

# About FACE!

A HUMANITARIAN GROUP, A HOSPITAL, AND A DOCTOR  
GIVE AN ECUADORIAN GIRL A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Nine must be a lucky number for **Tania Sanchez**, a brave 9-year-old who traveled to Desert Regional Medical Center from her native Ecuador in late July to receive nine hours of life-altering facial surgery.



Desert Regional Medical Center CEO Karolee Sowle opened the hospital's doors to Tania Sanchez.

Sanchez, who was accompanied by her older sister, suffers from hemifacial microsomia, or a partially undeveloped face; she was missing her left jaw, eye orbit, and cheekbone. Dr. Peter Scheer, an oral maxillofacial surgeon on staff at DRMC, volunteered to reconstruct Tania's face.

A cooperative effort between Scheer, the International Medical Alliance, and Desert Regional Medical Center facilitated the surgery free of charge. DRMC provided the operating and recovery rooms, intensive care, supplies, and support staff for post-operative care.

"It's a privilege to assist the International Medical Alliance and Dr. Scheer in this matter," says Karolee Sowle, CEO at the medical center. "They do amazing, life-transforming work."

IMA founder and president Ines Allen worked with Rep. Mary Bono-Mack to gain the emergency medical visas for Sanchez and her sister to travel to the

United States.

The July surgery included harvesting part of one of Sanchez's ribs and a piece of her pelvic bone to create a jaw, cheekbone, and eye socket. Scheer inserted a titanium mesh "crib" that cradles the bone grafts.

Results?

"Amazing," Allen beams. "She looks great."

Scheer says that Sanchez now has complete symmetry. The full, six-week recovery continues into the fall, as the patient was also fitted for orthodontic braces to guide the growth of the transplanted bone. In two follow-up operations, Scheer put the finishing touches on her reconstructed face.

Scheer, who regularly volunteers on IMA's medical missions to Ecuador at his own expense, says the complicated surgeries Sanchez needed could be performed only in a modern medical facility. He met Sanchez during his mission July 2008; her facial deformity was so extensive that he could not begin to work on her there. IMA prioritized her trip to Palm Springs soon after the 2009 mission.

Prior to his departure in July, Scheer contacted DRMC about the possibility of donating hospitalization for Sanchez, as well as medical supplies and equipment for the 10-day mission.

"We were more than willing to provide supplies to this great effort," Sowle says. "Our staff poured over excess supplies and assembled surgical packs specific to Dr. Scheer's cases" so that when they arrived in Ecuador, their time was effectively spent in providing critically needed care. ■



IMA founder Ines Allen (second from right) helped with medical travel visas for the Sanchez sisters.



Dr. Peter Scheer

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Dr. Peter Scheer was hardly alone on this year's IMA medical mission to Ecuador. More than 60 volunteer doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, optometrists, and others provided free medical services to more than 2,000 indigent patients.

Among the 2009 volunteers were anesthesiologist Doriana Cosgrove, M.D., and Lori Arnold, Pharm.D., of Desert Regional Medical Center. The only pharmacist on this year's mission, she was responsible for the initial setup and later dispensing of anesthetics and all the other medications.

Since IMA was founded in 2000, more than 35,000 Ecuadorians have received free medical care from dedicated volunteers in every medical discipline. IMA also helps people in need in the United States.

To learn more about IMA in the Coachella Valley and overseas, and to support the organization's efforts, please contact Ines Allen at 1-760-485-8963.