



Steinbach nurse heads to Peru

by Judy Peters

IN a few short days, Bettina Markwart will be leaving the comforts of her home in Marchand and her workspace at Bethesda Hospital to offer her services to some of the poorest people in Peru.

Markwart has committed to this volunteer opportunity for three years. She will be the first Canadian to work at the Diospi Suyana Hospital where some 40 missionaries work hand in hand with their 130 Peruvian colleagues.

As of November 2013, the hospital has counted more than 115,000 patient visits.

This hospital was started by Dr. Klaus John, who has practiced as a surgeon in Germany, USA, and South Africa, along with his wife Dr. Martina John who is a certified pediatrician in both Germany and USA. Along with others who share the passion of helping the poorest of the poor, the Johns founded the Diospi Suyana non-profit organization in August 2002.

The descendants of the Inca live under constant social discrimination and that weighed heavy on the doctors' hearts. In the Apurimac region, over 80 percent of whom live in abject poverty, said Klaus during a recent visit to Steinbach.

"Their medical need is quite evident in the high rate of infant mortality as well as the average life expectancy rate which is very low," Klaus noted.

Almost 35 percent of the Quechuas in Apurimac are illiterate and 50 percent are infected with worms. Most of the people in the mountains live in clay huts where there are no toilet facilities.

"And there are only four doctors for every 10,000 people," he said.

With traveling to 19 countries and making over 1,700 presentations, the Johns shared their vision of a dream hospital to serve the poorest of the poor in a region of Peru. Around 50,000 private individuals and 180 companies donated money and equipment worth 19 millions (US) dollars.

This is where Markwart is headed and she feels confident in her decision to use her training in a strange land, using a new language (Spanish) and having meager living quarters.

Her decision was made in December 2012 after she first learned of the Johns and the hospital.

"I heard about this through people from Germany," Markwart said. "It's been a long process. I always wanted to go into missions but I thought it would take longer."

The thought of going three years without a paycheck does not scare the woman who has received tremendous support from her family and friends, near and far. Rather, Markwart is paying to be able to work at this hospital.

It costs an average of \$1,000 per month and those funds are covered.

"It was amazing to see how people were moved in their heart to support me so I could go to Peru. My family is great in supporting me; also my church, relatives from Germany, a friend from Alberta and friends from around here. Now all that is left is prayers."

The first four months will be spent on language training near the hospital. Then, Markwart will dive in, helping people who have long been denied medical care.



JUDY PETERS • THE CARILLON

Bettina Markwart and Dr. Klaus John share their mission with *The Carillon*, showing slides and explaining the urgent need for many health care professionals to band together to help the poorest people in Peru.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Diospi Hospital in Peru is a modern facility with 50 beds, four operating rooms, 16 outpatient offices, a five-bed intensive care unit, a laboratory, an x-ray unit with a CT-scanner, a physiotherapy department as well as a dental and ophthalmologic clinic.