

## A Life of Service Comes Full Circle

"Ecuador is the thread that connects my life," says Maria Simeone, daughter of Joseph Simeone from the LMH class of 1957. Her father's life of service has shaped the fabric of her being. Joseph served in Ecuador with the one of the first classes of lay missionaries sent by Msgr. Anthony Brouwers.

After serving with LMH, Joseph stayed on in Ecuador and married Mariana Valdivieso, daughter of an Ecuadorian father and German/Hungarian mother whose family had immigrated to Ecuador. Maria was born in Ecuador, and Joseph and Mariana moved to the U.S when she was two.

Joseph continued to model a life of service honed by the Catholic mission field. Working with immigrant families, he developed the first Spanish bilingual programs in East LA at Stephenson Jr. High School. "He taught me a sense of responsibility for people that don't have it as well as we do," says Maria.

He and Mariana also taught their children to be proud of their multicultural heritage. Maria's home was filled with her grandmother's paintings of Ecuador. Mariana was a musician and Joseph a singer, and music was sung in Spanish, English, Italian and German. This foundation set her on a path to a career as a professional opera singer and she is currently a Teaching Artist for the Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa, Calif.

When it came time to have children, Maria and her husband chose foreign adoption. They adopted a son from Belarus and a daughter from Kazakhstan. But it wasn't long before she began to see the effects the orphanages had on her children.

"My undergraduate research was in

neuropsychology, and I realized I was seeing the results of attachment disorder," she says. Then, as she was doing concerts for children, she noticed the same behaviors among hundreds of students attending her performances, such as poor impulse control and poor focus. "It was so much like my daughter. I thought, 'I have to do something to help these kids!'"

She first began by applying creative reflex movement and music in her interactive concerts with the Pacific Symphony. That developed into her current MusicMoveTheBrain program, which she taught to families in transitional housing, in an orphanage in Mexico and to children in Haiti.

Fast-forward 10 years later, Maria is using her same musical programs with Alzheimers patients in the local Latino community. It has been one of the best experiences of her life.

"Working at this clinic with these beautiful Latino faces is like God bringing me home," she says. "I feel connected to these people in ways I haven't had in my work before. It's made me a more whole person."

And to bring her life full circle, she was recently invited to go and teach the program in Ecuador this September. "The founder of two Alzheimer's Centers in Ecuador came to my workshop, loved it, and asked if I would bring it to her foundation," she says. "That's the thread... to come back and give to a country that my dad was so passionate about, that I started life in."

Though both Joseph and Mariana have passed away, their passion for serving those less fortunate lives on. "I can't wait to visit Ecuador. It will be a return to my roots."



**Maria Simeone (above), daughter of Joseph Simeone, Class of 1957, and Mariana Valdivieso (middle), teaches music therapy programs around the world (bottom).**

# Your Mercy Reaches PNG

Our newest missionaries, Ron and Karen Srajer, and Danita Kurtz, are settling into their new life in Papua New Guinea thanks to your support. They have been greeted with songs and flowers in each parish they visit. "It is a very heartwarming welcome to our new home," says Ron.

Ron is currently touring all 19 parishes in the Diocese of Kimbe to document the condition of the buildings and note maintenance needs. Some of the villages are very remote. For one village, he rode for five hours in a small motorboat to reach it!

Danita is teaching at Caritas Technical Secondary School. For one of her recent assignments, she asked the class to present five items that represent their culture (see photo). "It was fascinating!" says Danita.

Thank you for helping us send tangible evidence of Christ's love to the people of PNG.



**Danita Kurtz, Class of 2018, enjoyed learning from her students as they presented on their cultural heritage.**

# LMH Spirit Leads to Mission in Ecuador

In April, Ed and Cathy Medina spent a week serving on a spring break medical mission trip in Ecuador with Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. Ed, a physician's assistant, and Cathy, a registered nurse, served with Lay Mission-Helpers for three years in Cameroon from 2001-2004.

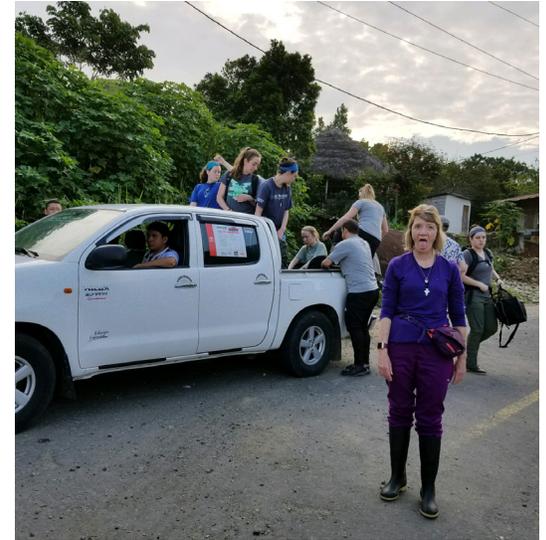
While the 18-member team of nurses, physicians and students set up base in Ahuano, at the edge of the Amazon, their days were spent visiting rural villages in the jungle. They would travel about two hours by boat, stop at a landing, then hike to a different village of roughly 100-200 people each day.

During their time in Ecuador, their team made a difference. "One village told us they hadn't been visited by a doctor in over two years," Ed said.

The team divided up responsibilities: some would see patients, some would distribute medicine, some would evangelize and some would play with the children. Ed and Cathy treated a variety of skin issues, fungus infections and arthritis and saw over 600 patients during the week.

The people were grateful and their kindness and generosity were humbling. "In one village, probably the poorest village, they treated us like kings. They killed their one chicken for our meal, and did everything they could to make us feel welcome. It was so touching!" said Cathy.

Three priests accompanied the group, including the local Ecuadorian priest. Mass was held every day, which became a focal point for the Medinas. "We've gone on other mis-



**Cathy and Ed Medina, Class of 2001, traveled to Ecuador in April with a medical missions team.**

sion trips, but serving together with other Catholics makes a huge difference in the spirit of the trip for us," says Ed.

"Some villages are so remote, they don't get regular visits from priests," he continued. "In one village, they baptized a 10-year old girl who had been waiting for six years."

"Serving with LMH changed us. We want to keep going, to keep being reminded how the rest of the world lives their lives," says Cathy.