

Hello Everyone,

Robert is doing well after three days of being sick recently. As of yesterday he was better. Just more mild stomach upset and weak. But they are preparing for a busy week ahead when the next volunteer group from Decorah arrives and they install 3 tanks. They will also be distributing food to villages. He was helping Benerito yesterday prepare the tools for these installations and since most of the places they go don't have electricity the tools are all battery powered. But they've been having a problem with the cordless saw and drill batteries and the charger is broke. He said there are 4 drills there at the mission but none of them have batteries that work or can be charged. They had been in two towns yesterday looking for replacement batteries but to no avail. Every time they looked in a store they were just being offered a new drill set with charger. I think that's how the mission ended up with so many cordless tools. There is very little in the way of good hardware stores. After they had no luck and got back on the boat to come home Robert was venting his frustration to Maribel about the stores selling you the tool but not carrying replacement parts and accessories. She looked at him and calmly reminded him that "This is Panama". Yeah, things are a little different. So much we take for granted, Home Depot, Menards, Tru Value, Farm Fleets and the list goes on. In Panama it is one dark, dimly lit, cluttered to the ceiling hardware store where they sell cheap products. So he and Benerito are going to try and get something figured out to be prepared for the upcoming tank installations. They need to have cordless tools on site because some of the work has to be done after measurements are taken at each location.

Another thing that happened recently was about a week ago. Maribel and Joe called for his help one morning at the mission when a man showed up with his boat bearing another man whom he found with a severe machete wound. The injured man had sliced one of his hands across the palm and fingers to the bone. He had been bleeding profusely. They began bandaging him enough to then send him to the hospital but Robert said even after bandaging him and putting a plastic bag over his hand the bag was quickly filling with blood. The man who had the motorized boat and had brought him there then agreed to take him to town to the hospital. Joe and Maribel gave him a couple gallons of gas to get there and off they went. Robert was hoping to hear back about how things turned out for the man. As bad as he described it I'm sure the man will not be using that hand anytime soon. Most of the adult men in the Guaymi population use machete's daily. Whether it is for their job or just to combat the jungle growth where they live, they are constantly swinging those things. They do seem to have a lot of respect for them but even so they are large, very sharp and there are always those times when they could "miss" their target. My theory is that maybe this man was cutting the hulls off of a coconut. They usually hold the nut in one hand while slowly striking at it to chip the hard hull off. If the coconut slipped off his hand then the machete would have landed right across his palm. I don't know this for a fact but it must have been something like that. They see these kind of injuries often at the mission.

Well that is my little update. Robert is looking forward to being busy this week and getting out to some of the villages again. Pray that he stays safe and feels good.

From Iowa, Mary