

May 9, 2011

Keeping In Touch . . . Impacting Lives

The School of Allied Health Professions would like to share the experiences of an alumnae providing medical care internationally. We commend the efforts of all of our alumni in providing healthcare to communities as an extension of their primary practice.



Christina Boover Lawrence, a 2008 alumnae, is pursuing her passion to serve those who are at a disadvantage in receiving medical care, both nationally and internationally. Christina graduated with her Doctor of Audiology degree from the School of Allied Health Professions. She also has her Masters in Speech Language Pathology. Her goal to attain a dual degree was to serve those with hearing and speech deficits. Christina's brother is deaf and her aunt has cerebral palsy. Growing up she realized the need for more comprehensive care for these populations. Her mother is from Cofradia, Honduras which allowed Dr. Boover-Lawrence to be exposed to a rich culture. As a result of these experiences, she learned both Spanish and American Sign Language. At a young age, Christina also began to see a need for underserved communities in other countries. Basic healthcare was difficult to achieve and services for special populations were nonexistent.

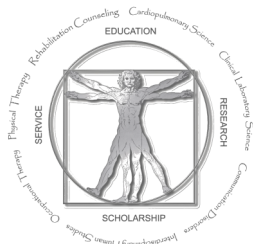
After graduation, Dr. Boover-Lawrence traveled to Guadalajara, Mexico to become acquainted with international needs. Since then she has traveled to Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras. Her focus has been on parent and teacher education. "If we do not empower individuals to sustain therapy and related programs, our efforts are futile." After several trips, Dr. Boover-Lawrence realized her dream to create a nonprofit organization, Speech, Hearing, and Balance Institute, Inc., to assist with the high demand of services for low-income communities.

Dr. Boover-Lawrence's most recent travel for international aid was to Chinandega, Nicaragua. In a single day, Dr. Boover-Lawrence and her associates performed 300 hearing screens and fit three students with hearing aids. The entire trip was made possible by Ken Bleile, an internationally known Speech-Language Pathologist. Dr. Bleile has organized several trips with the University of Northern Iowa students and asked Dr. Boover-Lawrence to join in on "the fun." Some determinations from the screens included the need for ear plugs to protect students' ears during music lessons. Some children already had mild hearing loss due to noise exposure. The focus of the trips is sustainability of healthcare. One recurrent problem is frequent repairs of hearing aids due to the moisture and heat of the Nicaragua climate. It is important to educate the school nurse on ways to maintain the hearing aids with economical solutions. For example, it is best to keep the aids in a glass jar filled with rice at night to alleviate some of the moisture that collects in the hearing aids.

Dr. Boover-Lawrence is married to a 2007 Speech-Language Pathologist alumnus, Nicholas Lawrence. They have a 16 month-old son, Maxwell Lawrence, and they live in Arizona. Christina and Nicholas both work for a school system on a Navajo reservation.

"Obtaining a degree from the LSUHSC Audiology program, where cultural sensitivity and sustainability are emphasized, created the platform I needed to comfortably assist underserved populations."

If you would like more information on the efforts of the Speech, Hearing and Balance Institute, Inc., contact Dr. Boover-Lawrence at admin@speechhearingandbalance.com or visit www.speechhearingandbalance.org.



Promoting Leadership & Collaboration
within an Interdisciplinary Network

Please address any suggestions or comments to tgunal@lsuhsc.edu
Editor/Graphics: Tina Gunaldo and Robert Reinhard

The School of Allied Health Professions would like to hear about the accomplishments of our alumni and friends. Please contact Tina Gunaldo at tgunal@lsuhsc.edu or 504-568-4251 to share stories and experiences.