

Veteran nurses give their all to malnourished children in Guatemala

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- As nurses, Terri Brandt and Jill Weise have a vocation — a vocation to care for the sick and vulnerable. This extends far beyond their hospital in North Dakota and out to the poorest reaches of Antigua Guatemala, where, for 16 years, they've helped save lives and helped local people build a better future through the work of The God's Child Project.

Terri and Jill share a desire to make a difference. In many ways, their lives have taken a parallel course. They went to nursing school together, and now, in their mid-60s, they both work in Sanford Hospital, Bismarck, ND — Terri in the neo-natal unit and Jill in both day surgery and as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). They also volunteer every year together in Guatemala after Terri's church, the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, introduced her to The God's Child Project back in 2005.

Terri and Jill build houses in Antigua Guatemala, helping lift local people — who commonly live on dirt floors with no plumbing, sewers, or electricity — out of poverty. They also do what comes most naturally — helping in the Casa Jackson Hospital for Malnourished Children, funded by The God's Child Project.

Since 2005, Casa Jackson has supported more than 2,000 malnourished, critically ill children back to health and many more via its outreach programs focused on nutrition, healthy living, and medical care within families and the wider community.

The hospital, which can house 60 children from babies to 18 years of age, allows mothers to observe their treatment and learn how best to care for them as they recover.

Being involved in the project from the outset, Terri and Jill have been central to its success. For



Human contact is sometimes the best medicine

Terri, the experience is far beyond a volunteering 'job':

"The first time I volunteered, I couldn't even help out. I cried the whole time. To hundreds of kids and mothers over the years, I have been a mom, a grandma, a hugger, a holder, a feeder, a social worker, a therapist, a friend.

"I like to see how babies change over time. When they first arrive at Casa Jackson, they are so malnourished that they just lay there and stare into space; they don't even cry. But, as we interact with them, they become more active and willing to show emotion. They become brave and their personalities shine through. The moms get to watch their progress and start to feel the courage to get involved in their child's healing process. They begin to feel hope and less shame."

And the ladies don't just give up their time willingly, but also their pay. While many workers of a similar age may be looking to slow down with a view to retirement, Terri and Jill regularly work extra hours. The people of Antigua Guatemala are never far from their mind:



The gift of a stable home

"The US dollar goes so far in Guatemala," says Terri. "We both work overtime so that we can bring as much extra cash with us as possible. We know that we can provide so much more — medicine, medical supplies, clothing, diapers, medical equipment, and baby formula."

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You don't need to be a nurse or have a medical background to serve in Casa Jackson," assures Jill. "The kids need human contact and encouragement and a place to thrive. Anyone can offer that."

Jill Weise

Their generosity doesn't stop there. The saying 'he would give the shirt off his own back' to describe someone who would do anything to help, perfectly describes Terri and Jill who, on their most recent trip, gave away three pairs of their own shoes to local people who didn't have any.

Terri and Jill have found that volunteering has not just benefitted Guatemala, but has also given them perspective and friendship:

"I love nursing. I love my patients," says Jill. "The US is so fortunate to have the funding and the resources it does.

We have so much, they have so much less and it is much simpler. It has shown me how much I can do with just giving what I've got to the kids in Guatemala.

"I helped build a house for a single dad of three young girls. Even though I don't speak Spanish, we were able to form a friendship just through helping each other through."

The God's Child Project works to provide children and families with a path out of intense poverty.

It cares for families in Guatemala, the United States, and around the world by giving people the opportunity to become self-sufficient, educated, and healthy members of society.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic putting a stop to their trip in 2020, Terri and Jill happily returned to Guatemala this March. All service projects with The God's Child Project are now back up and running and seeking volunteers.

"You don't need to be a nurse or have a medical background to serve in Casa Jackson," assures Jill. "The kids need human contact and encouragement and a place to thrive. Anyone can offer that."

You can apply now at godschild.org.

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