

The Hamilton Herald-News

THE NEWS SOURCE IN HAMILTON COUNTY TEXAS

Monday's Internet Edition, September 19, 2005.

Young Honduran recovering after life-saving heart surgery

- Eleven-year-old Seydi Gavarrete of Catacamas, Honduras, is spending three weeks in Hamilton in the home of Dr. Monte Horne and his family. She is here with her grandmother, Alva Ruth and is enjoying herself so much that she barely has time to take out for recovery from her open heart surgery last week.

Just looking at Seydi's deep brown dancing eyes and a quick smile, there's almost no way anyone would know that doctors opened her chest on August 24, stopped her heart from beating, patched a hole and sewed her back together.

Except for her slight build and occasional lapse of energy, nobody would ever guess that the spunky dark-haired girl, without the help of missionaries and volunteer surgeons in the United States, would have surely died a slow, miserable death of congestive heart failure, probably before the age of 30.

Without seeing the six-inch scar on her chest, still secured with steri-strips, it would be impossible to know that only a few days ago the little girl was so ill that she was not able to enjoy the childhood pleasures other youngsters take for granted. She was short of breath and could not run and play.

Seydi was born with a condition called Atrial Septal Defect, a hole between the top chambers of her heart.

A group of missionaries in Honduras located and evaluated Seydi and other children like her. "Not every kid with a murmur needs heart surgery," Dr. Horne explained. After determining that her condition warranted surgery, they contacted HeartGift, a



A BLESSED HEART – Seydi Gavarrete, age 11, of Catacamas, Honduras, recently had open heart surgery at Aus-tin's Children's Hospital to repair a life-threatening hole in her heart. Seydi is pictured here with her grandmother, Alva Ruth Gaverete. Park Heights Church of Christ, Carlton Baptist and Dufau Baptist Churches all made contributions to help the little girl get to the USA for the surgery she needed. She is staying with Dr. Monte Horne and his family while she recovers. Staff Photo

nonprofit, humanitarian organization based out of Austin.

The group of more than one hundred volunteers has performed open heart surgery on 30 underprivileged children around the world since 1998. The goal of HeartGift is to serve twelve children each year.

Hamilton's local Park Heights Church of Christ played a big part in helping get Seydi and her grandmother to the United States for her surgery. Two other area churches, Carlton Baptist and Dufau Baptist Church each also gave generous donations toward the cause after learning about it from Dr. Horne.

Watching a video about HeartGift, Seydi spotted Dr. Kenneth A. Fox, a member of the surgical team that performed her operation. Her face lit up as she exclaimed, "that's my doctor!"

The hardest part for Seydi's grandmother was watching her granddaughter awaken from the surgery. "I give thanks to God that everything went well," she said.

Seydi had already asked God to take care of her during her surgery. "She prayed right before she got the anesthesia," Dr. Horne said. "She says a very pretty prayer."

The young patient's prayers were answered. Her heart was blessed and repaired. Dr. Fox and his team performed the life-saving surgery on a Wednesday in Austin's Children's Hospital. The little girl walked out of ICU on Saturday and left the hospital the following Monday.

"She'll slowly but surely get her energy back," Dr. Horne said. "It would have been good to have done the surgery when she was younger, but it was not too late at age 11."

Seydi looks forward to doing all the things that kids her age like to do. When asked for specifics, she was quick to list her favorites, playing soccer, swimming and jumping, particularly in a long-jumping contest.

As a result of teamwork among missionaries in Honduras, caring volunteer doctors in Austin and big-hearted local individuals and congregations, Seydi and her grandmother will soon return to Catacamas and her two younger brothers, taking with them a healthy heart and the promise of a normal life for a brave little girl.