

Bula Fiji – Bluesky Newsletter

Outreach Program to Vanua Levu

Vanua Levu is the second largest Island in the Fiji Group and I was surprised at how “rural” it was, it reminded me of Fiji 30 years ago.

This was our first trip there and it certainly posed its challenges from transport, roads, accommodation, communication and logistics however we overcame all these hurdles and had an extremely successful trip.

The highlights

Monday 20th July Arrive late into Labasa after flight delays to find that no one had communicated we were arriving so we potentially had no patients to see the next day. Mel and Sadhana being the real estate agents that they are printed over 200 brochures and posted them in every street corner in town and handed them out to vendors and shoppers in the market.

Tuesday 21st July We worked out of Labasa market and we saw 120 people that day. Majority of the women had never had pap smears.

Wednesday 22nd July Went to Saigaga Health Centre where again we saw a number of women who had never had pap smears.

Thursday 23rd July We travelled to Savusavu which is 2 hours away, hosted for lunch by Lui and Margaret who own a fabulous resort. We then made our way to Lomalagi Resort where we celebrated Mels birthday over a scrumptious dinner and entertainment. Much kava was had that night by all.

Friday 24th July We worked out of Nagigi Village. The issues were the same again, however we did meet a child who had broken her arm and instead of going to the hospital the family had reset it themselves – badly. The team at the village converted an open hall into a 3 room clinic; walls were made of sheets, mats on the floors, waiting room built outside and the sound of the waves as background noise.

We were spoilt by the amount of food provided and the beautiful voices of the pacific. We stayed at Cousteau Resort for two nights.

Saturday 25th July We worked out of Savusavu hospital

Sunday 26th July Back to Nadi

Statistics from our trip

- In total we saw 300 people
- Of this 250 were women and 50 were men
- Of the 250 women only 6 had regular pap smears
- None of the women knew how to conduct a proper breast examination
- 90 had never had a pap smear
- 23 had one last year
- 31 had one at least once or over 4 years ago
- 15 had one in 2007
- 8 had one in 2006
- The balance were too old or we were unable to conduct one
- Of these we referred 6 for further testing
- We discovered 30 new cases of high blood pressure or diabetes
- Diagnosed a 5 year old with heart murmur who we referred to Suva Hospital

The support we got from the local community and resorts was awesome and very much appreciated. Savusavu foundation paid for our air fares, Cousteau Resort provided accommodation for free, rotary paid for lunches and the board hosted a dinner for us. Our thanks to our team this year as well, Cath, Mel, Cat, Animesh and Dami – this trip would not have been as successful without your commitment.



Bluesky Magic



The Bluesky Magic program is now officially running in Suva and Lautoka hospitals. This program is designed to provide children who are dying and their families a memorable weekend away.

Jay and I met with 4 families while we were there.

We sponsor the palliative care oncology room which is now known as the Bluesky Magic room at the Lautoka Hospital.

It has been re-painted, refurbished and we have created a little bit of magic for the kids by placing stars and moons on the ceilings. We will place into the room a TV, DVD and CD player, books and simple games.

This room is where most kids will spend their last days with their families.

Everything was donated to this project to a value of over \$10,000.

Our aim was to make Bluesky Magic self funding and to date we have the following sponsors on board

- Rahul Jeraj – my nephew who will donate \$30,000 over the next 3 years
- Westin Hotel – they provide accommodation and food and a magical experience for our families
- Professionals Fiji – they are conducting local fundraisers and helping us raise awareness

New contacts and relationships

This trip for me was also about cementing local support and building networks in Fiji. I am excited to say that we now have support from

- Anti cancer council in the Western Division –they will assist us in delivering outreach programs to rural areas of Fiji and assisting us with accommodation and transport
- McDonalds Fiji – working with us to transport supplies out of Australia in their containers plus support our local programs
- Europe Car Nadi – provide us with transport
- Namaka Pharmacy – supply us drugs at cost
- Savusavu Foundation – they will continue to fund and support future trips to Labasa
- Appointed a new Trustee based in Fiji with a local committee who plan to run a fundraiser later this year
- Contact within Government Depts. to assist us in providing clear passage into Fiji on a regular basis
- Contacts with Lautoka, Suva, Labasa Hospitals to conduct training programs with our visiting teams
- Orica New Zealand – supporting our fundraising efforts in New Zealand

We welcome them all warmly and look forward to a long association



Future Goals

As a trust our focus is on 3 key areas:

- women's health (including general health)
- education programs through churches and schools
- Bluesky magic

All of our outreach programs going forward will have local doctors attending. This will enable them to conduct follow up with patients, learn from our team and we build better relationships in terms of working together.

With the assistance of our contacts on the ground we will map out outreach programs that enable us to revisit communities on a regular basis.

Long term goal is to run outreach programs several times a year.

Brand Update

Due to the issues with the Fiji Government and delays in our name change being approved we have made the decision from a brand prospective to remain known as Links Fiji however our programs will now be called

- Bluesky Magic
- Bluesky Clinics
- Bluesky Education



Fundraisers

Melbourne fundraiser – we raised \$23,000 thank you!

Sydney fundraiser is on the 23rd of September 2009

Auckland fundraiser will be in October

Fiji fundraiser will be late 2009

My trustees and I thank you all for your support over so many years you all truly enable us to make a difference.

And to everyone who supports us through donations, auction items, food, transport, accommodation, flights thank you.

And I know that the children and families that we are able to make a difference to are so very grateful that people in places like Australia and New Zealand care.

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