

## **Orthotics Team Teaches, Learns in Latin America**

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Marty Carlson and Pilar from the IRI, Santiago, Chile, during the closing session of the course.

If you are teaching prosthetics and orthotics, you would certainly appreciate students who work hard in class and workshops, are willing to travel long distances to attend your program, and stay until the last question is asked and answered.

This has been the rewarding experience of J. Martin Carlson, C.P.O., [Sherry Rovig](#) and other practitioners and technicians at Tamarack Habilitation Technologies Inc., St. Paul, Minnesota USA. From September through December 1997, they made several of what Carlson describes as "teaching and learning" trips. Joe Bieganeck and Marty Carlson conducted a five-day workshop September 29-October 3 at the Instituto de Rehabilitacion Infantil (IRI) in Santiago, Chile. They demonstrated and coached two teams, consisting of orthotists and therapists, through the process of designing, fabricating, and fitting plastic shell type Sitting Support Orthoses for local children.

The workshop was part of a week-long schedule of activities celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Sociedad Por Ayuda del Nino Lisiado. This organization was founded in 1947 to aid children disabled by polio--a scourge of that era. Later the Society extended its program to also help children disabled by cerebral palsy, amputations, congenital deformations or limb loss, and other conditions. Other organizations which have aided the work of the Sociedad Por Ayuda del Nino Lisiado are Deutsche Welthungerhilfe, Diakonisches Werk, Pan Para el Mundo, and Misereor y la Fundacion Euronaid de Holanda. The Chilean community also has responded through the Teleton campaign.

Scenes from the seating course in El Salvador.

From Chile, Carlson went directly to Montevideo, Uruguay to participate in a program of lectures on biomechanics and orthopedic design October 4 and 6, organized by the Sociedad Uruguaya de Medicos Fisiatras and also sponsored by other health care organizations.

Then, in December, [Rovig](#) and Carlson conducted a five-day pediatric seating workshop in El Salvador. [Rovig](#) and Carlson led six teams through the process of fabricating and fitting molded plastic shell type sitting supports at an O & P training facility of Don Bosco University in San Salvador. "By the end of the week, seven severely impaired children from the rehabilitation institute next door to the training center had received completed seats and about 35 professionals and students had received training," reports Carlson.

In partnership with the GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Technische Zusammenarbeit), the University Don Bosco (UDB) began offering its Orthopedic Technology program in January 1996 with 25 students from local organizations. The GTZ is an autonomous German organization aiding the planning and technical implementation of projects in developing nations under guidelines established by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation (BMZ).

Unique in Central America, the three-year program trains orthopedic technologists to serve the disabled, however their disability was caused--accidents, illness, or war. The institution moved to

its new headquarters in Soyapango, east of the capital city of San Salvador in 1992, although the O & P training center remains in San Salvador. Besides orthopedic technology, the university offers studies in mechanical, electrical, electronic, biomedical, and industrial engineering, as well as humanistic studies such as sciences of education and communication. By January 1999, the UDB plans to have student residences and technical facilities for 25 Salvadoran and international students annually.

Joe Bieganeck, Pilar, and others at the IRI, Santiago, Chile.

Immediately after the seating course, Carlson attended the First Annual Salvadoran Rehabilitation Congress, December 5-6, and gave a paper on some aspects of lower-limb biomechanics in children with cerebral palsy. Other presenters included Dr. Miguel Gomez, Colombia; Ing. Heinz Trebbin, Germany; July Chan Jimenez, Costa Rica; Dra. Graciela Giachino, El Salvador; Dra. Sonia Maza de Rivera, El Salvador; Dr. Eduardo Mena Guerrero, El Salvador; Dr. Jose Antonio Velasquez, El Salvador; and Dr. Pedro Banchon, Ecuador.

Topics covered included technical advances in orthotics and prosthetics; geriatric rehabilitation; disabled sports; congenital disabilities; and a round table discussion of orthopedic aids.

Says Carlson, "It was a wonderful experience. The country has obviously returned to peace, and everyone was warm, friendly and gracious."

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