



ONBOARD

CANVASBACK MISSIONS | SUMMER 2020



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

FROM JAMIE SPENCE

Few people ever get to travel to the Micronesian Islands. Even fewer see the remote atolls with their many tiny islands that don't even appear on most maps. In the early days of Canvasback, we built our sailing catamaran to meet the people of those islands and bring medical care unlike anything they had seen before. It's been years since I've been back to the outer-islands, but I think about them often. I know the salt breeze full of the smell of ripe breadfruit, but what I remember most are the smiles of the people we helped, children and mothers with babies in their arms, as they waved to us from the beaches. And

I remember watching the dedication of our volunteers as they worked tirelessly under the unforgiving tropical sun.

In this edition of OnBoard, you'll see the legacy of that work continued. Our volunteers work as hard as ever and leave smiles wherever they go. And I'm glad to say, our Wellness Center staff has returned to the outer-islands with a message of health. These are very special stories and I am so grateful to all the volunteers and donors who have made them possible!

Warm regards,

Jamie

Special thanks to Taiwan
Heath Center for
cover image.
Design and
Editing by
Sterling
Spence



BIG

by Tanner Smith, Wellness Center Co-Director

CHANGE ON LITTLE JALUIT

Jaluit Atoll is located south of Majuro about 30 minutes by plane. Jaluit used to be the capitol of the Marshalls during World War II. Now it boasts a population of over 1,000 people spread out in a series of communities. It also has one of the only paved runways in the outer-islands, which means the small propeller airplanes are able to land regardless of weather conditions. So, come rain or shine, once a week the Air Marshall Islands plane brings supplies and passengers to the island.

Because of my responsibilities as director at the Canvasback Wellness Center, I hardly ever get to go on any outer-island trips. In the past three years, we have sent many teams to the outer-islands, but each time I have stood at the gate waving goodbye, unable to leave due to work constraints. Well, not this time! I finally took the chance and went on the inaugural “Scaling Up Pacific Adaptation” (SUPA) trip to Jaluit. SUPA is a new initiative from the European Union’s Global Climate Change Alliance that brought 17 people representing 5 different organizations to Jaluit to conduct health and agriculture assessments.

After landing at the small airport with only one man working to check everyone in and get us off the plane, we started a busy week of work. The first

order of business was meeting with local officials and landowners to get their approval for the health and agriculture surveys. Culturally, getting buy-in from these leaders is a very important part of doing business and usually takes place during a “yokwe” celebration. Though it was mostly a formality, we were grateful for their approval which meant we were off and running!

The week consisted of visiting health clinics, schools, exercise groups, and agriculture sites to understand the needs in the community. As we worked with local healthworkers to do blood pressure and diabetes tests, we found that about 25% of the patients we saw had diabetes. We were very concerned to see that many of the cases were uncontrolled which could lead to serious consequences such as amputations. We had a chance to talk with Elmon, the local health worker to understand this problem and found that patients only come in once a week on Mondays and often don't show up for check ups or to receive refills of their medication. We hope to help solve this problem by hiring a community health worker to assist Elmon on monitoring the hypertensive and diabetic patients and referring them to the health clinic.

Flying back the next week, I was excited about the work we accomplished and the great opportunities to come. Jaluit faces many challenges, but through our partnerships and with support of Canvasback's loyal donors, we are going to see big changes on the atoll!





by Jacque Spence,
Executive VP

GRATITUDE ON PALAU

“We have so many patients needing orthopedic surgery. The list is huge.” True to her word, LT, our amazing clinic nurse, had patients lined up to see our doctors. On the very first day in just 3 hours, we saw 18 patients. And by the end of our second day, all the slots for the first week of surgery were filled.

What stood out the most was the gratitude of our patients. “The island Ma-as (ladies) are going to bring you lunch. They want to say thank you for all that Canvasback is doing!” Our patients from this year and previous years brought local island food to provide us with a delicious lunch every single day.

Mary Sugiyama had a total knee replacement last year and came back to have surgery on her other knee.

“You can’t imagine how much pain I have been in. Every day all I can think about is my pain. I really thank God for sending the Canvasback team to Palau to take care of us. Thank you Canvasback for coming to this tiny island in the Pacific to help. We will never be able to repay the service that you have provided. To be able to get rid of the pain, we are so grateful.”

Last year, Titus came into our orthopedic clinic with a knee that couldn't be repaired without custom components. Zimmer Biomet made it a rush order. They donated the custom parts and they air freighted them to Palau just in time for our last day of surgery. The next day, Titus did a little dance to show us how successful the surgery was (see Titus-below with Dr. Henderson and Dr. Higgs).

This year, he came back for his right knee. "I really appreciate what this whole team has done. I thank the Lord for giving us this service."



Florencio Adelbai told me the day after his surgery, "I'm going to sing at the church and go fishing. The doctors are awesome – they're great. Yesterday, the doctor prayed with me before surgery. I felt so good about that. I know that God is with them."

Every day, patients who had surgery in previous years came back to see the doctors. Rosalita Ngeluk and Rachel Becheserrak had surgery in 2016 and 2017. Both of them had been in a wheelchair for years. Rachel said, "I was so depressed – I just sat around and did nothing. I was a prisoner in my house."

Rosalita was also weak and depressed and both of her knees needed to be replaced.

But now Rosalita and Rachel are active and happy. Rachel declared, "Look at me now. I can walk. I have no pain. I can do anything. Thank you very much."

We too want to thank all of our sponsors, donors, and volunteers for relieving the pain and suffering of so many islanders—giving them a healthy new life.





The following two stories are excerpts from a blog written by Sherri Elinson, a volunteer with Canvasback's ENT team to Majuro.

THE "GUAM" SHOP

While on mission in Majuro, I worked in the clinic office doing clerical work for Canvasback so I had very little opportunity to interact with our patients. But I did have the wonderful opportunity to interact with the residents of the island when not in the clinic. I was so impressed with the people and their appreciation for the members of the Canvasback team. They are so grateful for the services Canvasback provides—they love to show their gratitude.

On one trip we went to a clothing shop where we learned about *guams*, simple polyester dresses worn by most women on island. Upon walking into the shop, we were greeted by a lovely woman who couldn't stop saying thank you to all of us when she learned who we were. She told Jacque and me that she wanted to give each of us (a dozen team members) one *guam* to show her appreciation.

Try as we might to say thank you but no thanks, it became apparent that this was something she felt in her heart. So all the women on the team were graced with lovely new *guams* as a gift from Majuro.

THE VOLUNTEERS

I have been so impressed by the people I get to work with on a Canvasback mission. The doctors and nurses are extremely dedicated to the mission at hand. To a person, they work long hours without complaint and are acutely aware that the focus of their time is to see and treat as many patients as is humanly possible while on island.

It is hard work and can be stressful, not just for the team but for our patients as well. One day, as does happen, we were extremely busy in the clinic and became



very backed up. Though we worked hard to meet the needs of every patient, one patient waited quite a while to be seen by a doctor and then when he finally was seen, he had to wait again to see our audiologist for an audiogram. That done, he was asked to sit and wait yet again until we got the results so we could determine if he needed hearing aids.

Well, after a long wait the results were in and our patient did indeed need hearing aids but he was nowhere to be found - our patient had finally run out of patience and left!

But that just didn't sit right with our audiologist. So, what did he do? After a long and hard day of work, Dr. Rodney left the clinic in search of his patient. He finally located him at home where he fitted him with his new set of hearing aids. Now that's dedication!



AILUK

OUT & ABOUT ON





by Sterling Spence

About 250 miles to the north of Majuro, you'll find one of the most unique locations on the planet. Ailuk Atoll is a 2.1 sq. mile ring of land, home to a thriving Marshallese community of almost 350 people. It has become a destination for the adventurous yachtsman who wants to see a slice of the old ways of living in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. There, dugout canoes are still considered a common form of transportation and life is carved out of the coral with a mixture of ancient wisdom and modern technology.

As you can imagine, life can be precarious in the far reaches of the ocean. Changes in the climate or weather patterns could mean a lack of fresh water or a year without fresh produce. That's why the Canvasback Wellness team partnered with the European Union's "Readiness for El Niño Project" to help the community on Ailuk secure food and water resources before a drought. Kristin Smith, co-director at our Wellness Center, accompanied by Lise, one of our Wellness cooks, and Nora from our partners at the Taiwan Health Center traveled to the atoll to teach gardening and health courses.

They brought the lessons we've been learning with Marshallese across the island nation. Things like: how to grow okra on a coral atoll, what to use for composting in the tropical climate, and which vegetables are easiest to grow and fit well into cultural dishes. The team even met with the mayor to discuss strategies for making healthy food available at local businesses without harming them; these businesses have thus far made their living by providing affordable, imported foods that often lack necessary nutrients.

Canvasback's message of wellness, a model for a happy and healthy life, is excitedly spreading throughout the Pacific and we are determined to share it no matter how small the community because we believe everyone deserves a good life!

If you would like to financially partner with Canvasback Missions, log on to Canvasback.org/donate or use the enclosed envelope to send your gift.

YOUR GIFT WILL CHANGE LIVES—GUARANTEED!



940 Adams Street, Ste. R
Benicia, CA 94510
info@canvasback.org
(707) 746-7828

What causes a donor to become a financial partner with an international ministry? Why do donors select certain ministries to entrust their hard-earned money to?

I talked to one such donor who was happy to discuss her reasons for supporting Canvasback Missions but wanted to remain anonymous. This too is another earmark of most donors—giving to help others but not wanting to take any credit for doing so.

Joy (not her name) has been watching our new television series called IMPACT in her state of Washington for some time now. While watching, she said, “I was greatly impressed with the work Canvasback Missions is doing.” She went on to share, “I saw the dentistry, the eye surgeries and other surgical specialties that change lives. I was very impressed that I should help them financially.”

Late last year she needed knee surgery and it turned out that her surgeon has been on many Canvasback Orthopedic trips over the years. After her doctor operated on her knee, she was impressed that it was time to put her money to work.

She retired in January and received more money from Social Security than she thought she was going to receive. She continued to watch IMPACT and knew it was time to give. “The TV programs really helped guide me to give to Canvasback.”

She continued to share her story, “God has blessed me through every trial ... I had cancer and He got me through that too. There are a lot of places to put your money but I believe my money goes farther in another country. Canvasback makes that a reality. If I can't go on a trip, then at least I can give to the Ministry that helps others.”