



Weekend, May 16 - May 17, 2015

SALINAS LIFE

MUSICAL JOURNEY



SUBMITTED

In Jiu Jiang, China, near Shanghai, in 2007, Dr. David Morwood checks his patients. Every morning the team "makes rounds" on the patients to check on their progress, remove some sutures and to give instructions to parents about feeding as well as to check up on the patients who are scheduled to have an operation that day.



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Dr. David Morwood raises money to repair cleft palates in third world

By **Teresa Douglass** | tdouglass@gannett.com

A Monterey plastic surgeon takes his skills to the Third World to repair cleft lips and palates in children and some adults.

To help finance his trips abroad, Dr. David Morwood plays the drums at gigs throughout Monterey County.

By day, he's a plastic surgeon, but at night and on weekends he moonlights as a jazz drummer.

He's the house drummer for the Hyatt Regency in Monterey. And before that, he played at the Mission Ranch in Carmel every other weekend for more than 10 years.

When he's hired by Mission Ranch, the Hyatt Regency, Embassy Suites or Cibo Restaurante Italiano, he donates his earnings to the two nonprofits which send him throughout the world to repair cleft palates in needy children in developing countries: Rotaplast International, Inc. and Alliance for Smiles, Inc.

Through his musical gigs in Monterey County, he donates thousands of dollars each year to his medical mission trips.

The name of his band is The San Antonio South Project. Proceeds from its latest CD, "Falling in Love in Monterey," go toward his medical missions. It can be purchased for \$20 at his Monterey office, 665 Munras Ave., Suite 220.

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HOW TO HELP

» To donate to Rotaplast International, Inc., go to www.rotaplast.org or mail a check to Rotaplast International, Inc., 3317 26th St. San Francisco, CA 94110. For more info, call 415-252-1111.

» To donate to Alliance for Smiles, go to www.allianceforsmiles.org or mail a check to Alliance for Smiles, Inc.

2565 Third St., Suite 237, San Francisco CA 94107. For more info, call 415-647-4481.

Musical

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Love of music

Although he began playing the violin at the age of four, he said he always had a thing for the drums. He talked his parents into getting him a set of bongos at a church bazaar. The next year, he acquired a snare drum and the next year, cymbals.

By age 13, he played gigs for money with adult bands, he said.

He grew up in a small town outside of Burlington, Vermont with seven brothers and sisters. He was number 5 out of eight children.

At the time, there were a lot of ethnic clubs around such as the German, French and Italian clubs and they all had live bands. His father introduced him to musicians and had him sit in.

His father, the late Nicholas Morwood, wasn't a musician himself but knew the players and shared a love of music. There was a piano in their living room at home and Morwood's older siblings played the guitar and sang.

"Our parents encouraged us to do music," he said.

On Sunday nights, the children had to perform in front of the family before each could get their dessert. Some of them sang while others played an instrument or recited a poem.

"That was my parents way to get us not to have stage fright," Morwood said.

Musical influences

When he was only a preschooler, his mother taught him how to use a record player. He sat on the floor beside it, picked up the arm and placed the needle on the vinyl record.

"All of a sudden it was magic," he said. "The room filled with music and sound."

He listened to classical and big band music while his brothers and sisters were into Doo-Wop, Motown and R&B.

"Music has always been woven into the fiber of whatever I was doing," he said.

Career choices

While in high school, he considered becoming a full-time musician when he grew up.

His father had him talk to some of his musician friends who toured with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and the Glenn Miller Band.

They told him being a musician sounds glamorous but it's tough to live out of a suitcase on the road all the time.

So when he got an appointment to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, he took it.

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While there, he joined the U.S. Naval Academy Drum & Bugle Corps. He sang in the choir and one time, sang at the White House during a birthday party for Susan Ford, the daughter of then President Gerald Ford.

In the same choir, he sang patriotic songs during half-time of a televised NFL football game.

Later, while in medical school at the University of Vermont, he partnered with one of the deans who was a great saxophone player, he said. Their group, Just Jazz, played at ski resorts and weddings.

The sax player, the late Larry McCrorey, who happened to be the first black man to get a PhD in renal physiology, became a mentor for Morwood.

"As a dean, he was a huge influence on me," he said.



JUAN VILLA/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN

Dr. David Morwood, whose musical gigs fund his medical missions of fixing children's cleft palates, plays Friday at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa.



SUBMITTED

Dr. David Morwood repairs a cleft lip in San Salvador, El Salvador, in 2005. He is assisted by a local host nurse, and is being observed by a resident surgeon in training.

Between his father introducing him to musicians who emphasized music was a better hobby than a full-time career, the sax-playing dean and a plastic surgeon in Burlington who did overseas humanitarian missions, Morwood's life plan developed into what it is today.

What he does

He volunteers a couple weeks once or twice a year in faraway places such as China, El Salvador, Venezuela, Chile, Bangladesh and Vietnam. He's been all over South America and Central America.

It's very rewarding, he said.

Through the nonprofits Rotaplast International, Inc., and Alliance for Smiles, Inc. he travels with a team of 20 medical professionals and volunteers including three plastic surgeons, a pediatrician, anesthesiologists, nurses, orthodontists and speech pathologists.

Before the team arrives, these nonprofits get the word out that the American team is on its way.

Typically, up to 150 families bring their children to have their cleft lips and palates repaired. Patients are triaged and priorities are determined by safety, severity and age concerns, he said.

Life-changing surgery

In about an hour and a half, an obvious deformity, which often forces people to become shut-ins, is corrected and patients find their lives turned around for the better, he said.

Correcting cleft lips is mostly a cosmetic operation. But the cleft palate causes speech problems and slow eating. The roof of the mouth doesn't work because it's not intact, he said.

Babies with cleft palates cannot form a vacuum for a nipple or a bottle and these patients often suffer from ear infections.

"It's a whole disruption of their pharyngeal hygiene," he said.

While these cleft lip and palate repair clinics mainly serve children, some adults who have lived with it their whole lives get to have an operation.

One 60-year-old man from Columbia came to Morwood's Rotaplast clinic with a cleft lip. Because of his deformity, he had never been to school, rarely came into town and was reluctant to be seen.



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After arriving at the operating destination in Peru, the team sets up and a screening clinic begins. Typically, 150 families with their children and babies in need of surgery show up at the clinic for evaluation and hopefully to be scheduled for an operation. The patients are "triaged" and priorities are determined. Safety, severity and age are some of the factors taken into account.

After his surgery in the post operative clinic, he told the team he had kissed his wife for the first time after his operation, Morwood said.

People ask him how he can afford to volunteer in other parts of the world and he tells them he gets a lot out of it.

"It's physically exhausting but spiritually renewing," he said.

Even in Monterey when parents bring their babies to him and ask him to make them normal, he said it's the World Series of plastic surgery.

"With all the years of training, work and scholar," he said, "that's to me the ultimate challenge and request."

Combining interests

When he trained for plastic surgery, he chose locations that provided good medical training and also where there was great music, especially jazz music. He trained in New York, Paris, London and Los Angeles.



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