



SPACE CENTER ROTARY -

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by Tom Wier

I hope you were as moved as I was a couple of meetings ago when Charles Hartman stood before us holding in his arms that small child from Mexico that had received plastic surgery through Space Center Rotary's Rotary World Health Foundation. The surgery was done to correct a serious facial and oral birth defect. In fact, Charles told me after the meeting that a cracker that she ate during our meeting was the first solid food that she had had in her life!

Our Dr. Abdel Fustok did the surgery and our Dr. David Taylor furnished a device to temporarily close an oral cleavage until further surgery can be done. Imagine the tremendous difference that this series of operations will make in the life of this child. She will go from incredibly handicapped to leading a normal life. And she is only one of about twelve so far that have been helped through our program.

The Rotary World Health Foundation was conceived in the minds of two of our members while Charles Hartman was club president: Raymond Khoury (then administrator of St. John Hospital), and plastic surgeon Dr. Abdel Fustok. They saw how entire lives of some children were tragically affected when they were badly disfigured or disabled by birth defects or even as innocent victims of wars. Some of these tragedies could be eliminated by skills available to us but which were either not available or not affordable to the family of the child. Charles saw to it that a separate foundation was set up to handle this magnificent project.

The plan was simple, but it took a little practice to make it work: Bring the child here with the cooperation of a sponsoring Rotary Club in another country, St. John Hospital would provide the operating facilities at no charge, Dr. Fustok would do the operations at no charge, and Space Center Rotarians would host and transport the child and a parent while they were here. Many Rotary members or wives (no names now, too numerous) have done endless work to see that the families needs are met. And it hasn't been easy. But it has been so worthwhile!

What a striking example of the difference that Space Center Rotarians can make in the world! If you are looking for satisfaction in your life, it's available right here!