



KRB Update #2211–Delon, Eddy & Benin 2016 Keith R. Brinkman with Mercy Ships 26 November 2015

‘Thank you Mercy Ships’ words from some of our healed patients from Toliara who returned to the screening site in their town to see our screening team there looking for more patients. Happy Thanksgiving to my American

family and friends. We all have so much to be thankful for each and every day. Two short stories and some great news.

Delon - from Taolagnaro in the far south sector of the island of Madagascar (a four day and night journey by bus between there and the port city the ship is in). Our Screening Team was there in early September and Delon was one of those selected to come for maxillofacial surgery. I met him while visiting the HOPE Center. He could actually understand my limited French and would translate into Malagasy so that the others understood what I was trying to say. Delon is married and has one young daughter. He works and is also studying to be a pastor in his church. I had my friend call to see how he is doing with his transition back home – he shared it is going well and good to be with his family and community. He is rejoicing as he plans to be water baptized this Saturday.



Eddy - we are in the final weeks of pediatric orthopedic surgery which is done early in the field service so there is time for cast changes and all the therapy needed for these amazing kids and teenagers. I met one of the most friendly little Malagasy kid – his name is Eddy, 7 years old and he had bowed legs. He is from a village, but his mother heard of the screening and brought him. He was accepted, but due to her being in the final months of pregnancy she was not able to come and so his grandmother came with him as his caregiver. When I first met him, he just came up and sat next to me and talked and talked on in Malagasy and I smiled and shook my head. Last week, I saw him again and he has both legs in casts and yet he has started to walk on his own without crutches or a walker. Oh the joy that came, as he just grabbed my hand and we just walked around. Though, when we got to the stairs he needed a bit of help to get down as he swung his legs from step to step. He and all the orthopedic kids have a long road, but we are so excited at the progress so far. Please continue to pray for all of our patients.

Well the announcement we have been waiting for came, here are the details: “After careful consideration, the Executive Committee of the Mercy Ships International Board has approved the deployment of the *Africa Mercy* to the nation of Benin for the August 2016 – June 2017 field service.



The *Africa Mercy* was previously scheduled to dock in Benin in 2014, but had to redeploy due to the Ebola outbreak in the region of West Africa. Following the past two years of service in Madagascar, the decision to return to West Africa was taken with great care and deliberation even though Benin was not affected. During the past several months a number of West African countries have been declared Ebola free. In the coming months, Mercy Ships will continue to carefully monitor these encouraging developments, study and make the necessary preparations for this field service.

Despite the stability of both the country and its economic growth, it is still considered one of the poorest nations in the world, ranking at 165 out of 187 countries according to the United Nations Human Development Index in 2013. Benin welcomes support to improve the country’s health system. ⁽¹⁾

Donovan Palmer, Group Managing Director for Mercy Ships, reports, “*Since our last visit to Benin, the Mercy Ships programmatic model has expanded. Capacity-building projects are now possible on a scale which did not exist previously. Coupled with the opportunity to build on projects from the past, we believe Mercy Ships efforts have the potential to catalyze change in Benin in ways not possible before now.*” The *Africa Mercy* last visited Benin in 2009. Previous to that time, Mercy Ships have also docked in Cotonou in 2004, 2001, and first served in the nation in 1997.”

I am excited to return to Benin, to see former patients, local workers, partners and dear friends. I thank you all my family and friends around the world. *Give Thanks with a grateful heart.*

Serving Together, **Keith** Email: keith.brinkman@yahoo.com [kreb@keithbrinkman.com](mailto:krb@keithbrinkman.com) www.KeithBrinkman.com