

Audiology Summer Outreach 2023 – Baja, Mexico

June 1-6, 2023

After a multi-year hiatus resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, representatives from the University of Arizona audiology program resumed travel to Baja, Mexico to provide audiology outreach services to children in need. As in past years, we were hosted by the organization [Corazon de Vida](#) which provides support to children living in orphanages in Baja, Mexico. Our aim was to identify and treat hearing loss in children who would not otherwise receive access to this care and to support the potential of these children to access education. All of the children seen on this trip had been targeted through concerned caregivers, identified during previous trips, or had unknown histories. Additionally, this project provided students in our audiology doctoral program with a valuable culturally immersive clinical opportunity.



Our team was made up of three audiology doctoral students: Abbie White, Bryanne Crump, and Rosemary Bramlett, two clinical audiology faculty: Dr. Amy Wheeler and myself (Dr. Erica Hansen), and George Perez, our liaison for the orphanages. George, who is based in the Los Angeles area and a longtime member of the [Corazon de Vida](#) Foundation, was instrumental in providing coordination of our visits to the orphanages, warm introductions at each of the homes, transportation, and insightful information and back stories for many of the children.

George's dedication and special connection to so many of the children has astounded me over the years, and this trip would not have been possible without his efforts.

A total of 87 people received audiology services and we identified 13 as needing follow-up care on future trips. Beyond the numbers, we witnessed a powerful experiential learning opportunity for our students and a meaningful cultural exchange between our team and the delightful children we were so lucky to meet.

This year we went further south than ever before to an all-girls home that according to George is not often visited due to its location. This was our first time visiting, and we were warmly greeted and treated to a home-made traditional lunch that was enjoyed family style together with all the residents. After providing our hearing services, we were given a tour of the facility, which is in the process of receiving needed renovations, such as a new roof. These renovations were due to fundraising efforts. The grounds include a school with rooms designated for a variety of vocational opportunities including cosmetology, foreign language learning, music, sewing, and athletics. We were told the home shares their school with children in the surrounding community who would like to attend as a way to "give back" what was given to them.

Days 2 and 3 included a visit to a large rural residence amidst vineyard country in Valle de Guadalupe. Here we focused on providing care to adults with special needs, children who had previously been identified, as well as those who were new residents since our last visit pre-pandemic. Since my first visit to this home back in 2015, it was great to see the home thriving with many upgrades over the years. Our timing allowed us a glimpse into many fun weekend activities underway as the children played in the large courtyard between all the buildings. On previous visits, we have often had several curious onlookers. This year we experienced even more involvement from several children. We had multiple volunteers who helped us “check-in” our patients and closely observed our procedures. We were happy to have them shadow us and wonder if any seeds might have been planted in inspiring future audiologists.



On our second evening, we returned to our accommodation to find a couple of people waiting to talk to us about their hearing concerns. They had heard we would be coming and had waited hours for our return. Despite the late hour, we were able to complete some more hearing tests and provided some information about recommended follow-up care.

One highlight of this year’s trip was the incredible hospitality that we received. We were invited to be some of the first guests at what will be a ranch for people to stay when they are transitioning from the orphanages to adult life. The founder of the ranch, Juan Pacheco, is a former resident of the orphanages and knows from experience that support throughout this transition is needed. In addition, we were invited to spend time with Hilda Pacheco Taylor, the founder of Corazon de Vida, and her husband, which was truly special.

Many thanks to so many people who made this trip possible. Thank you to our private donor Gerald Giese, whose generous funding has made this trip an ongoing endeavor. Muchas gracias to George Perez, Hilda Pacheco Taylor, Juan Pacheco, and the Corazon de Vida supported communities for their incredible hospitality. Thank you to Marcia Geller who initially inspired this initiative and to the many



audiologists and volunteers who have contributed to these efforts over the years. And lastly, thank you from myself to our group for being an outstanding and dedicated team.

Here is a link to learn more about [Corazon de Vida](#) .

To see the complete photo album from George Perez follow this link: [Photo in AUDIOLOGY U OF A JUNE 2023 - Google Photos](#)