

I've always wanted to do a mission trip but figured it would happen once I retired. I wasn't sure what kind of trip it would be, I just knew that I wanted to help others and broaden my personal perspective. Now, I know my skill set and wasn't sure how I'd find a fit, but, as always, when you let go and let God in, amazing things happen—like earning an Operation Smile mission trip to Bolivia!



I'll never forget the first day of surgery. The family I was following wasn't scheduled until the next day, so I was at the hospital playing with some of the other kids. That morning was not what I expected; I wasn't prepared for the wave of emotions that would overwhelm me.

As I sat there playing with the children, I could see the faces of the parents whose children were being prepared for surgery and they looked so sad.

They were in a small group and it appeared a psychologist was sharing what was going to happen during surgery and how to care for their child once they returned home. My first thought was, "Why such sadness when you brought your child here for this very opportunity? Where is the joy and hopefulness? Why aren't you thrilled that your child has been selected for this life changing operation?"

Then, I heard someone mention the age of one of the children, and it clicked. These were the parents of some of the youngest children here. This is probably the first time they have been away from their baby. They had given their baby to a *stranger* for *surgery*. Their *baby* would be put under anesthesia. There was going to be a doctor that they never met, and may never even see, *operating on their precious baby*. And yet, they were still here. What mind-blowing faith!

Yes, there were tears. So many tears. Tears of fear, thankfulness, uncertainty, and joy—all at the same time. In the end, it was about having faith, hope, love and doing what we are each lead to do in order to improve the life of a child.