



THE SUN CHRONICLE

Attleboro-North Attleboro, Mass.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 2016

\$1 newsstand

Sturdy doctor lends hand in Costa Rica

ATTLEBORO

It can take up to a year to have a routine surgical procedure done in Costa Rica, compared with two weeks in the United States.

The reason? The Central American country is chronically short of medical personnel and its socialized health care system is often overwhelmed.

Enter Dr. James Snead of Sturdy Memorial Hospital in Attleboro, who this summer returned for his second mission trip to Costa Rica to lend a helping hand.

“The problem is the system,” he said. “There’ll be someone who has to wait eight months for a surgery I know I could do in a week if I was (in America).”

This time, the physician brought along his son, Mason Snead, a junior in high school with a keen interest in the medical field.

While Mason never got to participate in the surgical procedures himself, the trip afforded him the chance to see them happen firsthand.

Although the one-week mission was sponsored by HBO, Snead’s trip was largely independent. He had to pay for his own flight, hotel and public transport.

Snead stayed in San Jose, the nation’s capital, and worked between two hospitals:

‘The problem is the system. There’ll be someone who has to wait eight months for a surgery I know I could do in a week if I was (in America).’

Dr. James Snead

San Juan de Dios and Hereia Hospital.

He worked alongside many of the same surgeons he worked with during a 2014 trip to Costa Rica and performed similar work to what he does at Sturdy.

“I worked on ACL reconstruction, rotary cuff repair, shoulder reconstruction and labral repairs,” he said.

He described the two trips to Costa Rica as “eye-opening.”

This trip, he came away with a couple of observations.

“One, it amazed me how much the surgeons have improved in two years; and two, just how overwhelming it can be having to witness so many people just sitting there in these wards waiting (for surgery).”

He also noted how educational it was for his son to see so many painful surgeries conducted right before his eyes.