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Facial plastic surgeon travels to Asia to help those in need

BY LEE STEPHENS

Andres Bustillo, MD, FACS, a local facial plastic surgeon, recently traveled to Vietnam as part of "Face to Face," a collaborative medical mission.

The yearly mission is different from others in that the surgeons operate on children and adults, and also teach local physicians their techniques. The goal of the educational aspect is to prepare the surgeons so that in the future they can treat patients that require facial surgery.

"It's very rewarding mission, because apart from treating many children with facial deformities, we also lecture and instruct the doctors. In this way, we are helping them become self-sufficient," Dr. Bustillo said.

The team, made up of four facial plastic surgeons, spent one week in Hanoi. They operated out of the National ENT Hospital, one of the specialty teaching hospitals in Vietnam. The team operated both children and adults with facial congenital and traumatic facial deformities. These included cleft palate repair, nasal reconstructions, ear malformation reconstruction, and sequela of facial traumas.

"I think we made a very positive



Dr. Andres Bustillo is pictured with Ahn, one of the patients he treated in Vietnam.

impact on the lives of these patients. This is something that stays with them and with us forever," said Dr. Frank Fechner, a facial plastic surgeon from Boston.

Ahn, a 14-year-old girl was born with a large congenital dysplastic nevus. These skin tumors can turn to melanoma in the late teens and require removal. The tumor involved her upper and lower eyelids. The Face-to-Face team decided to stage the removal and reconstruction last year and undertook the first stage then. This year, the second stage was done. The final stage will be done

next year when the team returns.

"I am very happy with how the doctors did the surgery the first time and came back to operate on me this year. I am excited for next year to come so that they can finally remove the entire tumor," Ahn said.

Dr. Bustillo, who runs a busy cosmetic facial plastic surgery practice in Coral Gables, has been going to Vietnam for the past three years.

"I think that everyone should help those less fortunate, in which ever way we can." Dr. Bustillo said.