

## Refurbishing Hope

“Act as if our loved ones are on the table” is the adage **Gene Robinson** lives by. The axiom sparked the president and CEO of IMS, a Birmingham, AL-based surgical instrument management and consulting company, to create Instruments of Mercy, a nonprofit organization that repairs surgical instruments for medical mission groups. Established in 2004, Instruments of Mercy has collected used and damaged instruments from mission groups and refurbished them for more than 50 missions. The organization also refurbishes instruments for Mercy Ships, a charity operating hospital ships in developing nations. Robinson has been on several missions.

**On how the organization works with physicians:** We really work with the surgeons. We don't have huge warehouse or stockpile it. A surgeon has to be going on a mission trip, and if he's a plastic surgeon he knows he needs scissors and needle holders; if it's an orthopedic surgeon, he knows he needs a drill. They work with their hospital to find old or damaged equipment, we renew and refurbish it, and send it back to the surgeon going into the country.

**On contributing to earthquake relief in Haiti:** Because we've been doing it for six years, when Haiti came up we were positioned to refurbish a lot of instruments for those mission trips going overseas. When Haiti happened, I came in that Monday after the TV program *60 Minutes* showed the leg amputation of a child with a rusty instrument, and IMS, working through Instruments of Mercy, was already in action to help them. I didn't have to say a word. It was very gratifying that they understood that because of our prime directive we were going to do something for Haiti. It's just part of the culture.

**On mission surgeons' gratitude:** When I was walking down the surgical hallway on the Mercy Ship one surgeon broke scrub and came out and said, 'I'm glad you're all here; sometimes I want to take my mask off and bite the instrument.' It doesn't make much sense, but he was just so frustrated because their instruments hadn't been touched in four and a half years.

—MARIANNE AIELLO



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