



Amie Ruffcorn, RN, and Beau Konigsberg, MD, deliver a new pair of donated sneakers from Nike to Charles Jones after his hip replacement.



TAKING STRIDES TO IMPROVE LIVES

Being a chef, Charles Jones is accustomed to spending a lot of time on his feet. Working 12- to 16-hour days was not out of the ordinary for the Omaha man, who has also been a minister for more than two decades. Jones has been known to serve up a good steak and church sermon, but in the past year he wasn't able to do either.

"I haven't been without pain since November 2010," Jones said with his wooden cane by his side.

In May, Jones' pain in his hip became unbearable, resulting in an emergency department visit. A couple days later he went to see **Beau Konigsberg, MD**, assistant professor in the department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation. **Dr. Konigsberg** confirmed Jones had avascular necrosis of his left hip and would need a hip replacement.

"It's been a debilitating problem to not be able to stand and work," Jones said. "It literally stopped my way of life."

Since the diagnosis, Jones has been on medical leave without pay. But now the 42-year-old executive chef

is looking forward to getting back on his feet and restarting the life he was previously accustomed to.

Jones is hopeful about returning to work thanks to a call notifying him that Dr. Konigsberg had chosen him to be a patient in Operation Walk USA 2011.

Operation Walk USA is sponsored by The Hip Society, The Knee Society and the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons (AAHKS). Through the program, about 85 people in the United States received free joint replacement surgeries.

On Dec. 2 and 3, 2011, as part of Operation Walk USA, 58 orthopaedic surgeons from 16 states throughout the nation performed pro bono total joint replacement surgeries. The patients were unable to receive the appropriate and needed surgical care due to financial circumstances. Jones had his hip replacement surgery performed by UNMC surgeons Dec. 2 at The Nebraska Medical Center.

All aspects of the treatment – surgery, and pre- and post-operative care – were provided at no cost to the patient and the surgeons and medical

personnel volunteered their time. The hip and knee implants were provided at no charge by various orthopaedic manufacturers.

With a new hip in place and post-operative care, Jones is aiming to return to work either in April and May.

"It's my hope that I'll be able to get back to doing 50- to 55-hour work weeks and reclaim my salary and have the same quality of life I had before," he said.

Operation Walk USA is based on the successful international experience of Operation Walk that started in 1995 to provide hip and knee replacements to thousands of arthritic patients throughout the world.

California orthopaedic surgeon **Lawrence Dorr, MD**, founder of Operation Walk, was a visiting professor at UNMC in 2009 and had invited **Kevin Garvin, MD**, professor and chairman of the Orthopaedic Department at UNMC, to learn more about the program and potentially get involved.

Dr. Garvin was asked by **Dr. Dorr** if he would develop a team in Nebraska



Curtis Hartman, MD, and an interpreter, make rounds and check an Operation Walk patients in Guatemala. Dr. Hartman and a team of medical personnel from Nebraska volunteered their services during a mission trip this past November.

to provide care for patients around the world who did not have an opportunity to have surgery in their country.

“They’re disabled because of their arthritis, often unable to walk, having severe pain and there aren’t the resources in those countries and this is one of those countries,” **Dr. Garvin** said about the patients in Guatemala.

In 2010, Operation Walk – Nebraska, traveled to Antigua, Guatemala to perform operations. The team consisted of UNMC Physicians and medical staff, along with medical personnel from other hospitals. This past November, the UNMC team, along with other groups from across North America, returned to Guatemala and performed 73 joint replacement surgeries on 67 patients.

“It was very humbling as the patients were so gracious and grateful,” **Dr. Garvin** said. “It was quite an experience.”

Chad Vokoun, MD, internal medicine,

has been a part of two trips to Guatemala. Like the rest of the Nebraska medical team, **Dr. Vokoun** said he left each time impacted by the experience and by the people he met.

“The thing I will remember most about this experience is the patients,” he said. “The patients have just been so enjoyable and thankful and it’s just been amazing to see them get up and walk even two hours after they are out of anesthesia.”

Curtis Hartman, MD, orthopaedic surgeon, said the expressions on the patients’ faces is the lasting memory he took away from both his trips as part of Operation Walk.

“It is really difficult to put into words the gratitude the people of Guatemala showed us for the work we did,” he said. “The work we do every day is rewarding. We help disabled people walk; however, the patients we cared for in Guatemala never expected to have this opportunity.”

While there are plans to continue to participate in the international effort of Operation Walk, **Dr. Garvin** said there was a prevalent need for similar care in the United States, which is why Operation Walk USA was initiated.

“We knew we were doing a good thing in Guatemala, but at the same time, we knew there were patients right here in Omaha with disabling arthritis and no means to have surgery to correct it,”

Dr. Hartman said.

No matter if it is Guatemala or Nebraska, the outcome is typically the same. The patient leaves grateful to walk without pain.

Jones said he was thankful to his family for their help and to the medical staff, Operation Walk and

everyone who donated their time and services to help him.

“You just can’t put into words how grateful I am,” Jones said.



Did You Know

On Dec. 2 and 3, 2011, as part of Operation Walk USA, 58 orthopaedic surgeons from 16 states performed pro bono joint replacement surgeries on patients who are unable to receive the appropriate and needed surgical care due to financial circumstances.

In November, a UNMC team, along with other groups from across North America, traveled to Guatemala and performed 73 joint replacement surgeries on 67 patients.

Operation Walk USA is based on the successful international experience of Operation Walk that was started in 1995 by Lawrence Dorr, MD.

Learn more

www.opwalkusa.com/opwalk/
www.operationwalk.org

“We knew we were doing a good thing in Guatemala, but at the same time, we knew there were patients right here in Omaha with disabling arthritis and no means to have surgery to correct it.”

*- Curtis Hartman, MD
 Orthopaedic Surgery & Rehabilitation*