

## *Commodore's Corner*

Over the 19 years that I've owned my boat, one of the things that has never ceased to amaze me is the generosity of the cruising/boating community. It's not hard to understand since a lot of the destinations are often referred to as "Third World Countries". Every year the cruising community in Mazatlan have fundraisers for the benefit of the local orphanage. I've also crewed on boats that take school supplies such as pencils, paper, coloring books and crayons for the local children they meet along the way. A lot of these places still have dirt roads or none at all. On my recent trip Tortola, BVI to Golfito, Costa Rica we stopped in the San Blas Islands, on the Caribbean side of Panama. We had anchored by one of the Islands and no sooner than the anchor was sets, we noticed a couple of dugout canoes with the local Kuna Indians on their way out to our boat. They wanted to show us their Molas that they had for sale and sell us some of the local seafood such as crab, lobster and fish. We told them to come back later in the day after we settled in. A few hours later a family paddled out again and we invited them onto the boat for refreshments and to show us the Molas. They had a boy about 2 or 3 that they were holding who on coming aboard we noticed had a cleft lip. We purchased several Molas and enjoyed learning about their lifestyle on the Islands. During the rest of the trip we spoke several times of the little boy and what we could do to help. Fast forward several months later and I received an email from Larry one of the other crew. He explained that when he got home he continued to think about the Kuna boy. He found a group called Operation Smile that had people in Panama. Operation Smile is an organization that performs operations for such things. They were willing to perform the operations, however after several months they still could not locate the boy. Enter the boating/cruising community located in the San Blas region or passing through. In just 4 days the boy was located on another Island and in addition another child was also found. The amazing thing is that each of these operations only cost \$240.00 dollars each to make these kids smile again. Larry also sent the address of a website he set up for donations to pay for these operations. In less than 20 days Operation Smile received over \$1000.00 for the operations due to the generosity of the boating community. If your interested in learning more about Operation Smile or perhaps considering donating to such a worthy cause Please visit their website: <http://www.operationsmile.org> Thanks and see you on the water.

Jim