Surgeon helps Grenadan boy

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Dr, Steven Kronlage with Nassir, 6.

Three years after his first life-changing surgery through Hands of Hope Medical Mission (HHMM), 6-year-old Nassir Andrew of Grenada returned to Northwest Florida for a follow-up procedure to further improve the function and independence of his right arm and hand. North Florida Bone & Joint Specialist (NFBJS) Orthopaedic Hand Surgeon Dr. Steven Kronlage and Co-President of HHMM successfully performed the second surgery on June 22 at Andrews Institute Surgery Center.

The procedure represents the next chapter in Nassir's ongoing journey after being born with brachial plexus palsy, a condition resulting from nerve injury sustained during birth that affected the function of his shoulder, arm and hand.

"Nassir's diagnosis was a difficult thing to come to terms with, given that our healthcare system was not the best in Grenada. We got in touch with Dr. Kronlage at North Florida Bone & Joint Specialists, and they have walked alongside us ever since. I am just so grateful," said Reba David Andrew, Nassir's mother.

In Jan. 2023, HHMM sponsored Nassir's first stateside operation. During that procedure, Kronlage, along with HHMM Co-President and NFBJS Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr. Chris O'Grady, addressed residual contractures in his shoulder and elbow, allowing him to regain important function and raise his arm above his head for the first time. The surgery modestly but meaningfully improved Nassir's daily life, enabling him to position his hand in front of his mouth and across his body, which made everyday tasks and recreational activities easier.

"The first surgery gave Nassir improved function and opportunities that simply weren't available to him before. As he has grown, we've been able to evaluate his development and identify additional procedures that can help him. While we cannot make his arm function normally, our goal is to improve his ability to perform everyday activities such as writing, feeding himself and playing with other children," said Kronlage.

The recent surgery focused on stabilizing Nassir's wrist through tendon transfer procedures designed to improve wrist extension and overall hand function. The procedure is expected to make many routine activities easier as he grows older and faces increasing demands at school and home.

"For our family dealing with something like this, having that consistency and care is everything. What means the most to me is that they never disappeared between appointments. They check in, they stay in touch, and every year they meet with him over telemedicine to see how he is doing. They also ensured that finances were never a barrier to my son receiving the care he needed. That kind of generosity is something I will never forget and could never fully put into words," said David Andrew.

Nassir's return is a powerful example of the long-term relationships that can develop through mission-driven medical care. Founded to provide specialized orthopaedic care to underserved populations, HHMM supports patients both internationally and here in the United States who otherwise would not have access to advanced surgical treatment.

"One of the most rewarding aspects of this work is seeing patients like Nassir return years later and witnessing the progress they've made. The surgery itself is only one part of the story. What truly matters is giving children the opportunity to live more independently, participate in activities they enjoy and reach their full potential," said Kronlage. "They know my son. They know our family. And every time we connect with them, we are reminded that he is in truly wonderful hands. I would hope that anyone can find a doctor like Dr. Kronlage and the team at the Andrews Institute Surgery Center," said David-Andrew.

In addition to sponsoring patients like Nassir, the HHMM coordinates volunteer medical teams and fundraising efforts to support humanitarian surgical missions abroad. Both of Nassir's procedures have been made possible through the support of HHMM donors, volunteers and community partners, including the Andrews Institute Surgery Center in Gulf Breeze.



Dr. Kronlage with Nassir after the surgery.