

# MISSION OF HOPE, BOLIVIA NEWSLETTER

Volume 16, Issue 3

December, 2015



**Diana's first visit to the clinic**

## THE GIFT OF HEARING

**Diana was born prematurely** at only 5 months gestation. **She weighed only 2 lbs.** at birth! She spent her first 2 ½ months of life in an incubator. During that two month period, her parents saw many other babies die in their incubators, but Diana kept fighting and developed her lungs. It is **truly a miracle** that Diana survived such a premature birth in a public Third World hospital!

Doctors warned Diana's parents that she might have physical impairments due to her premature birth, such as blindness, deafness, or underdevelopment of her spine. Diana was unable to see at birth, but by 3 months of age, her vision had developed and she was able to see.

At the end of her first year, Diana was still not responding to sound. Diana's mother took her to a pediatrician, who told her that everything was normal. In January of this year, an uncle came to visit. The uncle was a physician. He convinced Diana's parents that **everything was not normal**. They went to a different pediatrician, who referred them to a specialist. A hearing test showed that **Diana was completely deaf**. They were told that hearing was an impossibility for Diana unless she had a cochlear implant.

Then Diana's parents heard that the Mission of Hope clinic was preparing for a week of free ear, nose, and throat surgeries. Diana came to the clinic in April of this year with her mother as Dr. Patricia Arteaga was screening patients for surgery. Dr. Patricia confirmed that Diana needed a cochlear implant and explained that we could not do that surgery at Mission of Hope. Dr. Patricia went on to say that some very good hearing aids were available that could possibly help Diana, since she had not heard any sounds since birth and had no speech.

Diana's mother said she did not have money for special hearing aids. She stays at home full time taking care of Diana. The father works as a helper in a warehouse and does not earn very much money. Mission of Hope paid for the hearing aids, and **Diana's world began to change!** For the first time in her life, she began to respond to very loud sounds. These sounds frightened her, and she would begin to cry.

Meanwhile, this little girl had really touched the heart of our director, Cindy Thacker, and she began investigating **the possibility of a cochlear implant for Diana**. Cindy first spoke with Dr. Paul Lambert, an ENT surgeon who specializes in cochlear implants and who has also volunteered his time doing free surgeries in the Mission of Hope clinic in Bolivia. Cindy was so encouraged by Dr. Lambert's response and his willingness to do the surgery that she arranged a personal, face to face meeting in Bolivia with Diana's mother and father and Dr. Patricia.

Cindy and Dr. Patricia explained to Diana's parents that this would not be just a quick surgery. They explained that it would mean traveling to the United States and staying there for about 3 months. They explained that it would be a long process of Diana learning to differentiate sounds that she would be hearing for the first time, just like a new baby hearing sounds for the first time. She would need on-going speech therapy once she was back in Bolivia, and possibly follow up trips to the US in the future. Once they had the assurance that Diana's parents were committed to following through with whatever needed to be done for Diana's successful outcome, they began moving forward and making plans. Everyone was **very excited about what lay ahead for Diana!**

## THE GIFT OF HEARING CONTINUED



**Diana at the beach after surgery**

We saw the hand of God move as the Medical University of South Carolina **donated all of their services at no charge**, including the surgery, anesthesia, lab work, and CT scans. The implant company, Med-El, also **donated the cochlear implant at no charge**. **American Airlines donated two round-trip plane tickets at no charge**.

God raised up a wonderful church, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, in Charleston, South Carolina. The people of that church have provided housing for Diana and her mother, meals, clothing, transportation to and from appointments, and translation. They have also provided many exciting activities for Diana and her mother during their free time, seeing the local sights and going to the beach!

Diana's mother says that Diana used to be very passive, never wanting to leave her mother's side. She never played with other children or interacted with people. All of that has **completely changed!** She is **now very interactive!** She now plays with other children and smiles easily.

Diana's parents say that she is a fighter! It took her a while to learn how to walk, but she kept trying, and she was finally able to walk at two years of age. And now, at three years of age, they say that **God has provided the gift of hearing** for Diana. They are so very thankful and appreciative!

## THE \$100,000 MATCHING GIFT CHALLENGE

The **\$100,000 matching gift challenge** continues until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015. **Every dollar** that we receive between now and the end of the year up to \$100,000 **will be doubled** by an anonymous donor. This money will be used to provide free medical care to the poor in Bolivia during the year 2016.

Mission of Hope, Bolivia takes its financial stewardship very seriously. **We are a debt-free mission** and almost 100% of all **donations go directly into our Bolivia program!** We have an all-volunteer staff here in the United States, which allows us to keep overhead costs at a minimum. No one receives a salary. Mission of Hope is now ending its 13<sup>th</sup> year of operating its free medical clinic in Santa Cruz. We are also ending our 3<sup>rd</sup> year of operating a free medical clinic in Sucre. Praise the Lord!

As we close out the year 2015, **we want to thank you, our faithful supporters**, for giving so generously throughout the year to support our work. We thank you for your prayers, for your financial gifts, and for your donated time and services. It is only because of the tremendous support that we have received that we are able to help special patients like Diana.

If you are an Amazon.com shopper, please consider using Smile.Amazon.com and designating Mission of Hope, Bolivia as your charity of choice. They will donate a percentage of your purchase price to Mission of Hope. Please understand that this is not an endorsement of Amazon or their products.

**Together, we are making a difference, both now and for eternity. To God be the Glory! Great things He has done and continues to do through Mission of Hope!**

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