

MISSION OF HOPE, BOLIVIA NEWSLETTER

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Patients waiting in line

Celebrating 20 Years!!!

What started as a vision became a reality when Mission of Hope opened the doors of a **free medical clinic in Santa Cruz, Bolivia** on the morning of **July 4th, 2002!** That first day, we quietly opened with a **full Bolivian staff** without any fanfare or publicity. The first patient arrived mid-morning and everyone was so excited! We saw a total of 3 patients that first day. The second day we saw 8 patients, and on the third day we saw 22 patients. By the end of the second week, we were seeing about **100 patients a day!** Every morning there was a long line of patients waiting outside to be seen. Patients started sleeping on

our doorstep so they could be first in line to get in, and it has been that way ever since!

Mission of Hope, Bolivia was formed by faith for the purpose of **providing free medical care** to the poor in the country of Bolivia and for the purpose of **sharing the hope that we have in Christ Jesus.** That **vision has not changed** during the 20 years of operating the Mission of Hope clinic!

Each morning, all of the patients come in as a group to the waiting room. Before anyone sees the doctor, the patients hear the Gospel message and have a time of prayer. **Thousands of patients have made decisions to follow Christ** in our waiting room! Praise the Lord!!

Patients come from all over Bolivia to our medical clinic in Santa Cruz! The clinic is staffed with local Bolivian doctors who specialize in pediatrics, gynecology, and general medicine. The clinic has its own laboratory and pharmacy. The goal is for each patient to be seen, diagnosed and treated all in the same day. Even a few coins for bus fare to get to the clinic can be a hardship for some of our patients.

Everything is in our clinic is free, including the doctor's exam, the lab work, and the medicines. We also cover services that are not provided in our clinic. If a patient comes in needing a cardiology consult, we send them to a cardiologist and **Mission of Hope covers the cost.** If a patient comes in with appendicitis, we accompany them to a local hospital, and **Mission of Hope pays the bill.** We also provide any medicines and medical supplies the patient needs while in the hospital.

**You are invited to celebrate with us
Saturday, July 9th, from 2-5 pm.**

The **20 year anniversary celebration** will take place at **"Church on the Hill"** in Fishersville, VA (Exit 91 from I-64) on **Saturday, July 9th, from 2 pm-5 pm.** Directions can be found on the church web site. Please **save the date** and make plans to come. **RSVP to cindy@missionofhopebolivia.org** so that we can better plan for refreshments.

Pastor Alex Merguzhis, who has been a **volunteer** in the Santa Cruz clinic since the year it opened, will be **the keynote speaker.** Alex will share the story of **how he first came** to the clinic and some of his **favorite patient stories.** We will meet in the **sanctuary at 2 pm** to hear Alex and then have a time of fellowship downstairs. **We look forward to seeing you there!**



Alex



Silverio

Silverio's Story

Silverio is 17 years old. He was the 7th of 8 children. He grew up in the countryside. His parents are farmers. He had to drop out of school because his parents did not have money to pay for transportation, books and other materials he needed for public school. At the age of 15, he left his home on the farm and traveled 6 hours to the city of Sucre. He moved in with his older brother, who helped him get a job working in construction.

In January of this year, Silverio was on his way to work on his motorbike in rush-hour traffic when he **was hit by a car**. The driver of the car did not stop and Silverio was left lying in

the street **unconscious**. The police were summoned and Silverio was transported to a public hospital by ambulance. A short time later, he regained consciousness and found himself on a stretcher in the hallway of a hospital. It was 9:30 am. He was told that he needed to find someone to buy suture, gauze, antibiotics and other medicines so that he could receive treatment for **his leg, which was badly hurt in the accident**. He called his sister to come and purchase the medicines and supplies. It took an hour and a half for her to get there by bus. So, **all day, he lay on a stretcher in the hallway** with a deep gash that extended from his heel to the back of his knee **without receiving the treatment he needed**. Finally, at 4:30 pm he was taken into a treatment room and a doctor closed the wound with suture, but it was not done well.

A few days after Silverio was discharged from the hospital, **the wound completely opened**. He was in **tremendous pain** and **could not walk**. He consulted with a private doctor, who told him the cost of caring for the wound in Bolivian money would be the equivalent of US \$1,143, an impossible amount for someone like Silverio! His family had no way to help him financially. **He lay in bed for 10 days**, unable to do anything. His sister, Martha was taking care of him. She was very worried about him and mentioned the situation to a friend. The **friend suggested taking him to the Mission of Hope clinic** in Sucre, **where everything is free**.

After Silverio's experience in the public hospital, **he had his doubts** about what Martha's friend was saying. He had a hard time believing that everything would be free. Silverio came to the Mission of Hope clinic walking with great difficulty and using crutches. By now, the **wound was badly infected** and the **tissue was breaking down**. He was seen by one of our doctors who began a series of treatments to clean and close the wound. Silverio was given pain medicine and antibiotics. He was amazed to find out that **everything really was free**. He was also very moved by the kindness and care he received from all the medical staff. While in our clinic, Silverio also **heard the Gospel message** of salvation in his Quechua language and with tears in his eyes, he **asked Jesus to be the Lord of his life**.

Today, Silverio no longer needs crutches. **The wound has completely healed**. He is so very **thankful for the loving care he received** in our clinic. For most of us, it is hard to imagine being in a hospital emergency setting and having to obtain our own supplies before we can receive treatment. It is difficult for us to imagine a hospital emergency department that does not have gauze, suture and medicines for the patients. Yet this is very typical of Bolivian hospitals. Silverio's story is a great illustration of why the **Mission of Hope clinics in Bolivia are so important**. The plight of the poor in Bolivia, with respect to health care, is dire. Patients are often turned away from hospitals because they do not have money to pay. If admitted, they often do not get the proper care simply because they are poor and do not have financial resources.

Thank you for partnering with us to serve the poor in Bolivia. Together, we are making a huge difference in the lives of our patients! We hope to see you at the **20 year anniversary** celebration on **Saturday, July 9th**! Please don't forget to **RSVP**. Thank you, and God bless you!

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Mission of Hope, Bolivia is a
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