



December 17, 2008

Fellow Supporters of Medical Aid for Children of Latin America:

In March of 1985 in a remote village, Las Martas de Farfan, on the Haitian border in the hills of the Dominican Republic, a young Massachusetts Peace Corps volunteer visited our clinic inquiring whether he could help a potential patient he had met in the hills. Francisco Ventura was a 40 year old man, a loner and hill farmer often ostracized by the local village because of his physical appearance. The Peace Corps volunteer thought the man had an ax wound to his mid face with his nose, lip and face all spread apart. He actually had a wide complete cleft lip and palate deformity, so our first team in the Dominican Republic repaired him. He returned the next year to have his palate repaired, and although he remained a bit of a loner, he was accepted and finally loved by his community. They thought he would never be normal. The Peace Corps volunteer returned to that site 15 years later to find Francisco healthy, happy and gregarious. Francisco's photos are on the front sheet.

Malay Valenci was operated that same first year because she suffered from a bilateral cleft lip and palate. She lived outside of the village in a small hill community, her mother took her out of school (it had only 20 children) because she was taunted and made fun of by her school mates. Seventeen years after her repair, she wrote us a letter, thanked us for changing her life and let us know that she had opened a small clothing store in a nearby village, was married and had a baby without problems. Her letter was awesome, moved us to tears and I subsequently lost it – the letter that is. Her early photos are also enclosed.

That same year the Ramirez family showed up together and they all had various congenital hand deformities, i.e. polydactyly (too many fingers), syndactyly (fingers stuck together), and various digital malformations. They eventually had all of their hand deformities operated on and their problems were solved. They are pictured here happy.

For the last 25 years our patients all have had the same needs. They long to look normal, are vulnerable, economically stressed and at times, have heartbreaking lives. The gratitude of our patients, their families and their joy and elation after life altering encounters with our MACLA team is indescribable. They have inspired us to continue our commitment to them.

We have expanded our work in the Dominican Republic and added an ear reconstruction team. Also in the last 9 years we have opened our equally rewarding Bolivia work. With your help we have operated on over 7,000 patients, have treated and consulted tens of thousands more patients for their medical problems. We are ready to keep on rolling.

With our countries and world's economies in the toilet, charitable organizations are suffering. We are too, but are confident that we will make it. Our struggling patients are looking for some help and hope. Please keep our MACLA patients in mind this holiday season. Continued thanks for your generous gifts.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Geraghty, M.D.

PS: Our revised web site www.macla.org hopefully will be ready in a few weeks. Please visit it and let us know what you think.



MACLA 2008

