



September 25, 2008

Dear Medical Aid for Children of Latin America Supporters:

This letter is long overdue in letting you know what a busy and great year it has been for our patients that you have helped through our successful medical teams' work. This last year we operated on more patients, over 310, and saw more consultations, over 1200 patients, the most in the last 24 years. We operated on over a 100 cleft lip and palate patients and several hundred patients with problems such as burns, scar contractures, ear deformities, hand problems and various plastic and reconstructive deformities. We are ready to roll again.

Although there are a myriad of patient stories we had three patients this year that profoundly affected our medical teams. Last February in the Dominican Republic Raul Florenteno, a 7 year old boy, who at the age of 1 had suffered severe facial and hand burns while in his crib and barely survived. At the age of 2 he was left in a poor orphanage by his family. Over the years he was shunned by his fellow orphanage children because of his severe facial, hand and arm deformities. The owners of the orphanage and their donors were most loving to Raul and brought him to our clinic. His left face was so severely burned that his mouth was incontinent and turned down to his chin. His left eye was exposed due to severe scars of his lower eyelid and cheek, his left arm pit was completely stuck to his chest and his left hand was functionless, like a mitten. Our team improved his facial deformities with grafts and flaps and gave him some function to his fingers and arm. He never complained and only had tears rolling from his eyes when we changed his dressings. At the end of the two weeks he was more active and had healed well long-term. He will be back this February for more surgeries. With his display of courage, he has become a favorite at the orphanage.

Maria Teresa Vannuz was also seen in February at the Padre Billini Hospital in Santo Domingo. She is a 37 year old woman who three months before had an argument with a neighbor regarding Maria's children playing in the yard. The evil neighbor lady mixed up molasses, battery acid, Drano and sulfuric acid in a bucket and threw it in her face. When she initially visited our clinic she had a towel over her head and members of our medical team sat her in a quiet corner and asked her history. She pulled back her towel revealing horrific burns of her face, mouth, neck, chest, arm and legs. The acid molasses had completely burned out her left eye, distorted her face so much that her mouth was contracted to her neck, her left breast was almost completely burnt off and she had severe burn scar contractures of her arms and hip with drip burns all the way down to her toes. As she told her story, she began to sob. She soon had us all weeping feeling for her plight- severe physical deformities, three children, no husband and unable to work. The next week a team of eight operated on multiple areas, skin grafting her cheek, her lip, her neck, her arm and part of her leg giving her more motion. There were Dominican women knitting scarves to cover the left side of her face and we had the media report her story on the news. She has since had aid from generous fellow countrymen and the courts are in the process of imprisoning her neighbor. We are anxiously looking forward to seeing her this coming February for more surgery.

In La Paz, Bolivia this July the physicians at the military hospital had a young student, Rynner Delgado Aguirre, waiting for Dr. Towle and his medical team. The young man mangled his hand accidentally with fireworks. There was little left to work with. Our surgical team operated on the young man three times in the first two weeks saving as many digits and his palm so he would have some parts that will function and pinch rather than having a functionless stump. The student was 21 years old and was planning on being a surgeon. At the end of the two weeks Dr. Towle was awarded a horse whip. The patient and his family are profoundly grateful for saving anything possible. He will have more surgery by our teams in the future.

We remain focused and grateful that we can offer free reconstructive plastic surgery to our Bolivian and Dominican patients who would otherwise have little or no care. Our patients travel from all regions of their countries and even sneak in over the border from Haiti just for a little hope. We are returning to Santo Domingo in October for our third annual ear reconstruction mission. By offering medical and surgical care you help these patients with their life struggles and bring them a little happiness. They continue to need our assistance.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Geraghty, M.D.

PS: Our end of the year letter will give you a little history of the last 25 years of MACLA and all the progress that we have made and the aid that you have provided. Thanks.