

# Charity Bolivia Newsletter

## June 2008

It's June already! Many newsworthy and exciting events are happening with Charity Bolivia. With all the political, economic and social turmoil in Bolivia, the incredible work and services provided by Colonia Ecologica are in much higher demand. Thank you to everyone for their continued support.

### Dario's cochlear implant



Kiko and Dario

Dario, now two and a half years old, received his cochlear implant on April 20. The doctors declared it a success!!! The implant is in, but he had to wait a month to calibrate the device. The calibration and adjustment of the apparatus will continue monthly to reach maximum clarity. They have advanced equipment to use with his implant, including cables to help him talk on the phone, hear the television and also to connect to the computer. Dario is undergoing additional physical therapy due to some facial paralysis as a result from the surgery. The doctors say he will have some lasting muscular and nerve damage, but in general he is healing quickly.

Dario continues to become more independent by the day, especially now that he can walk on his own! He explores, gestures and mimics others more, signifying that his language comprehension is improving already. Thanks to all of you who contributed monetarily and spiritually to Dario's surgery. We will continue to update you on his progress.

### University students

Three university students have recently moved to an apartment closer to Colonia, making their commute shorter. It is also more central to the different schools they are attending. Kiko and Carmen (the parents who run Colonia) reported the university students are starting new activities and programs at Colonia and becoming more involved as role models to the ever-increasing number of young children coming through the doors of Colonia.

*Monica* is in her first year studying education and is doing well at the university. *Favio* is excelling in his graphic design classes at a local institute and writes regularly to tell us all the new programs and skills he's learning. *Roger* has decided to switch from the university to the institute Favio attends to continue his education in computer science. He feels the classes at the institute will be more job and career specific, as well as less expensive. Roger struggled for a while finding direction, but has accepted more responsibility at Colonia and has had a positive change in attitude. Unfortunately, at this time, *Susy* has chosen to discontinue her classes and live independently from the others. We hope at some point she will return to our program and finish her education degree.

Inflation in Bolivia has been devastating to many struggling to feed their families. The cost of food and public transportation are being driven higher and higher, and the dollar continues to drop while wages stay the same. This is also impacting our university students. We received a revised monthly budget for Favio, Roger and Monica that reflects current prices. Translation of the excel spreadsheet is in progress to explain exactly where your money goes. Until then, it's attached in Spanish. The total monthly cost for ALL THREE students is \$640.

*Digital Camera?* Favio needs a digital camera to use in his graphic design program. If you or anyone you know is willing to donate a digital camera, new or used, please contact us!

### Goal for 2008: University Housing

As the number of children living at Colonia increases, so does our future university population. The goal is to create a university home as a direct extension of Colonia. To be more cost effective with housing and materials, as well as more convenient for Kiko and Carmen to provide consistent support to all students, this is a great option. In Bolivia there is something called an "anticredito". Rather than purchasing a house or renting an apartment, this is an option where about \$6000 is paid as "rent" for a two year period. Once the two years is up, all of the money is returned to be invested in a different house. Long term, this will save a significant

amount of money and allow students to have a large enough place to all live together. The hope is to raise this \$6000 by December.

## **Fundraising Past and Future**

### Flower Power

Thank you to Mrs. Schukart's and Mr. Bartschi's third grade classes at Rock Creek Elementary who helped sell \$2100 in flowers in only one week!! Fifty percent of sales went directly to the charity. If you missed the opportunity to purchase flower bulbs, this will become an annual fundraiser and a new flower variety will be available this fall.

Garage Sale – June 20-21 was our annual neighborhood garage sale. The weather was great and \$1129 was earned! All proceeds went directly to Charity Bolivia and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. (Check out our friend Kelly's 1/2 marathon training blog for LLS: <http://pages.teamintraining.org/or/nikesfo8/kschafer> ) Kelly is having another garage sale in August – save your unwanted treasures for her!

### Portland Marathon

The Portland Marathon is coming up again on October 5. Teams of volunteers get a choice of tasks with time commitments ranging from 3-6 hours. Last year our volunteers helped direct people through the marathon expo inside the Hilton Hotel. The more volunteers that sign up to help, the more money the marathon will donate to Charity Bolivia. Please let us know if you are interested.



Portland Marathon 2007

There are other opportunities to help Charity Bolivia in the works. Stay tuned!

## **Colonia's Progress**



African cabana with view of main walkway.

It's hard to keep up with all the new developments! New bathrooms and shower facilities were built for the external children not living at Colonia, many of whom do not normally have access to such luxuries. New study cabins are also in progress to allow more space for homework after school. They have hired additional tutors to help in the afternoons as well. Money has been donated to purchase a second minivan to help transport the children to and from school. Land adjacent to the house was purchased and a garden and fruit trees have been planted.

Due to the current teacher strike, the government is instituting an extra three week mandatory winter break. During this time, Colonia will be hosting 90+ children for a four day and three night Olympic competition. Kids have been broken up into five continent groups and will compete in 20 different events. Charity Bolivia will help provide money to feed these children during this exciting opportunity.

This newsletter will end with an anecdote from Kiko sent in one of his emails, translated of course. The passion for their work to better these children and the future of Bolivia is clear in every word they write. Thank you for your continued support and please pass on the newsletter to others who may be interested.

"Today I want to start by telling you an anecdote. The day was Monday and like normal I was taking the children and young people to school. But when I was already at the establishment, I realized that an external kid was missing. (Diego is the oldest of three brothers, 11, 9 and 6, who all receive assistance at Colonia.) Right away I returned to go find out why because he doesn't skip classes and is a boy who is always interested in studying. When I returned to his house, his aunt came out and Diego behind her. He told me that he didn't go to classes because he didn't have the uniform pants, shirt and tie. I asked him, "Where are the ones that you had?" He responded, "I loaned them to my little brother so he could go to school." I went back to Colonia to get him a uniform, but then I realized he didn't have a backpack either. He also had loaned that to his brother. When I arrived at the end of school, he (Diego) came up to me and handed back the backpack with all of the uniform, but I told him that he could keep it all. The happiness was clearly noted on his face.

"Our girls and boys are poor and need an opportunity to study. If these children had an opportunity to study, if the difference between the rich and poor were minimal, if everyone had the opportunity to attend a private school, if the families were not disintegrating, if there were more employers for the parents, if the leaders were not so corrupt . . . Colonia would not have a reason to exist. The children that come to Colonia are thirsty for love and caring and also of hunger . . ."