



# SOLIDARITYBRIDGE

*Healing & Empowering in Latin America*



2013



Annual Report



Expanding Our Bridge of Transformation

# VISION

We **transform lives** by promoting solidarity and justice through experiences of **service and healing**. We believe that saving a life and alleviating suffering can **sustain** families and **strengthen** communities.

# MISSION

In a spirit of **mutuality**, we build a **healthier future** for the people of Bolivia and Paraguay through domestic and international partnerships. We **train and equip** their medical communities, **empowering them** to provide high-complexity surgery and other health care for those living in poverty.



*"I came believing that it would be the Bolivians who moved and inspired me, but it was the missionaries themselves who made the greatest impact. I was so moved by their passion and compassion for the people."*

**Missioner**  
**2013 General Surgery Trip**

## A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*"A new way of seeing."* This is both the gift and challenge of Solidarity Bridge. Seeing our healing work through the lens of solidarity is a treasure to behold, one that leads to personal transformation and challenges us to act evermore as agents in this project. And we have!

In 2013, you helped us reach a record number of patients in our year-round surgical programs. These programs were strengthened by six US mission teams who trained and equipped more Bolivian physicians than in any prior year. In May, we hosted two Bolivian neurosurgeons who accompanied their US counterparts in Chicago and Boston, observing the organization and delivery system of five world class hospitals. And later in the year, our corporate partner of many years, Medtronic, journeyed to our various work sites to see firsthand the impact of their generosity. Soon after, they expanded their support to our open heart and neurosurgery programs.

We are grateful for this marvelous trajectory toward healing and wholeness on both sides of our bridge. *Muchísimas Gracias!*

*Ann Rhomberg*



*"I love Solidarity Bridge because it allows us to share our many blessings. In exchange, our eyes are opened and our hearts are filled."*

**Kurt Florian**  
**Chairman, Board of Directors**

# STANDING IN SOLIDARITY

In 1999, Solidarity Bridge began as a medical mission organization providing surgery for impoverished Bolivian patients. It soon became clear that much more was needed to make a lasting difference including training, equipment and a year-round local presence. Puente de Solidaridad (PuenteSol) was formed in 2005 and facilitates efforts full-time from bases in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

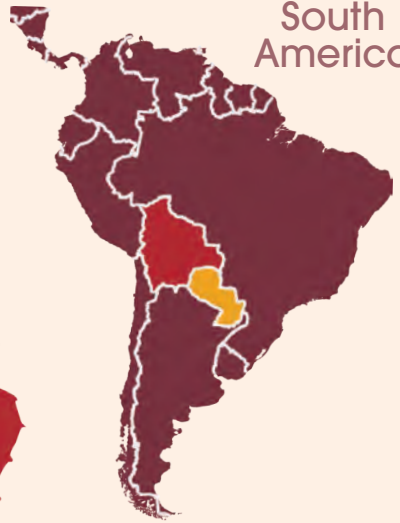
Today, Solidarity Bridge provides advanced surgical training, equipment and supplies to support permanent programs in General Surgery, Gynecologic Surgery, Heart Surgery and Neurosurgery. Approximately six mission trips each year enhance programs by progressively upgrading local skills, stimulating new strategies and partnerships and directly serving the most critical patients.

## Where We Served in 2013

**Bolivia**



**South America**



**Paraguay**

Asunción





# 2013 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Surgeries: 463  
Patients: 1,687  
Medical Supplies Delivered: \$4,305,153  
Medical Time Donated: \$433,380  
Number of Missioners: 65

General Surgery Program: 158 Surgeries

Gynecologic Surgery Program: 25 Surgeries

Heart Surgery Program: 13 Open Heart Surgeries

219 Pacemaker Implants

Neurosurgery Program: 48 Surgeries

Multi-Specialty Mission Trip: 1,243 Patients Served

Revenue: \$5,581,106 (\$4,727,024 in-kind, \$854,082 cash)



In-Kind: 85%

Individuals: 10%

Organizations/Corporations: 5%

Fair Trade: <1%

Expenses: \$5,533,727 (\$4,720,024 in-kind, \$813,703 cash)



Direct Program: 94%

Fundraising: 4%

Administrative: 2%

Net Assets: \$674,638 (\$362,000 in-kind, \$312,638 cash)

# GENERAL SURGERY PROGRAM

**Hospital Locations:** Aiquile, Cliza, Cochabamba, Coroico, Tiquipaya  
**2013 Highlights:** 158 surgeries, 33 gastroenterological procedures  
**Mission Trip:** Feb 22-Mar 3 to Cochabamba, Tiquipaya, Aiquile



## Fighting Chagas with Doctors Without Borders

The small village of Aiquile, five hours from Cochabamba via cobblestone road, is the Bolivian epicenter of Chagas, a parasitic disease that slowly gains strength and ultimately ravages hearts and other organs. Chagas is a major health challenge in Latin America. In Aiquile, three out of four people are infected with it.

Since 2011, Solidarity Bridge has partnered with Doctors Without Borders (MSF) to confront Chagas here. MSF provides early detection and treatment; we provide pacemakers and megacolon surgery for patients with advanced disease. Pictured above is Dr. John Gregory of the Billings Clinic in Montana who returned to Aiquile in 2013 to work with local partner, Dr. Luis López.

**VIDEO:** To learn more about Chagas and our work in Aiquile, see **Solidarity Beyond Borders**, at [solidaritybridge.org](http://solidaritybridge.org)



*“Mission trips are about empowerment. We’re training Bolivian medical teams to carry on this work after we leave. When we train one person we’re healing many. That feels good.”*

**Gay Garrett, MD**  
**General Surgeon, Washington, DC**

## A Year of Expanded Partnerships and Surgical Complexity

Our 2013 mission trip was crucial to program growth. A new local partner received training in laparoscopic gall bladder and hernia surgery. Existing partners were revisited and continued to upgrade their capacities to manage highly complex megacolon and oncological surgery patients. More than 20 Bolivian doctors, nurses, and residents observed and participated in the hands-on training.



During each of Dr. Malcolm Bilimoria's five mission trips, he has trained select Bolivian surgeons to take on pancreatic and other oncology cases that until recently were considered inoperable in Bolivia. In the US, Dr. Bilimoria directs the Center for Pancreatic and Hepatobiliary Diseases at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights, IL.

## TEOFILIA'S STORY

Teofilia suffered for years with back, neck and stomach pain. Laparoscopic gall bladder surgery changed her life. When Teofilia woke and realized her pain was gone, she cried with joy. After just one night in the hospital, she was ready to go home, saying over and over, "Gracias! Gracias! Gracias!"

Teofilia's team included Dr. Gay Garrett, general surgeon; Dr. Gabe Pitta, anesthesiologist and Dr. Luis Herrera, our newest general surgery program partner who provided Teofilia's follow-up care. In 2013, Dr. Herrera implemented techniques honed alongside Dr. Garrett to perform 19 gall bladder and hernia surgeries.



# HEART SURGERY PROGRAM

## Pacemaker

### Program Locations:

**Bolivia:** Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Tarija, Aiquile

**Paraguay:** Asunción

**2013 Implants:** 219

### Advanced Cardiac Implant Mission Trip:

April 28 – May 4 to Cochabamba and Santa Cruz

Solidarity Bridge's Pacemaker Program equips Bolivian partners to provide implants and long-term follow up care, primarily for patients with Chagas disease. The Open Heart Program

## Defibrillator Training Addresses Growing Need

Solidarity Bridge held its first training mission on defibrillators (ICDs) and biventricular defibrillators (CRT-Ds). These implants are in high demand for advanced Chagas patients, but procedures have been limited due to the high cost of implants and scarcity of surgeons able to perform the specialty surgeries.



*“The high incidence of Chagas disease called me to Bolivia. The ability to work side by side with Bolivian physicians to grow the heart program is very gratifying.”*

### Sameh Khouzam, MD, FACC

Dr. Khouzam is an electrophysiologist at Dayton Heart Center, Ohio. He worked with seven Bolivian surgeons to perform 11 cardiac implants and presented two conferences to 34 physicians.

## Generosity in Action: Medtronic

Medtronic's generous in-kind and financial donations have enabled us to implant more than 1,500 pacemakers since 2002. In 2013, Medtronic expanded its support to our open heart and neurosurgery programs.

Heather Hudnut Page and Prasanga Hiniduma-Lokuge, Medtronic envoys, visited Bolivia in July to see Medtronic's donations at work. In Aiquile, they met Roberto, pacemaker recipient and father of six, and Dr. Roger Artega of Doctors Without Borders, a Solidarity Bridge partner since 2011.





connects children with congenital heart defects and adults affected by rheumatic heart disease and other conditions with Bolivia's best cardiac surgeons.

## Open Heart

**Program Locations:** Cochabamba, Santa Cruz

**2013 Highlights:** 13 open heart surgeries



Solidarity Bridge is deeply grateful to Isaac and Renee Goff, who provide funding for most of our pediatric open heart surgeries through the Goff Gift Fund.

## ALEXANDER'S STORY

Alexander's nighttime attacks of coughing and shortness of breath terrified his mother. Liliana's income selling pastries could never pay for the surgery he needed to correct the congenital heart defect that was threatening his life. With PuenteSol's help and funding from the Goff Gift Fund, Alexander received his surgery in Cochabamba in October.

## YOLA'S STORY

For months, Yola, 32, suffered from fever, aches and dizziness so debilitating she couldn't get out of bed. In November, Bolivian partner Dr. Carlos Brockmann, performed her mitral valve replacement in Cochabamba. The Hermitage Charitable Trust generously funded the care she couldn't afford.



# NEUROSURGERY PROGRAM

**Program Locations:** Cochabamba,  
Santa Cruz

**2013 Procedures:** 48 neurosurgeries

**Mission Trips:** Jan 22 – Feb 2; Sept 21– 29  
to Cochabamba and Santa Cruz



As Medical Director of our Neurosurgery Program, Dr. Richard Moser has been an instrumental leader since the program's inception. He loyally completed his 11th and 12th mission trips in 2013.



*"When we provide devices hospitals could not possibly afford and teach surgeons to use them, we've created a self-sustaining situation in which people are cared for whether we are present or not."*

**Richard Moser, MD**  
**Neurosurgeon, University of Massachusetts**

## SOLIDARITY VISIT

Visiting physicians, Dr. Karin Aponte and Dr. Juan Antonio Moreno with Executive Director, Ann Rhomberg.



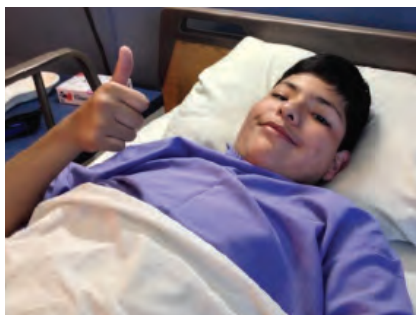
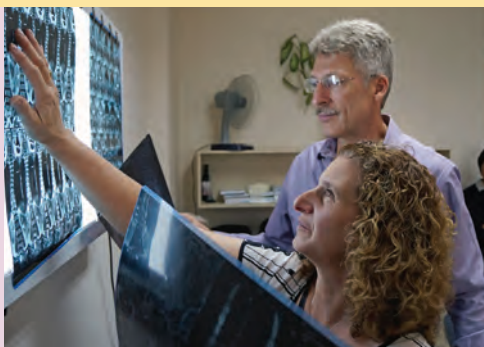
In the Spring of 2013, Bolivian neurosurgeons, Dr. Karin Aponte and Dr. Juan Antonio Moreno, made a five-week "Solidarity Visit" to the US. They observed world class neurosurgeons at Lurie Children's Hospital, Central Dupage Hospital, Stroger Cook County Hospital and Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago and the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, Boston, and attended the 2013 American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) conference in New Orleans. Thank you, Drs. Art DiPatri, Roberta Glick, and Richard Moser, for your leadership throughout their stay.

## New Techniques and Tools Advance Neurosurgery

In January 2013, our US and Bolivian teams performed transnasal endoscopic pituitary tumor surgeries in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. Both mission trips included training in minimally invasive spinal surgery techniques and presentations on adult and pediatric neurosurgery. Solidarity Bridge also initiated conversations to establish a Bolivian Institute for the Development of Neurosurgery, a collaborative effort that continues in 2014.

See how this program is helping patients. Watch our short video, Neurosurgery in Solidarity, at [www.solidaritybridge.org](http://www.solidaritybridge.org).

Dr. Sherry Taylor and returning missionary Dr. John Weaver plan one of September's eight spine surgeries. Dr. Weaver performed Bolivia's first minimally invasive spine surgery in 2012.



## PABLO'S STORY

Pablo, 14, has a severe form of Spina Bifida which has limited his mobility since birth. His family is deeply thankful for the restorative spine surgery that returned feeling to his feet enabling him to walk again.





# GYNECOLOGIC SURGERY PROGRAM

**Hospital Locations:** Tiquipaya, Coroico

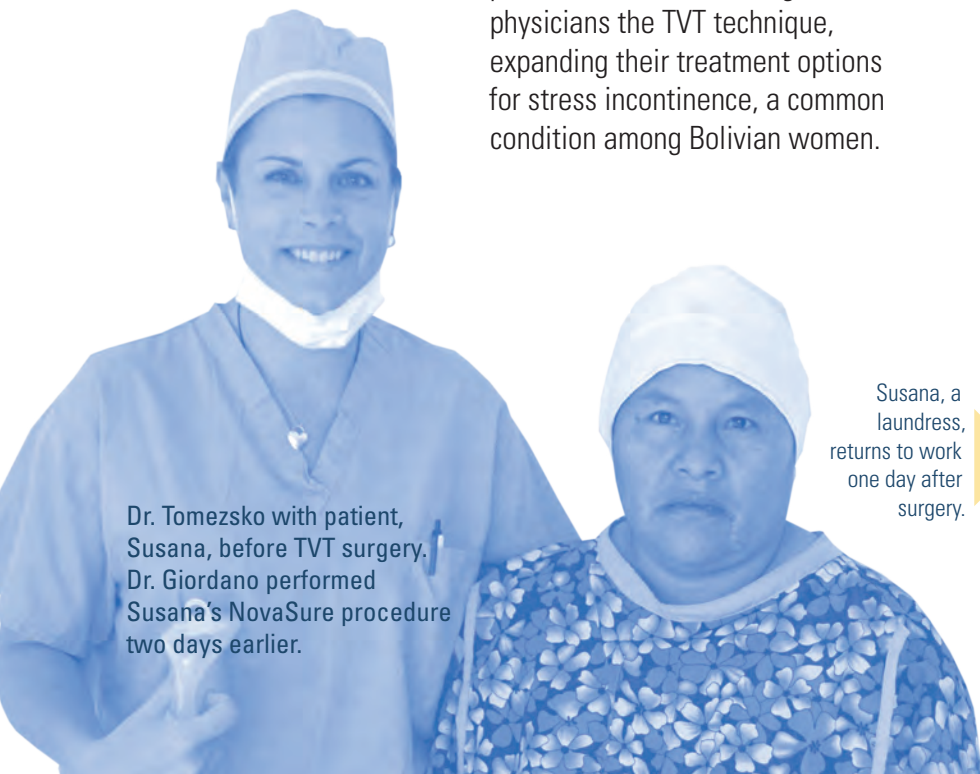
**2013 Procedures:** 25 surgeries

**Mission Trip:** June 19-26 to Tiquipaya



Thank you to Hologic for the permanent loan of NovaSure equipment valued at \$20,000 and the donation of disposable procedure kits.

Dr. Janet Tomezsko, urogynecologist, NorthShore University Health System, Evanston, IL, has taught and performed thousands of bladder-sling surgeries in her 16 years of practice. In 2013, she taught Bolivian physicians the TVT technique, expanding their treatment options for stress incontinence, a common condition among Bolivian women.



Dr. Tomezsko with patient, Susana, before TVT surgery. Dr. Giordano performed Susana's NovaSure procedure two days earlier.

Susana, a laundress, returns to work one day after surgery.



**In 2013, Solidarity Bridge** introduced a new technique to treat a debilitating condition that plagues many Bolivian women. The 90-second NovaSure endometrial ablation procedure stops heavy bleeding, often eliminating the need for a hysterectomy. Patients can return to their activities the next day, making treatment possible for women unable to take time off from work or be away from their families while recovering.



Carrie Giordano, MD with Judy Biggus, RN

Solidarity Bridge's Gynecology Program is championed by Dr. Carrie Giordano, Chair, OB-GYN Department at Resurrection Medical Center, Chicago. She offers patients and the Bolivian medical community expertise in minimally invasive laparoscopic surgery and other techniques. Dr. Giordano has been on five mission trips since 2009.



Dr. Giordano and Dr. Sandro Zambrana begin Bolivia's first-ever NovaSure procedure.

# MULTI-SPECIALTY MISSION TRIP

**Location:** Coroico

**Mission Trip:** Sept 25 – Oct 6

**Patients Served:** 1,243



Patients arrived by foot and bus from villages as far as twelve hours away, many remaining for the week so their families could receive all the care they needed.



*"The solidarity you feel is amazing. It was an experience of a lifetime and I hope to do it again."*

**Peggy Jordan, RN**



## **A Busy Week of Surgery**

Drs. Magued Khouzam, Carrie Giordano, Bob LaPata, Ricardo Palop and Dan Yousif worked closely with the Yungas Hospital surgical staff all week.



**On this fifth mission trip to Coroico** more than 1,200 patients were treated by specialists in pediatrics, internal medicine, dermatology, cardiology and gynecology. Missioners and Bolivian medical staff worked together in clinics and two surgery suites.

When mudslides closed the new highway, the Solidarity Bridge team had to travel the "old road," gaining a deep appreciation for the challenging conditions Bolivians face each day.



Year after year, Fr. Bob Oldershaw makes fast friends while on mission.

## EDMUNDO'S STORY



L-R: With Edmundo, PA Missy Koopmann, Dr. Jay Herrmann, Dr. Ted Conrad, and Anna La Tour, interpreter.

Edmundo, 69, is a farmer and father of seven. The cancerous tumor on his cheek had gone untreated for four years, even obstructing his vision, until Dr. Jay Herrmann and team successfully removed it. The dermatology team from Wheaton, IL saw 639 patients for everything from fungal infections to melanomas.



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Oceanique  
One Off Hospitality Group  
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Piron Belgian Chocolatier  
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Matt Rogatz  
Brian Sakowski  
Margaret & Bud Sents  
Angela Zotos & Dennis Sobieski  
Spare Time Group  
Teleflex Inc.  
Janet Tomezsko, MD  
Twin Anchors Restaurant  
Christina & Enrique Via-Reque, MD  
West Central Anesthesiologists Group  
Wilmette Chop House  
Wines for Humanity  
Dan Yousif, MD

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## Multi-Specialty Mission Team – Coroico 2013



## Our Fair Trade Partners



**Dharma Trading Company** sells clothing made by artisans in Bolivian fair trade cooperatives and takes no profit from sales. The Goff family, Dharma Trading owners, generously supports our pediatric heart surgery efforts.

**Greenola Style**, founded by Jennifer Moran, a former Solidarity Bridge intern, is a fair trade fashion retailer/wholesaler working with Bolivian women artisans. **PuenteSol** manages exports from Bolivian cooperatives to both Dharma Trading Company and Greenola.

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Sarah Hinojosa - Assistant Director\*  
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# SOLIDARITY BRIDGE

*Healing & Empowering in Latin America*

1577 Florence Ave.  
Evanston, IL 60201

Want to learn more?

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