

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS!
A TAPESTRY OF HEALING



VISION

We seek a just, compassionate, and interdependent world, where the health needs of those most vulnerable are prioritized and medical professionals have the necessary resources to serve their communities.

MISSION

In a spirit of solidarity, we partner with communities in Bolivia and Paraguay to increase access to safe, affordable surgery and other essential health care.



In mutuality with our colleagues and patients in Bolivia, we come to this work where we are called to both heal and be healed.

A Note from Our Leader

In October 1999, a small group of US missionaries traveled to Bolivia, spinning the first of many threads that would create Solidarity Bridge's tapestry of healing. Their aim was to build bonds of solidarity through hands-on medical care while gaining perspective on the inequities within the human family.

Since then, 400+ missionaries have journeyed on nearly 100 mission trips and four year-round programs have been developed. Hundreds of supporters have volunteered in our office, and thousands more have donated a wide array of resources. **Each of you has offered a unique thread to this beautiful tapestry of healing.**

Over the years, partnerships with our Bolivian peers have come to define our mission. Working together—as one with our colleagues at Puente de Solidaridad—our work has been strengthened and brought into new focus. Our new mission and vision statements reflect this priority for working in a spirit of mutuality and deepened solidarity.

Celebrating our 20th anniversary, I am grateful for Solidarity Bridge's role in providing more than 6,300 surgeries and over \$42 million in medical equipment and supply donations. These numbers come to life through the images and stories of patients, partners, volunteers, and donors pictured in this report. **I hope you'll join me in giving thanks for your part in our tapestry of healing.** I am most grateful for mine!

Sincerely,

Ann Rhomberg
Executive Director

A tapestry is woven by intersecting the warp and the weft. The warp yarns are held stationary on a loom while the weft is drawn through, woven under and over. For 20 years, the principles of Catholic social justice teaching have been the constant warp threads in our tapestry of healing. **Woven together, the principles of solidarity, the option for the poor and vulnerable, and the promotion of the common good have guided our work**—giving it beauty, strength and vibrancy. As we have grown and been transformed by the lived experiences of these teachings, our organization has evolved and our tapestry has become a more vibrant and intricate design.



When we forge deep connections with others, their sufferings and joys become part of our own concern and spur us to transformative action.

In a Spirit of Solidarity

The tradition of Catholic social justice teaches that the goods of the Earth are God's common provision for all. As one human family, we are meant to share equitably in these gifts. **But healthcare realities today are marked by immense disparities.** Worldwide, five billion people lack access to safe, affordable surgical care, and each year, 81 million people face catastrophic debt seeking these services. **Solidarity Bridge began as a concrete expression of Gospel love in the midst of this reality**—prioritizing the needs of vulnerable patients and families.

The principle of solidarity calls us to a deeper awareness that we are all interrelated and profoundly connected. Born out of this awareness, Solidarity Bridge started as a mission serving individual patients on short-term trips to Bolivia. But, as theologian Elizabeth Johnson suggests, **when we forge deep connections with others, their sufferings and joys become part of our own personal concern and spur us to transformative action in the world.** We were drawn into deeper solidarity through our encounters with both patients and doctors in Bolivia—those who suffer and those who dedicate themselves to respond to that suffering. As we forged those connections, our emphasis on direct care for patients grew into a focus on long-term capacity building in partnership with the Bolivian medical community.

We believe that we are called to co-create this tapestry with our God, the Divine Weaver. Today, this tapestry remains unfinished. There is more work to be done, on both sides of our bridge, to build communities of solidarity and mutuality, prioritize the health needs of the most vulnerable, and ensure a just distribution of medical training and equipment.

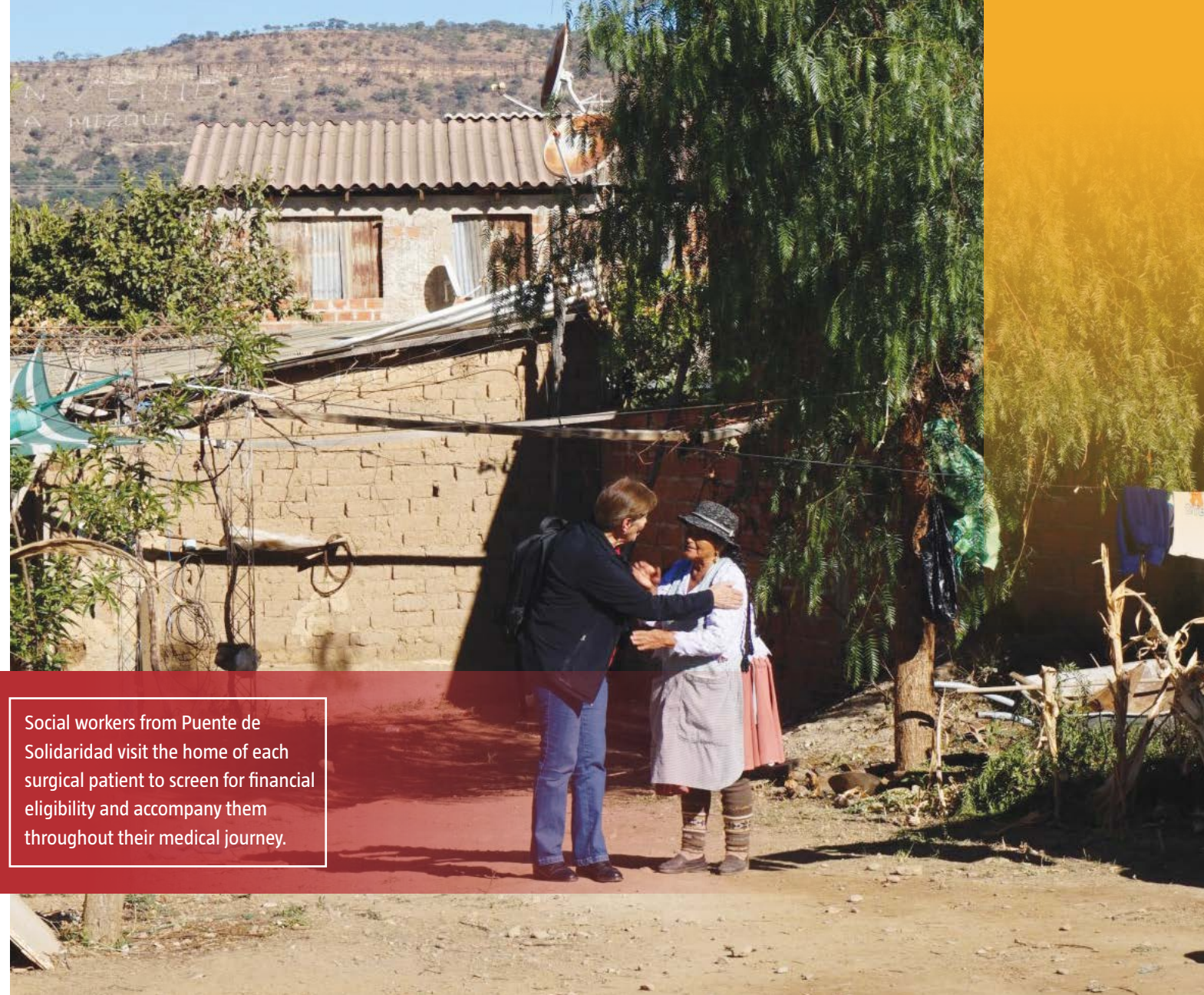
Advancing Surgical Care

In Response to the Bolivian Reality

Solidarity Bridge began 20 years ago with a simple desire to respond to the suffering we saw among our brothers and sisters in Bolivia. Our initial mission trips provided basic health care across various specialties. But **our focus shifted toward surgery as we listened to our Bolivian counterpart organization, Puente de Solidaridad, and their local physician affiliates.**

Our world is marked by tremendous inequities in health care. **Surgery requires significant investments in and access to training and resources on the part of a health system—and for patients, the expense can be insurmountable.** These are some of the reasons our Bolivian partners identified surgery as the primary area in which Solidarity Bridge could support their work. Today we operate four year-round, Bolivian-led surgical programs in general surgery, gynecologic surgery, neurosurgery, and heart surgery. Through focused training, key equipment donations, and strategic partnerships, we are helping the most vulnerable patients access safe and timely surgical care.

Bolivian surgeon, Dr. Jhonny Camacho (right), reviews supplies donated by Solidarity Bridge for use on his next mobile surgery campaign. Through his leadership, our training in minimally invasive surgical techniques is expanding to many more hospitals.



Social workers from Puente de Solidaridad visit the home of each surgical patient to screen for financial eligibility and accompany them throughout their medical journey.

Puente de Solidaridad was founded in 2005 in Cochabamba to manage our programs and day-to-day operations in Bolivia. Since then, it has grown into a robust sister organization providing vision and leadership for our shared work, and compassionate medical assistance to Bolivians who can least access care. Today our Bolivian partners perform the majority of our surgeries, using supplies, equipment, and financial resources provided by Solidarity Bridge donors.

Though we are two distinct organizations, neither Solidarity Bridge nor Puente de Solidaridad could succeed without the other. Together, **we share the desire to care for the most vulnerable and ensure that our efforts have a long-term, sustainable impact on the local health system in Bolivia.**

20 Years of Healing

For 20 years, countless missionaries, donors, volunteers, and partners across the US and Bolivia have added their threads to weave an intricate **tapestry of healing**—broad and strong enough to provide healing care, strengthen local capacity, and deepen our bonds of solidarity. **Thank you for your contributions to this work!**



Patients Served

2018: **1,163** | Since 1999: **65,066**



Surgeries

2018: **357** | Since 1999: **6,345**



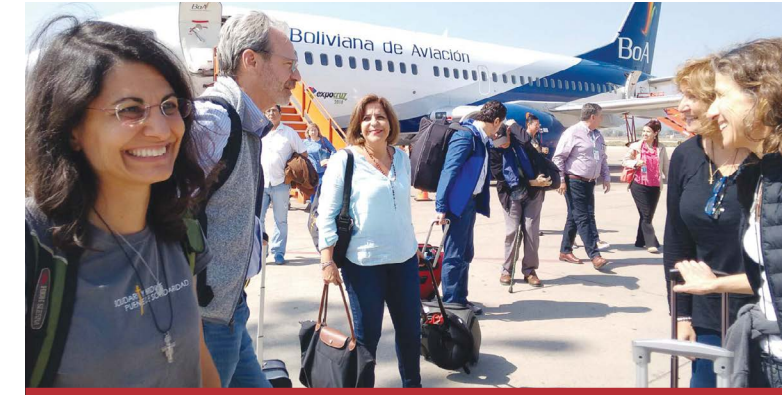
Medical Time Donated

2018: **\$837,365** | Since 1999: **\$13,339,457**



US Missioners

2018: **57** | Since 1999: **444**



Mission Trips

2018: **7** | Since 1999: **96**



Medical Supplies Donated

2018: **\$1,943,820** | Since 1999: **\$41,938,282**

Heart Surgery

Lifesaving Care in a High-Demand Specialty

For infants through the aged, the Solidarity Bridge Heart Surgery Program is dedicated to filling two high-demand and high-cost health needs: **pacemaker implants** and **pediatric heart surgeries**.

The need for pacemakers is especially high among Bolivia's rural and predominantly indigenous communities, who suffer most from the devastating effects of Chagas disease. Chagas—a critically neglected tropical disease—is a parasitic infection that can lead to heart failure among otherwise healthy women and men. There is also a pressing need to support access to pediatric heart surgeries in Bolivia. These highly skilled surgeries are only performed in a small number of hospitals throughout the country and their high cost makes them inaccessible to most patients.

Our Bolivian partner cardiologists perform virtually all of the surgeries offered through this program. Their greatest challenge is a lack of implantable cardiac devices and other specialized equipment. We are grateful for the generous support of our many in-kind donors, especially Medtronic and Boston Scientific, who respond to this challenge. These individuals and corporations help get donated devices and equipment to our Bolivian partners—a crucial way we can help improve access to surgical care.

Our pediatric heart surgery program is made possible in large part thanks to a grant from the Goff Gift Fund.

Since 1999, the Solidarity Bridge Heart Surgery Program has made possible more than 2,300 pacemaker implants and more than 250 heart surgeries.



"I'm a single mother and I work hard to raise my children. My older kids are already independent, but my youngest daughters still need me completely. Thank you for helping me to get better, keep working, and be the mom they need."

*Benita, mother of six, provides for her family through her work as a house cleaner and a street vendor. She tried to ignore her increasing fatigue, chest pain, and dizziness, until the day she passed out and woke up in the hospital. There she received the news that her heart was dangerously weakened by Chagas disease. **Benita received an emergency pacemaker implant, enabling her to return to work and her two youngest children to finish school.***

General Surgery

Expanding Outreach and Training for Increasingly Complex Care

While we have provided general surgeries since our inaugural mission, 2008 marked our first dedicated trip in this specialty and launched **a decade of training in laparoscopic surgery.**

The opportunity was clear—to expand surgical access for low-income Bolivians by progressively building laparoscopic capacities among our peers in public hospitals. This minimally invasive technique is the standard of care in the US but despite its benefits, it is less available to our brothers and sisters in Bolivia. Laparoscopic surgery offers **shorter recovery times, shorter hospital stays, and fewer opportunities for complication.** This not only benefits patients, but also increases the number of procedures that a hospital can offer, thereby greatly expanding surgical access, especially for the most vulnerable patients.

In 2011, our year-round General Surgery Program began, focused on strategic provision of laparoscopic training, equipment, and supplies. In 2014, we saw the impact of these efforts when our Bolivian partners expanded our mission model and began their own series of mobile surgery campaigns. Traveling to smaller, often remote hospitals, they now bring training and equipment to their peers and serve patients who are unable to travel to central urban areas. **Today the majority of our program surgeries happen through these mobile surgery campaigns, led by Bolivian surgeons and equipped by the donors of Solidarity Bridge.**

Mobile surgery campaigns help us reach patients across the country.



In 2011, we completed our 500th mentored general surgery. Today, our Bolivian partners have provided more than 700 additional surgeries in this program.



“Mobile surgery campaigns have been an important initiative. Just as Solidarity Bridge sends doctors to Bolivia, we go out from Cochabamba to the provinces, which benefits the people with greatest need. In places like Chapare and Cliza, we are serving patients with very few resources who otherwise would not have access to this type of surgery.”

*—Dr. Jaime Vallejos,
Bolivian partner surgeon*

Building on our remarkable progress with minimally invasive procedures, our US mission teams are now shifting their focus to respond to increasingly complex needs. In March 2018, we were invited to partner with the Oncological Institute of Eastern Bolivia for our first mission trip dedicated to surgical cancer treatments.

Neurosurgery Program

Training the next generation of neurosurgeons

Dedicated Bolivian neurosurgeons provide high quality care for their patients despite significant obstacles to advanced training and specialized equipment in this **high-tech and highly complex specialty**. We were invited to enter into this reality, and in 2006 we partnered with local doctors to launch our year-round Neurosurgery Program.

Solidarity Bridge collaborates with international neurosurgical faculty to provide formal professional development courses. Neurosurgeons from throughout the region have received both theoretical and hands-on, simulated training, and have engaged in mentored surgeries and pre- and post-surgical analysis. Over the past 12 years, **we have advanced training in pediatric neurosurgery and successfully introduced minimally invasive surgical techniques for tumor resection and spinal surgery**, now the standard of care among our partners.

Specialized equipment is one of the greatest barriers to equitable access to neurosurgery. We are grateful to our industry partners—especially Stryker, Globus, and Medtronic—who have provided more than \$4 million in instruments, equipment, and supplies. Through key equipment donations, we have procured the first high-speed drills and surgical microscopes in Santa Cruz, Cochabamba, and La Paz, ensuring our partners can provide more advanced care to their patients. Through our partnership model in training and equipping, US missionaries have developed long-term professional ties and personal friendships with their counterparts in these cities.



Neurosurgery Boot Camp is a required course for residents in the US. Through our program, 79 neurosurgeons from South America have also benefited from this essential training.

Our commitment to this complex specialty continues.

In 2018, our mission team attended the Latin American Neurosurgical Congress, offering hands-on training through our Boot Camp course for doctors throughout the Southern Cone region. We also initiated a new partnership in Paraguay and plan to expand our program to the Bolivian city of Sucre.

PROGRAM HISTORY

- 22** Total mission trips
- 138** Patients served on mission
- 209** Patients served by program partners
- 15** Hospitals served
- 17** Training courses provided

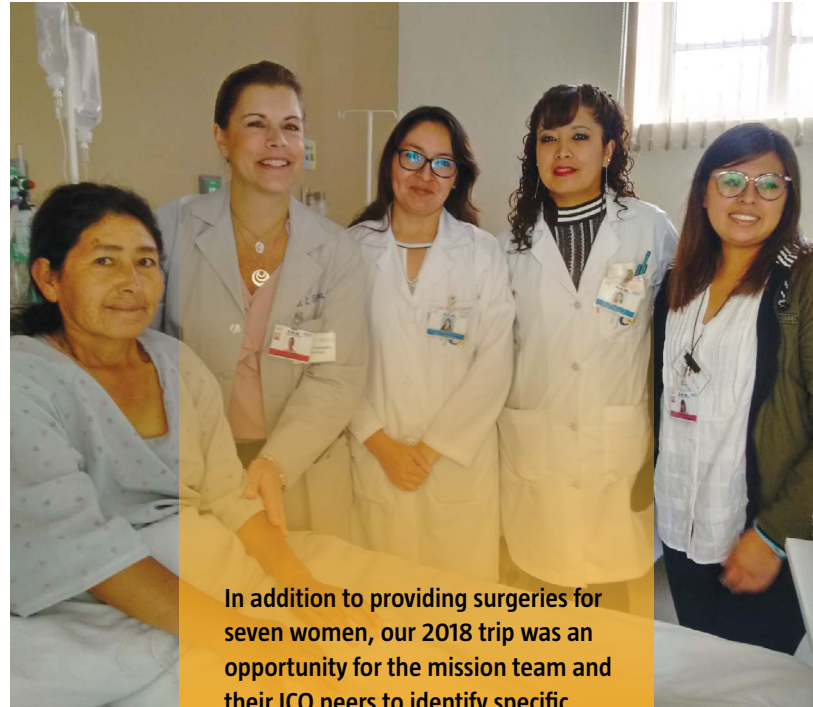
Gynecologic Surgery

Invited into Vibrant Partnership

Since Solidarity Bridge's second mission trip in 2000, gynecologic care has been an important part of our work. **Pregnancy and childbirth, particularly multiple births, can take a toll on women's health and wellbeing** – impacting their own lives and the lives of their families and communities. Through our Gynecologic Surgery Program, **we prioritize the needs of post-reproductive age women**, providing procedures including hysterectomies, myomectomies, vaginal slings, and various pelvic floor repairs.

In 2018, we were invited into a vibrant new partnership at the Instituto Chuquisaqueño de Oncología (ICO) in Sucre. With help from the state government, the ICO was built by a small group of committed Bolivian doctors responding to an innovative vision for their community's health, and the overwhelming need of patients. Room by room, from one end of a formerly abandoned building to the other, they rebuilt, repaired, and refinished the space, doing much of the labor on their own. In the week before our mission team arrived in October, this newly inaugurated hospital screened 325 women who had responded to the public outreach campaign for patients in need of gynecologic surgery.

One-third of the surgeries performed in this program have addressed pelvic floor disorders. These conditions are best managed by experienced specialists. Through mentored surgeries, we are training Bolivia's future leaders in the field.



In addition to providing surgeries for seven women, our 2018 trip was an opportunity for the mission team and their ICO peers to identify specific training objectives for 2019, focusing on pelvic organ suspension and vaginal hysterectomy procedures.

Multi-Specialty Mission Trips

Each year since our founding in 1999, Solidarity Bridge has organized a large multi-specialty mission team to **provide clinical and surgical care to Bolivian patients while offering supply donations and education to the local medical community.** Through the guidance of our local partners in Bolivia, our primary focus eventually shifted to surgery. However, we continue to send one multi-specialty clinical team annually that partners with hospitals and clinics serving communities at great distances from the urban medical centers.

In 2018, our team of 18 missionaries journeyed to the small, vibrant town of Mizque, 100 miles southeast of Cochabamba. Most of the people who live in Mizque province (pop. 41,000) are indigenous citizens of Quechua descent who live out their rich heritage in this small, rural community. They must travel for many hours to access surgical care and other medical specialty services.



We have been touched by the beauty and strength of the people we have met in Bolivia. In them, we see the power of hope and human dignity. While we go to Bolivia to heal and serve those in need, we have found that we are healed and served in return.

Over 15,000 patients, and hundreds of missionaries and health partners, have shared experiences of healing and solidarity through our multi-specialty trips.

Bridging the Resource Divide

Surgery is an indivisible, indispensable part of healthcare, and a basic human right, yet global health care systems have a long way to go to make this a reality. In Bolivia, access to surgery is often limited by the inaccessibility of necessary supplies and equipment, or by the cost of these supplies. Recognizing this, Solidarity Bridge focuses on the distribution of high-value surgical equipment to support the ongoing work of our Bolivian colleagues.

From our first mission trip in 1999, which delivered 44 lifesaving pacemaker devices, to our 2018 container shipment filled with nine tons of medical supplies, we seek to ensure our partners have the necessary resources to provide their patients with access to safe, timely, and affordable surgery. A highlight of this work in 2018 was the donation of a new laparoscopic tower to Hospital Viedma, through a partnership between Rotary International, Solidarity Bridge and Puente de Solidaridad. This busy public hospital now can offer minimally invasive surgery to hundreds more patients annually. We are grateful to our individual and corporate in-kind donors who make these donations possible. **Our equipping efforts are one way of transforming solidarity into specific action,** and bridging the resource gap between nations.

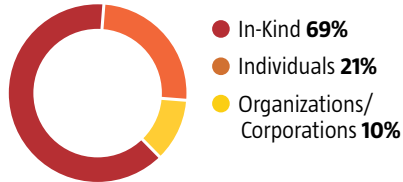
Puente de Solidaridad manages an in-country supply warehouse that equips all four of our year-round surgery programs. Surplus materials are donated in bulk to partner hospitals, and specialty items are provided for patients who cannot otherwise acquire what they need for surgery. **In 2018, we made 28 bulk donations to hospital partners** and provided supplies to 146 additional patients.



Board Member, Fr. Bob Oldershaw, leads staff and volunteers in blessing the supplies for our container shipment, April 2018.

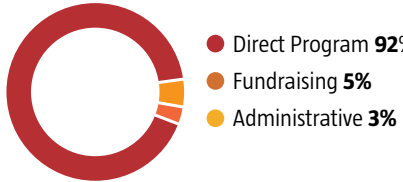
Revenue: \$3,259,426

\$2,233,470 In-Kind
\$1,025,957 Cash



Expenses: \$3,241,864

\$ 2,235,417 In-Kind
\$ 1,006,447 Cash



Net Assets: \$359,869

\$49,582 In-Kind
\$310,288 Cash

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Dr. Jay Herrmann, Leadership Circle donor, missionary, and winner of the 2019 Solidarity Award

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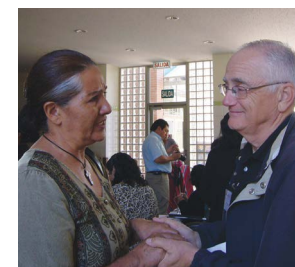
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Daniel, general surgery patient, 2016

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Gynecologic Surgery patient, Fany, greets her mission surgeon, Dr. Bob LaPata, 2008

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Multi-specialty mission team in Cochabamba, 2002

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Commissioning Mass at St. Nicholas, 2005

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Seventeen-year-old Henry (right) with his family before receiving heart surgery, 2018

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Dr. Robert Klobucnik with a patient in Cochabamba, 2005

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For more than 16 years, we have facilitated a partnership between Puente de Solidaridad and Dharma Trading Co. which aims to confront the reality that poverty is inextricably linked to poor health. Dharma Trading sells textiles produced by artisans in Bolivia, honoring their cultural heritage, paying living wages, and supporting locally sourced, low-impact, or recycled materials. The company takes no profit from the sales. The Goff family, Dharma Trading owners, generously support our pediatric heart surgery efforts.

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