

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019



# en•vi•sion



/ən'viZHən/  
verb

**imagine as a future possibility;  
visualize.**

“envision a world where the health  
needs of those most vulnerable  
are prioritized”

*In the US, the average pacemaker recipient is 75 years old. In Bolivia, because of Chagas disease, the average age of our patients is just 57. Jesusa (pictured center) received a life-saving pacemaker surgery at age 57.*



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**Solidarity** calls us to a deeper awareness that we are all interrelated and profoundly connected. As 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.†

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## Our 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.

## Our 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.

† Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Co., 1998), 175.

## A Note from our Board Chair



In 2019, the Solidarity Bridge Board of Directors unveiled an update to our vision and mission statements. The words you see here represent our understanding of God’s vision for the world. They guide our decision-making and daily actions as we live out our vocation to work in solidarity to bring healing and justice to all of God’s people.

American poet Lucille Clifton once said, “we cannot create what we can’t imagine.” In this report, **we invite you to envision with us a world that is ordered differently**—where the health needs of those who are most vulnerable prioritized, where the goods of the earth are equitably distributed, and where as Pope Francis says, the value of the “life of all, over the appropriation of goods by the few” is realized. This is the vision we share with our partners in Bolivia and Paraguay. This is the world we are striving to build.

Thanks to the steadfast support and generosity of our community, we advanced training in minimally invasive surgical procedures, cancer treatments, and trauma response in 2019. We facilitated mutual experiences of learning for more than 100 US and Latin American medical professionals. In Bolivia, our medical equipping

efforts expanded allowing us to support more patients than ever before. And in Paraguay, we advanced plans with our partners to improve neurosurgical services for those who can least access this complex yet essential care.

Our many achievements outlined in this report would not have been possible without the steadfast commitment of our closest partner, Puente de Solidaridad. Their commitment and leadership continued to guide our shared work in Bolivia, even in the midst of the civil unrest and political instability that followed their presidential elections last October. These challenges interrupted some of our planned activities, but also highlighted the deep need for our vision and mission. **We are called, now more than ever, to remain in true solidarity with our partners and work more ardently to ensure that the hope of a healthy future is available to all people.**

Thank you for daring to envision this too.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dale Granchalek', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Dale Granchalek

## Envision Expanded Access to Surgery

*Dr. Camacho visits with former patient Sara and her daughters.*



Solidarity Bridge began in 1999, inspired by the entrepreneurial vision of our Founder, Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa, who believed that the skills, creativity, and vision of those around him could be channeled toward the common good and give rise to a movement of solidarity.

**Years later, Dr. Johnny Camacho brought an innovative new vision for expanding this mission further.**

We first met Dr. Camacho in 2008 as a young surgeon at Cochabamba's Viedma Hospital. Over the next few years, and multiple Solidarity Bridge mission trips, he honed his operating skills in laparoscopic general surgery. He soon became a key partner with Puente de Solidaridad, providing surgery to patients through our year-round General Surgery Program. In this role, he channeled the skills and creativity of those around him, marshalling the resources of his hospital and donating his own time to serve patients who could not otherwise afford or access surgery.

But as he looked around his community, he saw the need to do more. "I was trained and did my residency in a poor hospital, where I could see patients' needs up close. The number of patients needing treatment today has only increased."

Looking for a way to reach patients who were unable to travel long distances for care, Dr. Camacho envisioned and helped develop a mobile laparoscopic unit that takes minimally invasive surgical services to provincial hospitals throughout the country. This model not only expands our program to more patients, but it also extends the mentored training in these procedures to new medical partners.

The majority of surgeries provided by our General Surgery Program are now performed on these mobile campaigns. Coordinated by the staff at Puente de Solidaridad, **teams of Bolivian surgeons and anesthesiologists take turns staffing the mobile campaigns, bringing training and advanced surgical care to under-resourced hospitals.** For his part, Dr. Camacho performed 32 hernia and gallbladder surgeries on campaigns in Yacapani, San Julian and El Torno in August and September alone. These campaigns take Dr. Camacho away from his regular practice in Cochabamba, but like hundreds of US missionaries, he sees his focus on serving those who are most vulnerable as an integrated part of his vocation as a doctor. The spiritual dimension of his medical work, says Dr. Camacho, “is the most important part, because it involves everything you are.”

**Dr. Camacho continues to expand the scope of partnership in our surgical programs.** In July 2019, he traveled to Santa Cruz to participate in a mission trip at the San Juan de Dios Hospital. He came seeking the training offered by US missionary Dr. Magued

*Dr. Camacho (left) and Dr. Vallejos (right) are two of our longest standing local partners. Inspired by our mission trip model, they developed the mobile surgery program which now brings resources and training to new hospitals each year, expanding surgical care to hundreds more patients.*



Khouzam on surgical treatment of esophageal achalasia. But thanks to his extensive experience in laparoscopy, he was also able to take on the role of a mentor. Just as he does during a mobile campaign, Dr. Camacho spent the mission week sharing his knowledge and experience with his Santa Cruz colleagues. In September, he joined the US mission team in Cliza, Bolivia and served as the general surgeon on our 100<sup>th</sup> mission trip.

We are humbled and proud to work in partnership with skilled doctors like Johnny Camacho. His passion and innovation reflect the entrepreneurial spirit of our founding. This spirit draws us to deploy our resources, time, talent, and treasure in new ways—to transform the structures that result in inequitable access to essential healthcare.



*Missoner Rene Portillo (center) works with his Bolivian peers to evaluate an X-ray machine at the Belga Hospital.*

## **Envision a World with Adequate Resources**

Surgery is essential—often the best treatment option for many common conditions. Yet it is complex, and requires significant investment, particularly in equipment and supplies. This is a key challenge in low-resource hospitals where machines can be difficult to both acquire and repair.

Because of resource inequities, many of the hospitals we partner with have to rely on old or donated equipment which is hard to keep in good working condition. When machines do break, needed parts or experts to fix them may not be readily available. Most medical equipment manufacturers do not have any presence in Bolivia or Paraguay. Our partner doctors and hospital administrators have told us that without reliable equipment, imaging, labs, and more, they cannot offer the life-saving treatments they are trained to provide.

With the help of the TRIMEDX Foundation, we have begun to address this challenge. **Together with our Latin American partners, we are expanding our vision of what it means to increase access to safe, affordable surgery.**

In 2019 we continued our partnership with the Indianapolis-based TRIMEDX Foundation, which was created to address the international need for medical equipment repair and support. In May, biomedical engineers Jurgen Zieb and Rene Portillo joined us in Cochabamba for our second mission trip focused on equipment repair. Prior to their travel, they consulted virtually with technicians and radiologists at the Viedma and Belga Hospitals, and were able to bring important replacement parts needed to repair essential X-ray equipment. These parts had been impossible to procure in Bolivia. During our mission week, we celebrated the experience of working together with our Bolivian colleagues to

find mechanical solutions that would increase access to quality health care for so many patients.

After finishing their repairs at the hospital, the missionaries were invited to share presentations on imaging technology and careers in biomedical engineering with students at the Universidad del Valle and the Escuela Técnica de Salud. When a student asked what inspires them in this career, Rene Portillo responded, “This is humbling work, but don’t give up. I am motivated by continually thinking of the patients who need these machines to function properly.”

**The training of biomedical experts is crucial to the success of a strong health system**, and Solidarity Bridge is taking a broad view of how our mission can help ensure that health professionals have the resources they need to serve their communities.

*X-rays and other forms of imaging are important tools to diagnose patients and to prepare safe and successful surgeries. In 2019, our partners requested repairs and replacement parts for this type of equipment.*



*The obligation to “love our neighbor” has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment to the common good.*

***Economic Justice for All***

## **Envision a Connected Global Church**

“We are community.” These are the words Mary Cronin uses to describe her vision of what it means to be church. “We are not just community inside the walls of Queen of All Saints [her parish for over 60 years]. We are community for the city and the world. We are one.”

Solidarity Bridge shares this vision of what it means to be church. Supporters like Mary Cronin are the ambassadors of this vision in their parishes across the US.

Mary first learned of Solidarity Bridge from her pew at Queen of All Saints Basilica in Chicago, where she witnessed a send-off Mass for missionaries departing for Bolivia. She felt immediately drawn to the mission. “In my heart, your organization is extremely important and I want to see its work continue. I know it depends on donors, including the medical people who travel and donate their time so generously.” Indeed, **our mission is strengthened by the many and varied participants, like Mary, who donate, promote, travel, or pray with us.**

Mary has lived a life dedicated to faith-filled solidarity and justice, and it’s no surprise that she has been a champion of solidarity in her parish community. As a child she was inspired by the homilies of her parish priest who preached about justice. “Even as a 4th grader, I was mesmerized.” As a young adult, her commitment



to justice deepened and she traveled from Chicago to be present when Martin Luther King began his march from Selma to Montgomery. “It was one of the most important things I have ever done in my life.” Mary has dedicated her professional life to serving others, working for the Cook County Department of Public Aid and IL Department of Human Services for over 37 years.

Today she is a devoted mother of two, a grandmother of five and a dedicated volunteer in her church and community. At Queen of All Saints she brings her deep experiences of solidarity to the parish’s *Third Sunday Collection*. Each month, parishioners give to this special collection in service to the poor. This money supports Queen of All Saints’ official sharing parishes and remaining monies are distributed to a dozen other organizations each year, including Solidarity Bridge. “We do a lot for our own local community through the St. Vincent de Paul Society and our regular gift card drive. But the *Third Sunday Collection* reaches out beyond the environment of our walls.”

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**“We are community, for the city and the world. We are one!”**

Visit [solidaritybridge.org/parishresources](http://solidaritybridge.org/parishresources) to learn how your parish can connect with the mission of Solidarity Bridge.

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*Solidarity Bridge partners with church communities in diverse ways—mission preaching, adult faith enrichment, Advent and Lenten causes, training in solidarity and service, and more.*

Through these gifts, the Queen of All Saints parish community has been faithfully and generously supporting the work of Solidarity Bridge annually since 2002. **These gifts invite the entire community into solidarity with our patients and partners in South America.**

Mary says, “We are all on this journey together and that is what it means to me to be a Catholic Christian. Jesus came to teach us: ‘love your God and love your neighbor’. It’s as simple as that.” Her life and the generosity of her parish community certainly embody these words!



## Envision Sustainable Impact

In 2019 we were faced with new challenges. A nationwide civil protest in Bolivia, following the October elections, caused the cancellation of three mission trips. Nevertheless, **the strength of our partnership with Puente de Solidaridad enabled us to serve more patients in 2019 than ever before!**

This was possible because of our shared vision for sustainable care. Each year, the number of patients served by our year-round programs grows. In 2019, we also saw the expansion of our medical supply provisioning, extending material resources directly to patients as well as our partners in healthcare.



**78%**

patients served in our year-round programs

**22%**

patients served on mission trips

### **The Heart of Our Mission**

*Through supportive services and compassionate care, we strive to provide patients with not only life-saving treatment but also accompaniment and solidarity during their medical challenges. In 2019, we reunited with Victor (second from left). Since his 2018 surgery to restore intestinal function following earlier treatment for colon cancer, he married and welcomed a daughter. Two of the missionaries who helped care for Victor were delighted to see him recovered and to meet his young family!*

## Medical Supply Distributions Expand Support

**4,272**

Pounds of supplies carried to Bolivia in 89 suitcases

**466**

Patients who received supplies to support their healthcare

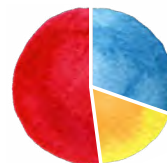
**23**

Hospitals supported by bulk donations of needed medical supplies

Revenue: **\$2,238,084**

\$1,157,354 In-Kind

\$1,080,730 Cash



- In-Kind **52%**
- Individuals **30%**
- Organizations/Corporations **18%**

Expenses: **\$1,895,052**

\$ 884,927 In-Kind

\$ 1,010,125 Cash



- Direct Program **85%**
- Fundraising **8%**
- Administrative **7%**

Net Assets: **\$695,176**

\$322,008 In-Kind | \$373,168 Cash

## 2019 Accomplishments



### Patients Served

2019: **1259**

Since 1999: **66,325**



### Total Surgeries

2019: **303**

Since 1999: **6,648**



### Medical Supplies Donated

2019: **\$612,066**

Since 1999: **\$42,550,348**



### Missioners

2019: **44**

Since 1999: **460**



### Mission Trips

2019: **6**

Since 1999: **100**



## A Just Distribution of Resources

*We believe that the goods of the Earth—which include medical care and equipment—belong to us all. A 2019 Solidarity Visit allowed our partners from Puente de Solidaridad to visit the US and consult with the Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach (HSMO) who share our belief in this moral obligation. Here, Puente de Solidaridad Supplies Coordinator, José Choque, confers with HSMO Biomedical Engineer, Ratish Kumar, about equipment to be included in an upcoming container shipment.*

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## Strengthening Surgical Systems

*In 2019, our Neurosurgery Program initiated new, long-term partnerships with public hospitals in Sucre, Bolivia and Asunción, Paraguay. We began by conducting baseline assessments with all perioperative services, from admission to rehabilitation. The goal of these partnerships is to improve outcomes for traumatic brain and spine injury patients by strengthening the coordinated response of the entire surgical ecosystem.*

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## *A Growing Focus on Cancer Treatment*

*In April 2019, we returned to the Cancer Institute of Eastern Bolivia for our second Oncological Surgery Mission Trip, offering training in general surgery and gynecologic specialties. Missioner Dr. Erin Stevens (in blue), partnered with Bolivian surgeons Dr. Ingrid Hurtado (center) and Dr. Osvaldo Ortiz (right) to treat nine women with gynecologic cancers. Dr. Stevens also presented lectures on sentinel node biopsies, as well as HPV and cervical cancer.*



**Dharma Trading Co.**

FIBER ART SUPPLIES & CLOTHING BLANKS SINCE 1969

For 17 years, we have facilitated a partnership between Puente de Solidaridad and Dharma Trading Co. which confronts 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.



### ***Celebrating Our 100th Mission Trip!***

*In 2019, our 100th mission trip took us to the municipal hospital in Cliza, Bolivia. US surgeons and clinicians partnered with their Bolivian peers to serve more than 750 patients! Mission trips are an important opportunity for training. By teaching new and advancing techniques, we have an opportunity to sustainably impact the health system.*

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