



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

SHINING FORTH TOGETHER



SOLIDARITYBRIDGE

DEAR FRIENDS,

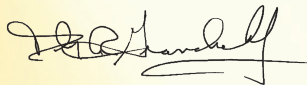
For patients who have felt the darkness closing in on them—by quarantines, economic downturns, illness, and overwhelmed hospitals—**our mission remains a beacon of light.** With flexibility and perseverance, we've adapted to ever-changing conditions and accomplished incredible feats: serving more patients than prior years, providing virtual training for hundreds of local providers, and supporting a record number of care centers with medical equipment and supplies.

A recent U.S. Surgeon General advisory reminds us that our "health depends on the well-being of our health workforce." Despite enormous challenges, **the medical professionals committed to our mission displayed an energy and passion that ignited our efforts** in 2021. Fortified by their relationships of solidarity built across borders, they exhibited strength and an unfailing commitment to the care of patients. Thanks to them and the contributions of hundreds of donors, volunteers, and other allies, we have made a sustainable impact on the health of our brothers and sisters in Bolivia and Paraguay. With steadfast hope in God's vision, we are shining forth together toward a healthier world.

Thank you for your continued support.



Ann Rhomberg
Executive Director



Dale Granchalek
Board Chair

VISION STATEMENT

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 STATEMENT

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.

PATIENTS SERVED IN 2021



1,569 patients received financial subsidies and supplies to cover imaging, lab testing, or other urgent healthcare needs

+

308 patients underwent surgery through our four year-round programs

1,877 patients directly served

62 percent of our patients come from rural communities where they face increased barriers to complex care

20 children from Tarija, Bolivia, were diagnosed with operable heart defects through our new cardiac screening campaigns

PRIORITIZING THE HEALTH OF THOSE WHO ARE MOST VULNERABLE



Maria (right) was welcomed home with joy after her surgery.

Photo credit: Plataforma Chagas

Maria is a 49-year-old farmer and mother of three. Her family lives in extreme material poverty, on a remote farm without access to running water. Almost a decade ago, she was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy caused by Chagas disease. Chagas is a neglected tropical disease that disproportionately affects indigenous and rural communities in the mountains she calls home.

A pacemaker kept Maria healthy and active while her children grew into teenagers and young adults. But by 2021, the battery had worn out. After hearing of our mission trip through a radio broadcast in her native Quechua language, Maria walked five hours to the town of Vallegrande and took two buses to Cochabamba to reach the office of our sister organization, Puente de Solidaridad. Two days later, Bolivian surgeon Dr. Benjo Gareca and U.S. missionary Dr. Marta Vakulenko replaced her implant with a new generator donated by Boston Scientific.

The Quechua announcement Maria heard is an important example of our extensive outreach efforts to identify those patients who are most vulnerable. Working together with *Plataforma Chagas*, a Bolivian public health program, we can coordinate this type of complex care for patients like Maria, who face extreme barriers in accessing medical care. In addition to the radio promotion, *Plataforma Chagas* covered Maria's transportation expenses and provided her with a Quechua interpreter.

Pacemakers allow patients to live longer, healthier lives but they require ongoing monitoring. That's why our Pacemaker Program not only implants devices but accompanies patients for the rest of their lives to make sure they receive continued care. Thanks to the partnership between Puente de Solidaridad, *Plataforma Chagas*, and Solidarity Bridge, Maria has access to the high-level care she deserves, and her light will shine on for years to come.



“ If anyone should be given preference, let it be the poorest, the most vulnerable, those who so often experience discrimination because they have neither power nor economic resources. ”

ENSURING DOCTORS HAVE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES

Since our founding, medical teams traveling to Bolivia and Paraguay have hand-carried high-priority surgical supplies and equipment that support the daily work of our medical partners. But with limited travel in 2021, we turned our focus to other ways of delivering resources—all so that the work of our local partners, and the care of their patients, would not be hindered by a lack of materials.

With the help of our partner, Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach of Springfield, Illinois, we shipped three maritime containers. This was no small feat in a year when the global supply chain was turned upside down by clogged shipping lanes, container shortages, and the impact of COVID-19 on dock and transportation workers. Puente de Solidaridad, our sister organization in Bolivia, received two of these shipments. They distributed the supplies to 73 facilities located throughout seven of the country's nine regional departments. The third shipment supported medical and surgical services in Paraguay.

We know these efforts are worth it when we receive feedback like the quote below from Dr. Carla Erika Salinas Ramos, a Bolivian anesthesiologist who supports our surgical programs.



74

**hospitals, clinics
and other healthcare
providers received
supplies**

13 SUITCASES
carried to Bolivia

3 40-FOOT
maritime shipping
containers

TOTAL WEIGHT
51,314 LB

TOTAL VALUE
\$1,634,735



“Life is composed of challenges and obstacles that we must overcome... which in turn generate networks and ties of friendship that allow us to be part of one of the noblest causes, being able to help. My sincere thanks for all the work you do and for allowing me to be a small part of that.”

PARTNERING IN A SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY

Personal and professional growth is best fostered through mutually supportive human relationships. This is as true in the medical profession as anywhere else. That's why creating spaces for medical peers to work side by side, learning from each other and forming strong bonds of friendship, is at the heart of our mission. In 2021, we learned to do this more deeply, in-person and remotely.

Working virtually was vigorously embraced by our newly formed Neurosurgery & Neurology Institute (NNI). The NNI is an expansion of our Neurosurgery Program and is committed to alleviating the suffering, death and disability from neurological disorders and injuries that disproportionately impact patients in the countries where we serve.



Dr. Rebecca Garcia Sosa, a pediatric neurologist at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago, has been a key contributor to the NNI's neurology focus. "As a Puerto Rican, I am always looking for ways to give back to communities in need. And as I learned about Solidarity Bridge from two of my colleagues, I quickly decided

to join them on their next trip to Bolivia," said Dr. Garcia Sosa. "Unfortunately, our trip was canceled due to political unrest in the fall of 2019, and then came the pandemic. As we brainstormed how to help our colleagues from afar, the idea of virtual conferences came up." Working together with Bolivian neurologist Dr. Víctor Hugo Cuéllar, Dr. Garcia Sosa organized a series of seven webinars on the clinical care of patients with epilepsy.



It has been a pleasure to work with Dr. Cuéllar and his colleagues. Partnering with physicians in other parts of the world feels like a blessing and a privilege. We learn from them and they learn from us, which helps everyone!

- Dr. Rebecca Garcia Sosa



Dr. Cuéllar is one of only 20 doctors in Bolivia who have completed specialized training in Pediatric Neurology. As he works to expand care in this growing field, he knows close collaboration between specialists like himself and primary care providers is essential. Once diagnosed, nearly 70% of epilepsy cases can be controlled and seizures can be prevented with simple and cost-effective interventions. But if primary care physicians do not have the training and resources to recognize and refer epileptics to specialists, or to oversee their long-term treatment, patients and their families may never be able to access the medical care they need.

Our webinar series on pediatric epilepsy extended training to more than 250 Bolivian pediatricians, neurologists, internists, nurses, and even parents of patients. Partnering with Solidarity Bridge and Dr. Garcia Sosa, Dr. Cuéllar is meeting the training needs of his colleagues in primary care settings. Together we're shining forth toward a higher level of care for patients with epilepsy.



We are advancing epilepsy care in Santa Cruz through collaborations with Dr. Cuéllar (seated), UK nonprofit TeleEEG, and many others.

2

Mission
Trips

6

Missioners

8

Bolivian Mobile
Surgery
Campaigns

33

Virtual
Trainings and
Encounters



SINCE 1999

\$45,289,099
MEDICAL SUPPLIES
DONATED

68,646
PATIENTS SERVED

7,062
SURGERIES PROVIDED

462
MISSIONERS

103
MISSION TRIPS

2021 FINANCIALS

REVENUE

\$2,271,255.06

In-kind – \$1,223,936.97
Cash – \$1,047,318.09

■ In-Kind **54%**
■ Individuals **25%**
■ Organizations/Corporations **21%**

EXPENSES

\$2,691,234.29

In-kind – \$1,634,735.04
Cash – \$1,056,499.25

■ Direct Program **91%**
■ Fundraising **3%**
■ Administrative **6%**

NET ASSETS

\$626,393.13

In-kind – \$80,327.59
Cash – \$546,065.54

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

\$100,000+

The Goff Family
Anonymous

\$20,000 - \$999,999

Hermitage Charitable Trust
David & Tibby Ford
Piaree Madoo Moser &
Richard Moser, MD
Lori Price
Raskob Foundation for
Catholic Activities

\$10,000 - \$19,999

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Susan & J. Laurence Costin, Jr.
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Helen Brach Foundation
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Fr. Bob Oldershaw
Ann Rhomberg
Sue Rhomberg
Sisters of St. Casimir

SOLIDARITY CIRCLE

\$5,000 - \$9,999

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Kira Foken
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Victoria Harding & John
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Heather & Peter Tinsman, MD
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Mitch & Fran Wiet

\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Karen Kaul, MDs
Robert & Isabel Curley
Ellen Dalton
Margaret & Patrick Dunham
James & Laura Durkin
Ajay & Ansarie Easo
Pamela Gibson
Maureen Gleason
Dale & Erica Granchalek
Ellen & Michael Griffin
Michael Holmberg & Louise
Berner-Holmberg, MD
Holy Name Cathedral



Our patients are not simply the recipients of our services, but an integral part of our mission. Here Epifania (center) generously welcomes missioners, Jodi Grahl and Dr. Marta Vakulenko, into her home. Moments like these are important opportunities to reflect on human connectedness and deepen our bonds of solidarity.



For 19 years, we have facilitated a fair trade partnership between Puente de Solidaridad and Dharma Trading Co. which confronts the inextricable links between poverty and poor health. Additionally, the Goff family, owners of Dharma Trading, generously support our work in pediatric heart surgery.

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\$500 - \$999

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Jodi Grahl
Juan Lorenzo Hinojosa
Richard Moser, MD
Marta Vakulenko, MD

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Mariangela Duarte Rojas
Catherine Flanagan
Margaret Flanagan
Chris Giella
Claudia Gomez Postigo
David Gonzales
Joe Griffin
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Eileen Heineman
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Supplies delivered to Hospital Nacional de Itauguá in Paraguay outfitted a new operating room to safely serve COVID-positive patients. It has already served more than 200 patients since its inauguration early last year.

FINDING SOLACE IN SOLIDARITY

The heart of our work expands beyond what we do in the hospital or clinic. Our cross-cultural efforts are centered on an openness to transformation in our lives, communities, and our wider world. In 2021, we co-hosted two retreats and symposiums **creating space for US missionaries and South American partners to grapple with the effects of the ongoing pandemic** and reflect on their experiences of providing surgical care during this time.

EXPANDING MATERIAL SUPPORT



A staff member from the Municipal Hospital of Aiquile, Bolivia, signs for the itemized list of medical supply donations. In 2021, **74 medical facilities received bulk distributions**. All donations are meticulously documented and each recipient institution signs an agreement to commit to their proper use, serving patients in need. Our warehouse staff follows up to make sure equipment is maintained.

PROVIDING DIGNIFIED CARE



Our goal is not only to restore health, but also to uphold human dignity. With that in mind, **every one of our 1,877 patients in 2021 was individually assessed and accompanied by a social worker** from Puente de Solidaridad.

SOLIDARITY BRIDGE STAFF

Ann Rhomberg, MSW, *Executive Director*
Maria Eugenia Brockmann, MA,
Senior Director, Programs
Megan Kennedy-Farrell, MRE,
Senior Director, Mission & Identity
Lindsay Doucette, MPA, *Program Director*
Jodi Grahl, *Program Director*
Rachel McDonnell, *Director of Development*
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