



TASH TIMES

Vol 28 – September/October 2023. Oaxaca, Mexico.

www.tashinc.org

■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

Psalms 90 says: “Seventy are the sum of our years, or eighty if we are strong.” Having turned 80, I wouldn’t describe myself as exceptionally strong, so I think the reason God wants me to hang around for a while is to help more people and to pray more.



Oscar, the Chief Nurse at the Clínica during check-up, with child from the Ciudad de Los Niños.

At the end of June, I retired from the parish where I had been helping out three days a week. I had been at the parish for nine years. The farewell social was very moving because of all the kind comments about my preaching and best wishes for my future.

I made a request of the pastor concerning a farewell gift. I wanted nothing personally but would like the parish to help me raise the sixty-six thousand dollars for the orphanage. He agreed and urged the parishioners to direct their gifts to this worthy project. I am happy to tell you that the parish raised \$26,129. Since I made the same request in the newsletter, you raised: \$87,566. **Between these two gifts, we surpassed the \$66,000 needed to rebuild the dormitory.**

Psalms 136 says: “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures forever.” God’s love for us is unconditional. God will never stop loving us no matter what we do. It is God’s desire that once we believe in His unconditional love, we freely love other people. Whenever I have asked you to support my ministry in Oaxaca, you have always generously answered my request. **For twenty-four years I have thanked you for your generosity. Once again, I thank you in the name of the poor and sick in Oaxaca.**

In his article, Dr. Charley Gates will tell you about the recent visit to Oaxaca that some benefactors and friends made. He told me on his return that the people there still ask about me. I appreciate their remembrance and their prayers. You are always in mine.

God bless you!

Fr. Scott

■ Servant Leadership – *Reflections on Donor Trip to Oaxaca - by Charley B. Gates, MD*

TASH conducted a donor trip to Oaxaca from July 29 – August 2 for the first time since I became Board President in 2018. The TASH Board felt that it was important to provide an opportunity for a group of long-time supporters to witness first-hand the enormous impact that TASH is having as a result of its indefatigable efforts over the past 23 years to serve those most in need. **The trip was a resounding success!**

I would like to share a few of my reflections on the organizations that we visited.

continued on next page

Servant Leadership, continued

The Clínica del Pueblo (hospital): In January, Dr. Marissabel Casas Marroquín joined The Clínica as the new executive director. Originally from Mexico City, she has spent the last decade as an administrator in rural health clinics and a public hospital in Chiapas (an adjacent state in southern Mexico) delivering health care services to marginalized communities. She has a proven track record of leadership both as a physician and as an administrator.

Dr. Marissabel began her presentation by quoting Matthew 25:40, in which Jesus says, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me.” She explained that Father Scott used this verse in one of the first Masses that he offered to bless The Clínica in 2000 shortly after The Clínica opened its doors, and this verse resonated with her. I think that Dr. Marissabel is a fantastic fit to lead The Clínica.

Santa Cecilia and the School of Music: Our visit occurred two weeks before a group of 40 students traveled to France to perform in an international meeting of youth symphonies. The Archbishop of Oaxaca presided over the Mass that we attended. He blessed the children for their upcoming journey. He also specifically thanked TASH and Father Scott for all that TASH has done for this community since 2008.

Scholarship students: We spent about 90 minutes with twelve scholarship students in a robust round-table discussion. It is inspiring to hear these students speak about their career aspirations which include law, medicine, and architecture, among others. The students were very grateful for the scholarships. Though challenges remain, **the students have a clear path forward which has given them hope for a better future both for themselves and for their families.**



Donors interacting with scholarship students. Tejiendo Comunidad is translated to Weaving Community, a theme that came up a lot during the trip.



Donor trip to the Clínica - August 2023

La Ciudad de los Niños (orphanage): The construction of the new dormitory is underway. The first floor is expected to be finished before the end of this calendar year. After a tour of the facility, including the construction site, we had lunch with the 35 children who are currently living at the facility during the summer break. They are a happy group full of energy and enthusiasm. The children have been temporarily housed in the dining area since an earthquake in 2019 destabilized their previous living quarters. The new dormitory will give them a clean and secure living space.

The director of the orphanage, Jesús, and the Board President, Pablo, were in attendance. Both have a special devotion to the mission of La Ciudad to provide these children with education, community, and spiritual development.

Canica (after-school program for street children): Over the past twenty-five years, Canica has honed its approach to improving the lives of street children through nutrition, tutoring, physical education, and psychology services. The second-floor construction project that TASH sponsored last year allowed Canica to expand its enrollment, which increases the impact that

Servant Leadership, continued

Canica can have on the problem of truancy and dropouts, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty among these families.

As I observed the TASH donors interacting with the Oaxaqueños, I felt an enormous sense of honor and humility to be a part of the TASH community that is full of people with big hearts and kind souls. From the bottom of my heart, I offer my thanks to everyone for your thoughts, prayers, and generous support of TASH.

I plan to return to Oaxaca in December to strengthen TASH's relationships with local leaders and to engage in strategy planning for 2024 with the hospital and the partner organizations.

God love you.

Charley Gates, MD
President, TASH Board of Directors

■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll

During the donor trip, we had the opportunity to meet with Sr. Juventino Filio. **To know his back story gives a sliver of insight into a life of struggles and encounters.** Yet as the group can attest, Juventino is a man of faith and resilience.

Juventino was born on October 28, 1954, the youngest of seven brothers and sisters. His father passed away when Juventino was an infant and thus he has no memory of him. In his tiny village of Mazatlán Villa de Flores Teotitlán, the native indigenous language is Mazatec and the main source of income was peasant farming to produce corn, beans, and squash.

In his late teens, and for reasons unknown to him, his mother and uncle took him and his youngest sister to Tehuacán, Puebla, a neighboring state. He was given over to a woman and instructed to sell Jell-O type desserts. He remembers being overwhelmed with sadness. However, he wanted to obey his mom and he would wake up at 5 a.m. and work all day. After a year, he and a friend decided to hitchhike back to Oaxaca. He had thought to have fallen into some good fortune as a man offered him a roof over his head and a job to sell pork rinds. However, the man was an alcoholic and he quickly needed to escape that situation.

His next employment was selling popsicles for \$1.70 pesos or about .30 cents in US currency per day! In the nearby market, a kind woman would often offer him a hot meal. It was during one of those visits to the market that he met his future wife, Lidia. They were able to get married in the church and soon thereafter rented a home made from adobe mud and cardboard. They resided there for almost a decade, carefully tucking away the little savings they could. Eventually, they made slow progress and with the help of Lidia's extended family, they were able to get a more secure home. They would have two sons and one daughter, who are now in their 40s, live in Oaxaca, and have gainful employment. However more recently, Juventino suffered another hardship, as Lidia was diagnosed with cancer in 2012. He would accompany her for many years at the hospital before she passed away.

Juventino shared with us that that was a particularly difficult time, because he himself had developed complications from diabetes. By losing his eyesight to cataract, he had to give up his popsicle business, which was his only source of income. Having sought out options for surgery, he would initially have no luck as the costs were prohibitive for them. **Fortunately, this is when the Clínica del Pueblo came into the picture.** Juventino shared that in his depression, he got involved with several self-care groups.



Sr. Juventino speaks to his experience at the Clínica.

continued on next page

Witness to Oaxaca, continued*Offering to pray with Sr. Juventino.*

At one of them, they recommended he go to the Clínica, as they had a Mutual Support Group for patients with diabetes. Once at the Clinic, the community health team referred him to the internal medicine specialists, who in turn worked with the ophthalmologist to schedule his needed cataract surgery. He received a \$0 hospital bill.

On July 31, together with the Clínica outreach team, the 12 members of the donor trip had the opportunity to meet with Juventino and his daughter. It was a moving conversation, as Juventino shared that he was fearful of having the means to receive us. His nerves were quickly calmed as the Clínica's Director, Dra. Marissa, shared with him that the visit was about communion and community. She asked about his medical condition and assured him he would shortly begin to regain his eyesight as the effects

of the surgery diminished. He was quite relieved to hear that. Towards the end, Brett Schurter, a recently ordained deacon, asked Juventino if we could pray together with him. He gratefully accepted.

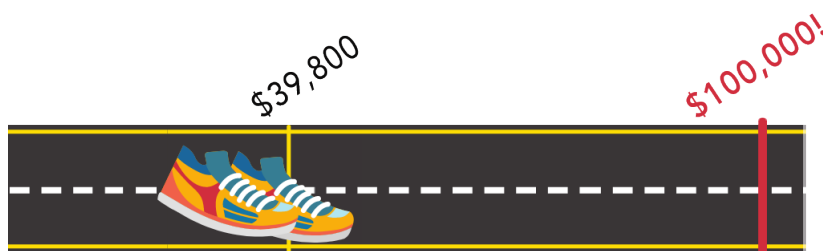
As of the publication of this article, Juventino has fully recovered from the cataract surgery and continues to attend the Mutual Support Group both for himself and to share his story of hope and perseverance with other patients. At TASH, we are grateful for the recent donor trip and their witness to the impact of 23 years of service; a dream made possible by Fr. Scott's first visit in 1998 and the community of supporters during more than two decades since then. We hope to continue this path to bear testimony to more stories of care and humanity.



FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES

45 days to go! We hope that you will join us as a sponsor, racer, volunteer, or race day attendee as **we celebrate the 15th edition of the Ole 5k Benefit.** This year, we will be organizing a sponsor "Building Bridges Brunch and private Mass" at St. Augustine's Friary on Sunday, October 8.

100% of the proceeds will be sent to our projects in Oaxaca, Mexico, where many families must get by on \$5 - \$7 per day. With great need comes greater generosity. Family fun for a worthy cause! You can find more information and updates: www.ole5k.com



HELP US REACH OUR GOAL!

If you would like to make a donation to support the mission in Oaxaca, we would truly appreciate it.

Please make a check out to TASH, Inc. and use the donation envelope included or you can make a secure donation online at www.tashinc.org.



Do you use social media? Follow @tashincorg for updates on our work.