



# TASH TIMES

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## ■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:

**When I first arrived in Oaxaca in 1998, I was not prepared for the poverty I experienced.** I had worked with the poor in Washington, D.C. However, there was no comparison. In Oaxaca, there was no medical attention for the poor. There was no clean or running water. There were dirt roads with gigantic potholes right outside of the Capital. At the main plaza in the city, little boys with their shoe shine kits went among the men hoping to shine their shoes for a few pesos. These boys were considered nuisances and often were chased away by the waiters. The poverty rate for Oaxaca was one of the highest in the country and the daily wage was one of the lowest.



*TASH supports a health fund and micro-enterprise initiative to help the displaced landfill workers, like Don Balta (pictured here).*

Much of what I have written so far is known to many of you. I wrote it to compare it to the travel magazines in our country that present Oaxaca quite differently. Occasionally I would get a letter from a relative, friend or benefactor in which they included an article from a travel magazine. They wrote that the magazine did not give the impression that there was poverty in Oaxaca.

I responded that if a travel magazine was covering one of the big cities in our country with the goal of having people visit there, it would not cover the poverty or the crime in that city. It is hard to imagine the poverty in a country unless you visit there and travel outside the tourist area. If you cannot travel then you have to rely on credible

witnesses. I hope you have found me and Pete Noll credible witnesses. When board members go down for the first time, they tell me that no matter how much I described in detail the amount of poverty, they were taken aback by what they saw during their visit.

Since 1998, I have not seen any real effort on the part of the government to address the issue of poverty in Oaxaca, neither on the state level nor on the federal level. The people who are helping the poor are the non-governmental organizations like TASH. There have been times when the State Health Department has sent people to the Anna Seethaler Hospital because they didn't have the resources to help them. The same can be said about the State Hospital in Oaxaca. I remember that a heart doctor from California, at the urging of his brother whom I knew, came down to see our clinic. I took him to the hospital where the poor go who can't afford a private hospital. When we walked into the Emergency Room, there were people lying on the floor waiting to be seen. At that moment, I knew we had to enlarge the clinic to become a hospital.

**“Miracles” do happen. Scripture tells us that “God hears the cry of the poor.” His response is to use people like you and me to perform the “miracles.”**

God bless you!

Fr. Scott

## ■ Servant Leadership – “The most important issues in life are rarely urgent” - by Charley B. Gates, MD

“The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” – President John F. Kennedy

The most important issues in life are rarely urgent. In fact, the important issues are often overshadowed by smaller matters that seem to be urgent. For example, relationships with family, friends, and God are the foundation of a happy, healthy, and productive life. Thus, they are crucially important. Yet, relationships can easily be ignored in the face of time-sensitive matters that demand immediate attention: monthly bills, work deadlines, and the never-ending gauntlet of electronic messages. Most of these urgent, but less important, items consume time and energy but are quickly forgotten.

Of course, if ignored long enough, important matters eventually become critically urgent. By then, a real crisis has developed which may cause irreparable harm in a way that a forgotten bill or a missed email never could. Imagine the emotional damage caused by a relationship that has been ignored to the point of breaking.

This issue comes up frequently in my orthopedic surgery practice. By the time many patients see me, something has gone wrong: a bone has been broken, or a tendon has been torn. Many of these injuries could have been prevented with proper attention to nutrition, strength, flexibility, and bone density. Yet, there was never any urgency to pursue these important preventive measures. The sun was still shining, so to speak, and so those important prevention measures were put off - until it was too late. For many patients with these injuries, surgery is the only remedy.

**Over the past 24 months, the TASH board has undergone a significant overhaul as part of a strategic, long-term planning process.** One board member departed, and three new board members joined: Charlie Baker (2022), Paula Wilde (2024), and Duane Fahrion (2024). They are talented professionals with a wide range of skill sets. They have experienced the mission in Oaxaca in person, and they share a passion to serve the poor. They are already making significant contributions to TASH.

In March, the TASH board met in-person for six hours over the course of two sessions. This followed a preparation period of six weeks during which time many documents were reviewed pertaining to strategic analysis, past performance, and future opportunities. Led by myself and by Father Scott, the meetings covered a lot of ground and allowed TASH to critically assess the optimal path forward.

In Oaxaca, the local board that oversees La Clinica del Pueblo, the hospital that is the flagship of TASH's mission, also underwent an independent overhaul process. They added six new members to replace two retiring members. The new members include a physician, a lawyer, and four prominent leaders of non-profit organizations. These new members offer expertise, wisdom, and deep connections within the local community.

On January 1, 2025, La Clinica will celebrate its 25th anniversary. **The sun continues to shine, and the hospital is stronger than ever.** It is led by a dedicated executive leadership team, and the care that is offered to patients is high quality. Regardless, it was important to take action now at a board level to ensure that TASH and La Clinica are able to continue to serve the poor in Oaxaca for another twenty-five years. Both in Oaxaca and in Pittsburgh, significant progress was made towards this goal.

Your prayers and support are as critical as ever, and I am grateful.

God love you.

Charley B. Gates, MD  
President, TASH Board of Directors



Charlie, Paula, and Duane, in Oaxaca, visiting a micro-enterprise project in July 2023.

## ■ Witness to Oaxaca – by Pete Noll

The story I will share is a reflection on the realities for most people, who without the efforts of the Clínica del Pueblo and the support of the TASH community, would be left abandoned by the state system, and without the economic possibility to access the private sector. Ignacio Oscar Reyes, 54 years old, was born in San Ildefonso, Sola de Vega, with a population of several hundred habitants. He is one of 10 siblings. He remembers his earliest years, as his father tended to the subsistence crops, and he watched over the farm animals. Unfortunately, in around 1975, there was an excess of rain that ruined the crops in the region. His father decided to migrate the family to a town, San Antonio de la Cal, on the outskirts of Oaxaca City. He recalls his father saying, “At least in the city, we won’t die of hunger, as I can earn a wage each day to buy food.” **This is the extreme poverty that Fr. Scott talks about in his lead article.**

San Antonio de la Cal is known as a brick-making town, a bit in parallel to Pittsburgh in its early days, as a steel-making town. At the age of 11, Ignacio began to help his dad by carrying around the sand and clay used to make the bricks. He recalls the work as labor intensive and exhausting a lot of the time. In his early 20s, like many young men did, he migrated north to Los Angeles. He hoped to save up enough money to send back to his family. However, as many immigrants do to make ends meet, he worked two full-time jobs. In those years, it was not so difficult to come and go between Mexico and the United States. So ultimately, he decided to return to Mexico as he had started his family back in Oaxaca with his wife, Olivia, and their young kids.

Thus, he returned to the brick factory, and despite the heavy toll and low wages, at least he was home with his family. Then tragedy struck. His daughter fell ill. He shared, “We attempted to take her to the public hospital and then to private doctors, many who said, “ella está bien,” translated, “she is fine.” However, a parent’s worst nightmare happened, and she passed away without receiving any treatment. The family grieved for a long time. Ignacio’s wife added, “We had reconciled and thought maybe it was God’s plan, as (she) left behind a son, now our grandson.” In the interview, they referred to him as their “son.” This is a common practice in Oaxaca where family unity is generational.

**Despite the hardships, the last chapter includes a positive development,** even while Ignacio’s health was deteriorating. It so happened that Ignacio and his wife attended a wake in San Martin Mexicapam where the Clínica is located. It was there that some friends told them about the Clínica. One week later, they had an appointment to see the ophthalmologist. Ignacio received successful cataract surgery, followed by a prostate procedure. During the interview Ignacio explained that he was now feeling much better, and it wouldn’t have been possible without the economic subsidy to cover his two surgeries. Furthermore, the couple doesn’t have healthcare insurance.

I joined the Clínica social worker, Ivette, on a home visit on April 25. As is the custom in Oaxaca, one of the most meaningful ways to show gratitude is by offering food. At their humble abode, Ignacio’s wife Olivia made hand-made tortillas with avocado and tomato salsa. I must say they were “Deliciosos!” The gratitude is mutual, as the people of Oaxaca, even those



*Ignacio and Olivia pictured here with Ivette, a social worker at the Clínica del Pueblo.*

*Witness to Oaxaca, continued*

with very little material wealth, have always been so kind to me, as I know they were with Fr. Scott and most recently the current TASH Board of Directors.

As the conversation wrapped up, I got goosebumps. Ignacio's wife Olivia commented: "La Clínica is full of angels" gesturing her hands in a circular motion. Of course, the angels watch over the staff and the patients, and with your continued support, will be there for decades to come. Do please join and support TASH in the **journey towards the 25th anniversary of the Clínica del Pueblo in 2025.**



Ignacio, at home, with his great grandson. (Photo 4/25/2024)



## FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES



Four months and counting! We hope that you will join us as a sponsor, racer, volunteer, or race day attendee as we celebrate the **16th edition of the Olé 5k Benefit**. Again, this year, we will be organizing the 2nd ever sponsor "Building Bridges Brunch and private Mass" at St. Augustine's Friary on Sunday, September 29, starting at 11 a.m.

**BECOME A SPONSOR**  
YOUR LOGO HERE

100% of the race proceeds will be sent to our projects in Oaxaca, Mexico, where many families must get by on less than \$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](http://www.ole5k.com)

**Staff update:** For administrative assistance, you can now contact Jessica Whitacre, at [jessica.whitacre@tashinc.org](mailto:jessica.whitacre@tashinc.org) or (412) 219 9099.

**Planned Giving** – *Would you like to assure that TASH can continue to increase its impact, especially as we approach the 25th anniversary?* A gift to TASH improves lives today and into the future. Behind every person served are loyal benefactors, like you, who make their care possible. Every time an individual enters the Clínica, receives affordable and quality attention, or needs emergency care, your generosity is felt and remembered.

In addition to supporting the mission of TASH, a planned gift can provide substantial tax advantages, especially on gifts of stocks and real estate.

**To learn more, you can visit the Website:**

<https://tashinc.org/donate/planned-giving/> or contact us at 412-219-9099.

*Make a gift today that lasts for a lifetime!*



**If you are able 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](http://www.tashinc.org).



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