



TASH TIMES

Vol 39 – July/August 2025. Oaxaca, Mexico.

www.tashinc.org

■ GREETINGS

Dear Friends:



Father Scott blesses a parishioner of Santa Cecelia after celebrating Mass in August 2024.

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about Oaxaca. My thoughts have taken me back to the opening of the **Clínica del Pueblo Anna Seethaler** 25 years ago, in 2000. I am now 82 years old, so 25 years is a large chunk of my life. During those 25 years, I have seen a **small bakery of three rooms** grow into a **large clinic-hospital**. There was a lot of growth in the first six years, enabled by the support of many benefactors here in the United States. From the very beginning, **people's generosity has supported my dream of having a clinic-hospital for the poor in Oaxaca**. Initially, people in Oaxaca were skeptical that it could happen. However, they slowly began to believe that it was possible and became very enthusiastic about it.

The hospital can treat most illnesses, except cancer and heart disease. Each month, **more than a thousand people** walk through the doors needing medical help. Sometimes they travel six hours down the mountains to reach the Anna Seethaler hospital. When the public hospital turns people away, they often find their way

to us, where we receive them with **dignity and respect**. When they need to have cataracts removed, they can wait more than six months for surgery in the public hospital. Our hospital can do them within a week. When they go to the public hospital and need to stay overnight, they often sleep on the streets for lack of money to pay for lodging. At our hospital, **they can stay in the two rooms we have for overnight guests**. They pay nothing for their **lodging**. They can also **wash their clothes** and **prepare their meals** without cost.

One of the most touching stories I experienced personally at the clinic involved **a mother and her young son**. They came a great distance for the mother to receive treatment for an **infected eye**. She got there in enough time that she didn't lose her eye. She and the boy stayed at the hospital for some time, so that the doctors could continue to treat her eye. **The staff at the hospital fell in love with the little boy**. They soon realized that he was deaf. When the mother was ready to leave, the doctors told her that she should come back in a few weeks to have the eye checked. **The staff asked the mother if her son could stay behind until she returned**. Hesitantly, she said yes. One of the staff, who came from the United States, had her family with her. So, she took the little boy home with her. When she took his shirt off to give him a bath, **she found multiple scars on his back from being whipped**.

Weeks passed, and the mother did not return. Meanwhile, her son was being spoiled by everyone. He loved it because he lived in destitution at home. As more time passed, the staff thought that the mother had **abandoned** him. The American family began plans to **adopt** him. Then one day, the mother returned to the hospital. Her eye was no better because she had not worn the protective glasses she was given to use when she cooked. Like many poor people, she cooked outside, and **the smoke kept getting in her eyes**.

After receiving more treatment and promising to use the glasses, she was ready to return home with her son. **He cried and fell to the ground**. She had to drag him until he stood up. The staff was also crying. Two of the staff and I told the woman we would drive them home. The trip was more than two hours one way. When we arrived, **the boy did not want to get out of the car**. When he did, he shook all the way up the hill to their home. It was two small rooms with the kitchen outside. Two of the other children were home, and they looked very underdeveloped for their ages. Soon the father came home. It was obvious that he was **drunk**. He got his act together to greet us and thanked us for taking care of his wife and his son.

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Father Scott, continued

I asked him to take a walk with me. When we got a distance from the others, I said to him, **“Do you know that your son is deaf?”** He said, “Really?” I said, “Yes! He can’t obey you when you are screaming at him from behind. So stop beating him.” My voice became louder. **“If you continue, we will get the police after you.”**

We drove back in silence because of the sadness we felt. When I left for Pittsburgh, all I could think about was the boy.

Some weeks later, the mother showed up with her son. After she got her treatment for her eye, she said to the staff, **“The only chance my son has to have a good life is for me to leave him here.”** She left crying. The staff found a loving couple who could not have children, who took the boy into their home. Eventually they adopted him, and he has grown up a healthy, strong young man, who knows sign language.

Friends, our hospital-clinic is now 25 years old. **It needs repairs**, and some of the **equipment needs to be replaced**. I am asking you to make a generous donation to celebrate this remarkable achievement. Who would have guessed 26 years ago that my dream would have pleased God and He stirred the hearts of many people to make it happen. **Would you please give a generous donation to keep my dream alive?**

God bless you!
Fr. Scott

■ What is your vision for your life? - by Charley B. Gates, MD

Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: I don’t much care where.

Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.

- Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

Vision is critical to a purposeful life. When you have no vision of where you are trying to go, you have nothing to guide your decisions. **It’s hard to know if you are making any kind of progress since there is nothing to measure it against.** Poor Alice in the story above – she lives in a world of ambiguity, without a clear path, without a clear vision of what she is trying to achieve or where she is trying to go.

In his book ***Be Useful: Seven Tools for Life***, Arnold Schwarzenegger stresses the importance that vision has played in his life. From a very early age, he was committed to coming to the United States and having as **big an impact** as he could. Arnold was born in Thal, Austria, in 1947. Life was difficult in post-war Austria. The apartment that the Schwarzenegger family called home had **no electricity or running water**. Money was constantly a problem. Arnold describes his relationship with his father as complicated. He says that he suffered what would now be considered physical abuse but in those times was considered standard parenting. **“If we did something bad or disobeyed our parents, the rod was not spared,”** says Arnold. “My hair was pulled. I was hit with belts. So was the kid next door. It was just the way that it was.”

Arnold has lived a remarkable, though flawed life: he won seven Mr. Olympia titles, transitioned into a leading man in Hollywood, and then became the 38th Governor of California (2003–2011). He credits his ability to achieve these remarkable successes to having a very clear vision of what he wanted to do with his life. **That vision guided him and made difficult decisions easy.** Decisions are much easier when one’s priorities, and one’s vision, are clear.

Vision is also essential in the life of organizations. For this reason, led by **Father Scott**, TASH revisited its mission for what it is trying to achieve in Oaxaca. The reshaped mission now reads:

“TASH is dedicated to Oaxaca, Mexico. It is focused on healthcare and giving children a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop.”



*Bryan Nurnberger,
founder of Simply Smiles*



*Gabriela Chavez Hernandez,
executive director of Simply Smiles*

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What is your vision for your life?, continued

Simply Smiles (<https://www.simplysmiles.org/>) is one of the partner organizations that TASH supports in alignment with our vision to improve the lives of vulnerable children. Simply Smiles is led by **Bryan Nurnberger**, a United States citizen who first visited Oaxaca in 2003.

During Bryan’s visit, he volunteered at an orphanage for indigenous children, **an experience that changed Bryan’s life**. His interactions with the children had a powerful effect on him. Based on the problems that he saw at the orphanage, **he had a vision for a different model of orphanage – one that was smaller and felt more like a family**. That “family feeling” was very important to Bryan and currently is a hallmark of the Simply Smiles orphanage.

Simply Smiles is currently undergoing an **expansion**, and it recently welcomed five new children to its center.

Thank you for your continued financial support and prayers as TASH carries out its mission in Oaxaca.

God love you.

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

■ Witness to Oaxaca – *Simply Smiles Welcomes a New Family* - by Charley B. Gates, MD

The **Simply Smiles Children’s Village** in Oaxaca, Mexico, is an oasis for some of the region’s most vulnerable children. When founder Bryan Nurnberger opened the village in 2015, he hired Gabriela Chavez Hernandez as executive director. Gaby has proven herself to be a talented and dedicated leader.

Simply Smiles is different from other orphanages. It does not **“warehouse”** children. And it roundly rejects the concept of **“something is better than nothing,”** an approach that the organization recognizes fails to provide the opportunities necessary to heal, to overcome adversity, and to leave trauma and stigma behind.

A founding principle of Simply Smiles is that **it never sacrifices quality of care for quantity**. With that in mind, Simply Smiles intentionally limit their capacity to 16 children, making its provision of the highest quality of care sustainable. **It raises children as a family**, striving each day to duplicate the same commitment as the most loving and capable parents.



TASH funded this kitchen renovation at Simply Smiles.



TASH funded the construction of these casitas (“little houses”) at Simply Smiles orphanage profiled in the “Witness to Oaxaca” article.

Together, Brian and Gaby have created an environment that allows the children in their care to **learn, grow, thrive, and heal** as they pursue their dreams and their brightest futures. A moving testimonial from one of the children¹ at Simply Smiles attests to this:

“The truth is, I don’t remember much about my early childhood (prior to arriving at Simply Smiles), but I do remember coming home sometimes, **and there was nothing to eat**. I couldn’t complain because my dad didn’t leave us any money, and when he got home, **he was angry and would hit us**. We couldn’t do anything.

“Here in this home (Simply Smiles village) **we are a family**, a team that supports each other. If someone strays, we try to help them understand and guide them so they don’t ruin their lives. We help them to learn to value things and put in the effort because not all children in this world have what we have.

¹Simply Smiles protects the identity of its children. Thus, names are never mentioned, and photographs that show any of the children’s faces are prohibited.

Witness to Oaxaca, continued

“We are very fortunate to have come to this place and to have met **Gaby and Bryan**. They have shown us love, and you won’t find people like them anywhere else in the world! They have taught us to work, to respect others, and to live with others. **All of the things they have done for us cannot be repaid.**

“**Gaby is like our mother**, and I respect her very much. I have never disrespected her, and if I ever did, I would always ask for forgiveness. It’s thanks to her that I’m here giving this message because she has taught me how to express myself and how to be grateful.”

In March 2025, Simply Smiles welcomed five new children, all under the age of 12, including one sibling group. As a trusted child placement site, Simply Smiles was contacted by Oaxaca’s DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia, or Mexico’s department of family services) to receive these children. These children have already had a difficult start in their short lives with no known family. They have been under the supervision of DIF and have a craving for stability.

After just a short time, Gaby is happy to report that **the new children are acclimating well to life at the village**, getting to know the other children, building trust with Gaby and the staff, and settling into a routine. They are receiving healthy and nutritious meals, attending local schools, beginning work with a child psychologist, and receiving medical care and all of the services that make them feel safe.

TASH has supported Simply Smiles with funding for various capital projects, including an extensive kitchen renovation and new construction of casitas (“little houses”) where the children live.



The interior of the casitas at Simply Smiles are bright, clean, and spacious.



FUTURE EVENTS & UPDATES

The **17th Annual Olé 5k** will take place on **October 4, 2025**. Registration is now open! Please visit <https://tashinc.org/ole-5k/race-info/> for more information about the race and about opportunities for sponsorship.



Here are some other photos from my visit to Oaxaca in March 2025.



With the leadership team at Canica, the after school program for street children.



A meaningful visit to La Ciudad de Los Niños (The City of the Children) orphanage.



A visit to the home of Edwin Pacheco (discussed in detail in the last newsletter).

To make a donation, please make a check out to “Tash, Inc.” and use the included donation envelope. To donate securely online, please visit: www.tashinc.org

Transparency: Visit tashinc.org to learn how your donations support those in need in Oaxaca, Mexico. Contact us at admin@tashinc.org with your questions.