International Children's Surgical Foundation

"Everyone Was Born to Smile"

ICSFOUNDATION.ORG VOLUME 9 NO. 3

Free Surgeries 12,700 Feet above Sea Level

Bolivia was one of the first countries served by the newly-created ICSF in early 2006. Eighteen Bolivian missions later, Dr. Williams recounts, "LaPaz is so high in elevation that I have always had a little trouble sleeping at nights due to the lower oxygen levels.

"That aside, we have had some of our most rewarding experiences there. Some of our families travel for more than a day to reach us. The mothers and fathers are the most expressive parents in the world. They frequently grab me by the arm and voiciferously and tearfully express their gratitude after the surgeries.

"We have been able to do very complicated multistage operations in Bolivia" (see Ruth, below) "because of my Bolivian plastic surgeon friend who follows the patients year round."

ICSF traveled to Bolivia directly from Pucallpa, Peru, where a wide variety of patients was also treated—a record number, in fact.

Eight-year-old Ruth, with permanent hair loss due to a scalp scald burn at age four. Ruth (far right) after two-stage scalp expansion using a silicone tissue expander involving two surgeries, four months apart).

Three-month-old Noemi, of Bolivia, before surgery and after.

ICSF Takes on Rare Case in Philippines

Congenital Amniotic Band Syndrome of the face is a very rare condition, occurring in less than one out of 500,000 live births. But figures didn't mean anything to Shelon's mother and father. Their son was born with a horrible deformity, and they were devastated. To make matters worse, every medical team that came to their region said they could not do complicated cases such as his on their routine cleft palate missions. It seemed as though these organizations just didn't want to make the effort to help.

Shelon before surgery for Congenital Amniotic Band Syndrome of the face.

Fortunately, Shelon's family met a local doctor who knew about ICSF and its willingness to take on complicated patients. The referral was made. ICSF subsequently made all the special preparations needed, including a computerized scan of the face and head, available only in the larger cities. After a year of preparation, Shelon's time came during ICSF's August mission to Cadiz, Philippines. The operation took six hours and proceeded without a hitch. Postoperatively, Shelon did well with only a very slight healing problem—which was taken care of by ICSF.

Shelon's parents were glad ICSF cared enough to be there for him for his recovery phase. The other groups that came would not have been available for postoperative care due to their quick-in, quick-out styles of working. Shelon has recovered now but still needs further surgery. Dr. Williams adds, "Shelon will also need a prosthetic eye, which is a formidable task in a Third World setting. ICSF is up to the challenge, though. We like helping kids like Shelon, who have not been able to find help from other mission organizations. It's gratifying to help them to the greatest extent possible, even though they are poor."

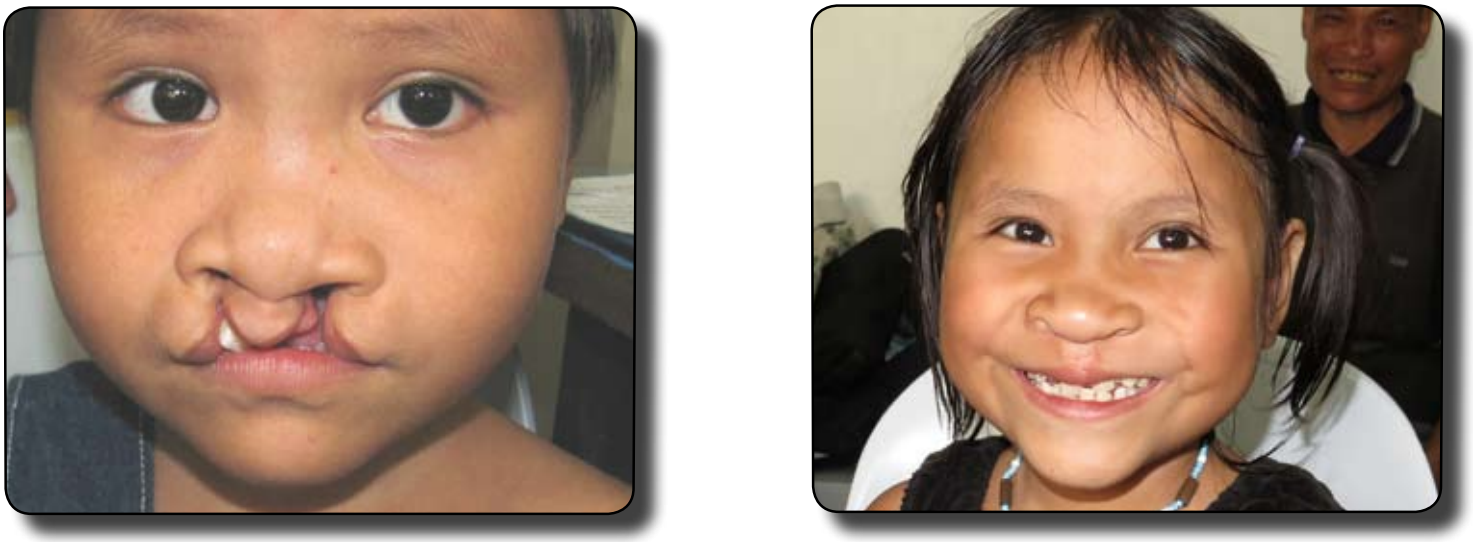
Shelon after surgery. The left side of his face and mouth will be corrected in ICSF's 2015 Cadiz mission. ICSF alreayd has initiated contact to secure a prosthetic eye.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Little Worlds

"You can't change the world," said my doctor friend in 2004, after I told him of my plans to leave all medical practice in the U.S. for the developing world. My friend had uttered these words in an effort to convince me that giving up my plastic surgery career in the U.S. would not be in my best interest. "It's unfair to help one person and not everyone else," he added. As I later contemplated my friend's words *you can't change the world*, a little patient came to mind. Her smile was radiant in my memory, undimmed by time. Instantly a revelation came to me as clearly as anything has ever come: *Her world HAD been changed* by the surgeries she had received. I remembered that after her treatments she was able to look at other people without shame. She surely perceived the world differently after her surgeries. The little girl in my memory had proved my friend wrong.

(Continued on page 4)



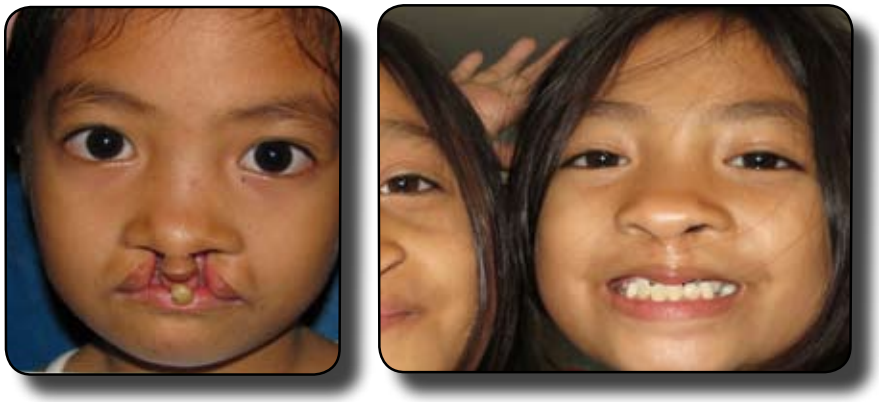
Grace's world changed greatly after her surgeries.

Hope's world was changed by ICSF's surgeries.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

(Continued from page 3)

A lot has transpired since that 2004 discussion with my friend. ICSF came into existence and more than two thousand little worlds have been changed. Furthermore, my life has been brightened by the multitude of people whom I have met, ICSF's supporters—who also believe that we can change the world, one little world at a time. Thank you, ICSF's supporters, for helping to change these little worlds.



Princess's world changed, and so did her mother's, after the surgeries. This post-surgery photo shows her with a friend.

Please take a moment to look at just a few examples—on this and the previous pages—of little worlds that have been changed by ICSF through your generosity. And remember that "Everyone was born to smile."

Dr. Geoff Williams

President, ICSF
P.O. Box 4594, Boise, Idaho 83711-4594
(208) 375-8132

www.icsfoundation.org

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The Gift of a Smile

Many gifts fade or lose their appeal with time. This holiday season, give the timeless gift—the gift that will never lose its worth—the Gift of a Smile. Give the Gift of a Smile to a poor child in a distant land, a child who will receive it with gladness and use it every day for the rest of his or her life. Donate this holiday season for one or more child's free cleft surgery by ICSF, the organization that will take all the time in the world to create a beautiful smile for a poor child in a far-away land.

Luzielle uses her Gift of a Smile every day.