



# August Newsletter 2023

**200 chairs arrived in Ibarra, Ecuador and 100 have been assembled, customized and distributed between January and June 2023**



All hands were on board, Jan 20th 2023, as the 40-foot truck arrived at our center in Ibarra, Ecuador with 200 wheelchairs. "It's a dream come true" says Kit Frank our partner in Ecuador. Over the next 8 weeks, Chris, physical therapist from Nicaragua, Jessica our Ecuadorian physical therapist, Kit, Ruth and numerous international volunteers assembled, fit, adapted and distributed 50 wheelchairs. It was an incredibly moving and satisfying experience.



## Meet some of the children and see the impact



Promoting Independence!! Meylin no longer needs to be carried by her mother. She is determined to propel herself in her new wheelchair. The chair has brought new opportunities to Meylin and her family.



Andy was slipping out of his old chair every minute with the seat belt around his neck. In his new chair he was giggling and watching everything happening in his environment.



Jordy will go to public school using his new wheelchair. This chair supports his independence and allow him to build friendships at school and in his community. He is thrilled.



Alina now has a wheelchair suitable for the rough terrain where her family lives and a tray to create new possibilities for her to eat, help, play and learn.



# Introducing the “Cub”, new on the market wheelchair, and learn about Cielo de Amor’s accomplishments and needs

We were delighted to be able to purchase 20 “Cub” wheelchairs made by Participant Assistive Products. It is the first affordable chair that is ideal for children with cerebral palsy and has been years in the making. The Cub wheelchair, tilts, reclines, folds, has all the necessary postural supports, a tray, and a fifth wheel for rough terrain. It is very easy to assemble and adjust. We are thrilled and the families are too.



Elvis is in a Cub and can now sit comfortably and go with his family on outings in the community. We adapted the cushion to accommodate his scoliosis and the fifth wheel allows his family to navigate the rough terrain where he lives.



Marjory’s chair was adapted, to accommodate her individual needs. The head rest was enlarged, extra support was provided for her legs and the back position altered. She is excited to be able to be with her mother in the kitchen and to be able to feed her chickens in her yard.



Aldair is sitting comfortably in his Cub. If he needs to rest, the chair can easily tilt back. The tray is so helpful to enable play and learning, as well as meal times

## **Accomplishments**

- 1) We have hired 3 local Ecuadorian staff in wheelchair provision and one trainer from Nicaragua
- 2) We purchased 200 wheelchairs and have fit and distributed more than a 100. We have run out of some sizes and types of chairs.
- 3) Provided 25 follow-up visits
- 4) We have had more than 20 students and volunteers
- 5) 40 Ecuadorian health care staff received training in wheelchair provision

## **Needs**

- 1) \$40,000 to purchase a container of 100 specialized wheelchairs
- 2) \$5,000 to add a part time physical therapist
- 3) \$4,000 to hire a part time wheelchair technician with a disability
- 4) 15 more monthly or annual donors to guarantee staff salary



## Dreaming, Expanding, Training, and Building Sustainability in Ecuador



In February and March 2023 CIELO de Amor provided basic and intermediate trainings to 40 local physical therapists, students, government healthcare workers and administrators in the provision of simple and complex wheelchairs. The dynamic three-day training included hands on assembly of wheelchairs, maintenance and repair.



Training participants gained a deep understanding of the differences and benefits of the range of chairs we provide. They had the opportunity to propel the chairs in the local square and understand accessibility challenges. Participants had hands on experiences providing maintenance and simple repairs to the chairs. First-hand experience and testimonies were shared by several wheelchair users which increased understanding of the importance of an appropriate and well-fit chair with a pressure relief cushion



The trainings success has resulted in increased interest in further trainings and requests for many more wheelchairs. We are currently in dialogue with various government branches as to how they can support the process both financially and logistically.

CIELO de Amor will continue to subsidize wheelchair provision in order to provide quality wheelchairs and follow up services. **We are deeply thankful to our donors** for making this possible and excited about the possibility of Ecuadorian contribution toward the wheelchair service. We are passionate about building local capacity and sustainability and will continue to provide ongoing training to physical and occupational therapists, health care workers and administrators

**OUR DREAM:** We have found land in a suitable location and we would love to have our own purpose-built center. Estimated total costs are \$125,000. Please share with us if you know of individuals or grantors who might like to contribute to make this dream a reality.



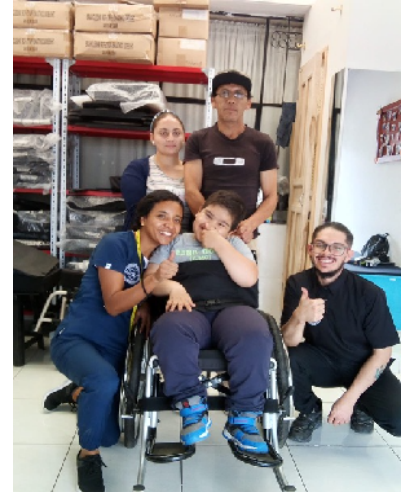
## Meet our staff and some of our volunteers



Alicia, technician, queen of cardboard adaptations and sewing



Jessica and Chris, physical therapists from Ecuador and Nicaragua



Jessica and Kevin, our newest physical therapist, with a content client and his family

Thanks to our generous donors we purchased an industrial sewing machine. We can now make our own cushions, seatbelts, straps and adaptations so that each child receives a customized chair that meets their unique needs.

Some of our volunteers

Richard and Elaine assembling chairs. Richard is a phenomenal teacher of tool use and generously left us a fabulous array of tools and supplies, all labeled and organized.



Matt and Kit designed a drop seat so that wheelchair users can comfortably self-propel with their foot if they desire



5<sup>th</sup> graders at Village School accomplished a phenomenal fundraiser; two bake sales, a raffle, and coin drop raised money to purchase 3 wheelchairs for children in Ecuador.

**Thank you to all our donors for changing the lives of more than 200 children, adults and their families, and supporting the salaries and training of staff in Ecuador**