

NEWS FROM THE ROOFTOP



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CARLOS: A BOY OUT OF TIME

by Charlene Meyer

As I look back on nearly 20 years of traveling to Nicaragua, I ask myself why I am so passionate about this country I have come to love. True, I am still not used to the raw beauty of tropical forests, smoking volcanoes dotting the mountains, natural waterfalls with beautiful flowers, and stars so bright you feel you can touch them. But what keeps bringing us back are the big brown eyes that follow us as we traipse through their mountainside settlements of dirt-floor shacks as we check on the projects funded by friends of The Tin Roof Foundation. We are searching for the most urgent needs and revisiting children and families who have touched our hearts.

Today, it is Carlos. His full name is Carlos Noel Llanes Pineda. We told you about him in our last *News from the Rooftop*, but today his plight has deepened and we are desperate to help him. He is 6 years old and was born with a birth defect called hypospadias, which is the absence of a urinary opening. I have been unable to forget this precious little boy since meeting him in March.

CARLOS WAITS FOR HELP

Our planned visit with Carlos, his mother Carolina, and his siblings proves to be a challenge. We received good news several weeks ago that Carolina had the lumps in her breast biopsied, thanks to a Tin Roof donor. We celebrated as we heard the news that the results were negative for the reoccurrence of breast cancer. However, we received sad news that Carlos has been back in the hospital. His condition has worsened as we wait for the doctor and hospital to set a date for the first of several needed surgeries.

I desperately want to see Carlos. We are told the family has moved from their village



in Somoto and no one seems to know where they live now. My frustrations intensify as we continue our search. We have only hours left before we must leave to make the long drive back to Managua. At the last minute, we receive word of his location. We quickly load up our 4-wheel drive truck and within 15 minutes we are descending a steep, rocky jeep trail that will lead us to him.

A MOTHER IS DESPERATE

In the distance I see a frail boy sitting on a plastic chair in the doorway of a humble house. His lap and legs are covered with a thin towel. His face is pale and the sparkle I remember in his eyes from our last visit has vanished. He is listless and barely responds to our questions.

Carolina, his mother, tells us he was just released from the hospital yesterday. She was given prescriptions for several tests and an appointment back at the Managua hospital in four days. Anything beyond physician and room cost is not covered. The family must pay for all needed medical tests and medications as well as care for the patient around the clock and bring in all the food. In desperation,

Carolina has rented her home and moved in with another family to get money for tests and transportation costs, but it is not enough. We give Carolina \$50 to help with the cost of tests and travel for his upcoming appointment. We know this is not enough to save Carlos.

My heart is broken. How is it possible this young boy is still waiting for surgery? His condition is deteriorating each day. We discuss our options. We can no longer wait for his turn on the long list at a government hospital. We can have surgery done privately. Carlos will need several surgeries at a projected cost of \$15,000 for private surgeries. We are out of options; it is a matter of life and death for Carlos.

HELP BRING HOPE TO CARLOS

We need your help to save this child. Won't you please help us with a donation? It is not too late for Carlos, and we know if we can just get him the surgeries he needs, he can be on his way to leading a better life, full of hope for the future. Please send your donation today to The Tin Roof Foundation, or call Charlene Meyer, (513) 474-4540 to discuss your contribution.

BRINGING HOPE TO KIDS