Dear friends and benefactors,

It is my pleasure to announce that our Bolivian family is celebrating its first anniversary. A year full of experiences, good ones and not so good ones, but all in all, we grabbed the bull by the horns and despite the difficulties we are becoming a happy, growing family.

On January 2005, we found, rented, and started fixing up a large house that would later become our home, office, and even school during the summer break. By April 15, the first group of five brothers and sisters joined us. One day later, a group of six sisters, all girls, came to us. From that day on, we continued to grow slowly making sure that the family environment had a good foundation. We first thought that the rented space could accommodate up to a hundred boys and girls. As the children continued arriving, we soon realized that our expectations were too ambitious. Presently, we have over forty children and the big place is not so big after all. Adding fifteen or twenty more children will fill our rented home to its maximum capacity.

Luckily, early last year we also found and purchased a nice property that eventually will become the children’s permanent home. Towards the end of the year, the land was cleared, and roads were opened, initiating what someday will be our home. It will take at least one year for the first phase to be completed and enable us to move in. Meanwhile, the family will stay at the rented house where we live now.
An ever present challenge is to surround the children by exemplary adults that can inspire and help them to develop drives and acquire values to better themselves. In an effort to train the staff, I am able to spend a lot of time very close to the children. Our local staff works hard to involve themselves in the children’s lives. Some are very successful, but for others it is more challenging. As in other countries, we welcome volunteers who can enrich us with different views and ways of doing things.

Bolivia has been undergoing a lot of political instability. Only last year, after days of civil unrest, the president was overthrown. Previous to that, our state’s governor left his charge. Road blocks occurred unannounced and frequently. Related consequences were that many food products, agricultural products, fuel, etc. did not arrive in the city, and thus the cost of consumer goods went up. In stable Latin-American countries, bureaucracy is generally a barrier, however in Bolivia, the government changes made everyday life even more difficult.

Because of the relatively small group of children we have in Bolivia, I can gladly say that I know each one of them very well. We have a long way to go as we continue growing, but we are following the right path to achieve our goals of healing and recovering a small part of what the children have lost. For your faithful and continuous support, and on behalf of the forty plus children under our care, I thank all of you.

German Mercado Ramirez
National Director Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos-Bolivia
We have been blest that most of the children behave themselves very well and need only minor disciplinary measures as they adapt to their new home. Personally, I find it incredible to see how welcoming our existing population is to those just arriving. The most frequent situation with new arrivals is that many of the facilities in our home are new to them. Since many children come from extremely poor communities, we show them what all of us take for granted, such as how to use toilets, showers, sinks, etc. Most of the children arrive with several ailments, so the caretakers work in conjunction with the health department to make sure they receive the proper medication and treatment.

A regular day in the life of a child begins early in the morning by taking a shower and participating in the daily chores around the house, followed by breakfast. Mornings are reserved for school. After school they have lunch, and use the rest of the afternoon in homework and recreation activities.

Keeping committed personnel to work with children has been a real challenge. During the year we experienced a high turnover in childcare. Many were not prepared for the reality that working with children is more than a full time job and requires giving a lot of one’s self, and accepting the children as our own family. Many people need a job, but few have what it takes or are willing to give what it takes to care for the children. In order to attract and keep good personnel, we offer competing salaries, social services, and assist them in their family matters when possible. My personal experience is that good volunteers enrich the child care area, bringing new ideas, and bonding with the children. In January, we welcomed our first volunteer and are looking forward to welcoming three more by the middle of this year. I am sure that the relationship of our local staff with the volunteers will be a win-win experience for all of us.
Social Work

Social work was one of the most active departments this year. Many of the Pequeños came from far away, depressed, and inaccessible areas of the country. Even though our children come from different circumstances, such as death or abandonment of parents, the one thing they have in common is the need for love and security. NPH encourages any existing relatives of the Pequeños to remain in contact with them. In Bolivia, we set at least four official visitor’s days at year.

By December 2005, NPH Bolivia was home to forty children from zero to sixteen years of age. During that same year three children left the house, and one was taken back into our care. Early this year, we had three families totaling twelve children waiting for an opportunity to come to us. Since we work in coordination with the public department of social and child welfare, our main limitation in bringing these children to NPH was the instability and transition of public authorities. Our present house is limiting us too, because it is getting crowded.

Below are some statistics of our program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population during 2005</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admitted to NPH</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current children in NPH</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children that left NPH</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redmitted to NPH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting to be admitted</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following is a chronicle of one of many social work trips that hopefully will help to get a better idea of the children’s situation prior to coming to NPH.

Last Tuesday July the 5th. 11 children joined the family. Our family went from 19 to 30. And so our needs went up: more food, clothing, tuition, medical expenses and so on. We are still working to make the new arrivals feel at home and I am sure that it will not take much longer because they are as happy as they can be.

Our trip to pick up the children started early in the morning. The night before, we rented two SUV’S to reach the tiny villages where the families lived. First we went to Comarapa, a town of about three thousand people to pick up Jacqueline, a 10 years old girl. Then we left the main paved road. The weather did not help; with the rain, the dirt roads became muddy, making it impossible to reach all the way to the village without endangering our lives or the vehicles. Five kilometers were ahead of us, so we decided to walk the rest of the way. Our pants and shoes were soon covered with mud, we were soaking wet and shivering cold, but we kept on walking. After an hour and half, we got to the house where our first children were living. They were waiting for us. Immediately we started walking back to the cars. Maribel and Rogelio, nine and eight years old respectively, managed the five kilometers walk back to the car very well. But there was also two year old Nelly and six week old Juan Manuel, who obviously could not make the trip by themselves adding challenge to the walk.

It took us another twenty minutes trying to turn back in the narrow muddy road, and then we headed to the next village to pick up the second group of children. Fortunately, the road was not as muddy as the first one, and we reached the village without major inconvenience, but we did have to wait for the older boys. We were told that they went out to hunt armadillos. A while later they showed up with a skinny dog and empty hands. As soon as they arrived, the six children jumped into the cars and we headed back to the house. The ride back was not as smooth as I had planned. All of the children except one got car sick which necessitated a thorough shampooing of the car when we finally returned.

We finally made it back to the house just before eleven at night. The children went to take a hot shower and then had a late hot dinner. Even though we talked to our children about the arrival of their new brothers and sisters, I was curious to see how they were going to receive them. To my surprise, our Pequeños, though tired because of the late hour, were very happy and welcoming to the new arrivals. They had helped to prepare a simple cake to share with new Pequeños after dinner. Every day the group gets closer and closer, and it gets difficult to know which ones are the new arrivals.

Below find a brief report on these children. On the day that we bring the children to our house, when possible, we also bring the relatives so they can see where and how the children are going to live.

Jacqueline was abandoned by her parents. She lived with her grandmother for a while, and then jumped from one uncle to another for short periods of time. A few months ago, she was raped by one of them and was put under the care of “La Defensoria de la niñez”. She was later placed with a foster family, but they did not have the means to continue caring for Jacqueline and so she came to us. Jacqueline will get proper psychological and medical treatment, but mainly the love and care that she needs to
overcome such a traumatic experience. Jacqueline is a very bright and joyful girl, an example to other children, and she is rapidly fitting in our family.

The Gutierrez family is composed of:
Maribel 9 years old
Rogelio 8 years old
Nelly 2 years old
Juan Manuel 1½ months

The Gutierrez’ were homeless living with their mother, begging from house to house and sleeping in the patios until they were kicked out. Mrs. Gutierrez has psychological problems. Communication with her was very limited as she is very quiet and her native language is Quechua (a Bolivian local language). We used a translator to communicate. Mrs. Gutierrez was very grateful and happy that NPH was helping her children. I suspect that Maribel needs professional psychological help, because she tends to be violent with her little sister and with the rest of the children. We are going to take her for examinations so we know for certain how we can better help her.

Our second family is the Rodriguez family. They are:
Jhonny 17 years old.
Alenia 14 years old.
Reovane 12 years old
Nelida 7 years old.
Jhonatan 4 years old
Maria 8 months old

The Rodriguez’ were also homeless and all lived with their mother in a small dirt room that belonged to their neighbors. Jhonny and Alenia are proving that they want to study and help their little brothers and sisters. They are self motivated, smart, and an example to the rest of the children. In the first week, Jhonatan had a difficult time when his older brothers and sisters left for school every morning. He used to cry a lot, but he is now realizing that his brothers are not leaving him.

We are completing all the medical examinations on our new children. Besides doing the requested examinations of HIV, Hepatitis B, and tuberculosis, we added the examination to detect Chagas. Most of our children’s living conditions before coming to us were environments where this ailment is common. As with most of the new arrivals, these children too have lice, skin diseases, and some degree of malnutrition, ailments that soon will go away.

We have an extended waiting list of children that NPH could care for. It was difficult to pick the Gutierrez and the Rodriguez families over the other children and we do not want to grow too fast and jeopardize our program. We will continue steadily taking children as long as we can provide them with proper care.

We found out that Maribel needed a lot of attention and love and also that she has learning disabilities having do to with birth complications. Starting this year she entered a school for the especially challenged.
Education

Finding a school for the children was a real challenge, mainly because the school year in Bolivia runs from February to November, and we received our first group of children in April. Enrollments at all public schools are done months before the school year starts and space is very limited. It is not unusual to find that most public schools are overcrowded. We could not find a public school that would accept so many new children months after the school year started. As an alternative, we visited several private schools and soon realized that some of them did not even want to consider us when we mentioned that the children were orphans coming from poor communities. Others had very high tuition or limited space. After all the research, we opted to enroll the children in a private school where they could continue studying as they arrive at NPH without losing a whole school year. Fortunately, through negotiations, we were able to get a big discount on the tuition.

An initial inconvenience, due to the fact that the school is located about six miles away from home, was that the public transportation cost went up for several months. The cost came back down only after we had purchased a sixteen passenger mini-bus. It is worth mentioning that the children worked very hard and were able to pass their classes, especially when many of them missed a lot of school days before coming to NPH.

In December of 2005, we started the first “summer program” for the children. All the children enjoyed courses in regional music, arts and crafts, English, and Tae Kwan do. Our house was stretched to accommodate the offices and the summer classroom, and we used every corner of it. At the end of January, summer courses finished with an exposition of the children’s work. Summer courses were successful and the children enjoyed learning interesting subjects and discovering their hidden talents. We look forward to sponsoring this program again next summer. For 2006 more than thirty children were enrolled in school.

Health department

During the first week of each child’s arrival, they receive several laboratory tests such as HIV, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, Chagas (a tropical sickness transmitted by a bug), as well as routine blood testing. They also receive a general physical and dental check up. Depending on the results, we follow through with needed treatments. Very often, children come with skin diseases, a certain degree of malnutrition, and plagued with lice. With proper medical treatment and nutritious meals, their health and physical appearance improves rather quickly.

One major surgery was performed on a ten year old girl who broke her arm in a soccer game. Fortunately, she recuperated very well. Besides this surgery, we have had only common ailments such headaches, high fever, and other minor sicknesses. Our clinic is being reorganized by a long time friend and first volunteer, Mary Donlan. Soon, we will also welcome a physical therapist and another two volunteers.
Religion

Following our family principles, we take seriously the spiritual education of the children. Part of that education takes place in mass every Saturday and it is complemented by devoted friends that come to our house to teach catechism. Early this year, six of our little ones were baptized, and six more received their first communion. In the following months more children will receive first communion and will prepare themselves for their confirmation. Additionally, we are in talks with our local church to organize retreats to raise the children’s awareness.

Sponsorship program

Our sponsorship program has waited a long time to take off. My expectation is that by the time you read these lines, it will be up and running. We thank all of you who want to become godparents, or know of people that wish to become godparents.

Funds allocation

As in every start up program, at NPH Bolivia, our initial operating cost was high. Finding a suitable place to start the program was one thing, but fixing that place to fit our needs was something else. Cost to fix the provisional old large house doubled what we had budgeted. Even after the old place was fixed, and especially after we moved in, a lot of maintenance work had to be done. Other expenses stayed closed to previous expectations, and a few categories went up higher than we expected. The graph below shows a comparison between annual actual expenses and budgeted expenses.
Construction progress

We worked with an architectural firm to draw a master plan for the property we will build on in order to maximize space and reduce future construction flaws. By December of 2005, we initiated the first construction phase by clearing the land and opening roads. Part of the first phase are the following: architectural and engineering master plans, infrastructure, drilling a water well with an elevated tank, building a large dining-room with its kitchen, and six houses each to accommodate sixteen children and two caretakers. The picture below shows heavy machinery opening roads at our property.

We at NPH Bolivia are grateful for every person and company that has been supporting the children, and remain confident that one day in the near future a new NPH home will be a reality.