

Dear Caring Oxford Club Member,

I'm writing you today to ask you to step in the footprints of a hero -- and help us sustain a brighter future for the children and adults in the isolated villages of Limon, Rancho Santiago, and 48 surrounding communities in southwest Nicaragua.

But first, let me tell you a story a little girl.

Rosa Gonzalez¹ yanked open the door to the Roberto Clemente - Rancho Santana Clinic. She clasped Marie Elena -- her 7-year old daughter -- in her arms.

She desperately scanned the large room looking for someone, anyone who could help.

“Mi hija. Mi hija,” she could barely choke out, her voice dry and dusty from a day and a half travel. “Ayuda me.” (“My baby girl. My baby girl. Help me.”)

Almost immediately a stout man with kind eyes and a soft face -- a man who moments earlier sat down for a much deserved rest -- swept her from her mother's arms and carried her to a secluded corner of the Clinic.

Marie Elena and her mother's journey to the Clinic had begun a day and a half earlier on a rattletrap bicycle. Mother and daughter were like many of the Clinic's visitors who arrive on foot, by bicycle (2, 3, or 4 on one bike), on mule back, or on foot.

Visiting the Clinic was a difficult decision for the Gonzales family. They had never visited it before. Although friends had told her they could get help without paying, Rosa and Santiago couldn't believe that.

But the little girl's breathing problems worsened. Santiago had just gotten a few days work for a dollar a day and the family couldn't afford to have him not work. So mama took Marie Elena while papa stayed home.

The dust of the roads and the stress of the journey tightened Marie Elena's lungs every mile. Fortunately, the little girl's strong spirit won out over her asthma-weakened lungs. She remained conscious until the bike was barely 25 yards from the Clinic's door. Then she fell unconscious.

A Neighborhood Family Doctor for People Who Have Seen Little -- if Any -- Medical Care

Hello. This is Julia Guth, Executive Director of Oxford Club and Director of the Roberto Clemente - Rancho Santana Clinic. The medical care given at the Clinic is dramatically improving the lives of the people from this area in southwest Nicaragua.

¹ Rosa Gonzales, Marie Elena, and their family are composite characters, drawn from the hundreds of men, women and children who ask for your help today.