



**IMAHELPS**

**SUMMER 2023**

**Journey to Quito: A Season of Impact**

**Stories of Dedication, Innovation, and Hope**

*By Annika Allen, Jeff Crider & Dr. Marilu Romero*

**MAKING  
AN  
IMPACT**

IMAHELPS



SUMMER 2023

**Welcome to the IMAHelps Newsletter**

As we unveil our inaugural quarterly newsletter, journey with us through the impactful stories of our summer mission in Quito, Ecuador. Every narrative and image resonates with the essence of the IMAHelps ethos.

Dive in, feel inspired, and stay connected.



**CONTENTS**

<b>04</b>	<b>Quito Focus</b>
<b>08</b>	<b>Donor Gratitude</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Robotics Innovation</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>A Touch of Therapy</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Robert's Legacy</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Emerging Leaders</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>The Road Ahead</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>IMAHelps History</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Endowment Endeavor</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>Contact the Board</b>

*Designed by Annika Allen.  
Photos courtesy of Angelo DiFusco.*

# QUITO FOCUS

## Changing Lives **|||||**

### Directing Care Where It's Needed Most

In a transformative journey from February's reconnaissance to the mission between July 29 and August 6, IMAHelps volunteers made a profound impact in Quito, providing free healthcare to 3,750 patients at Hospital General Docente de Calderon. Services provided included nearly 70 general, orthopedic, gynecological and plastic surgeries and free dentistry for over 500 patients. Our mission's ripple effect was evident in the throngs that wrapped around Calderón Hospital, showcasing the success of our outreach to Quito's marginalized communities.





## Laying the Groundwork

In February, IMAHelps' reconnaissance trip to Quito's remote communities laid the foundation for our successful summer mission, ensuring widespread awareness and trust.





**LASTING  
IMPACT**

**Diverse Health Concerns**

IMAHelps' mission in Quito highlighted a broad spectrum of medical expertise. Beyond general surgeries, our team also had dentists, acupuncture specialists, and, uniquely, a high school robotics team crafting mechanical limbs. The inclusion of our mission's first psychotherapist, Dr. Marilu Romero, further emphasized the depth of holistic care we provided to the community.



## A Visual Journey

To dive deeper into our transformative journey in Quito, visit the IMAHelps website. There, Marina Kufa's captivating video and a rich gallery of photos await, along with news stories capturing the essence of IMAHelps' spirit in Ecuador. Don't miss this visual retelling that brings our mission to life.

Explore more at

► [imahelps.org/quito-focus](https://imahelps.org/quito-focus)



# **DONOR GRATITUDE**

## **A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Benefactors**

IMAHelps extends a heartfelt thank you to our benefactors, whose steadfast generosity has been our cornerstone. From July 28 to August 6, their support enabled our dedicated volunteers to touch the lives of 3,750 patients during our mission in Quito, Ecuador. This transformative journey would not have been possible without the donations that fueled our endeavors, allowing us to provide critical care and instill hope in countless families.



## **Charting New Horizons**

Building on Ecuador's success, our sights turn to the Dominican Republic. Engagements with its Health Ministry start in October, setting the stage for next summer's mission. Await updates post our Dominican visit!



**From Our CEO**

“We simply could not do the humanitarian work we do without the support from our donors,” said Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr. “We cannot emphasize this enough. ... We are committed to step up our communication with donors with electronic newsletters and other outreach efforts to keep everyone apprised of our medical mission activities.”





## **ROBOTICS INNOVATION**

### **Crafting Hope in Quito**

The collaboration between IMAHelps and the robotics team from the Great Lakes Science Center in Cleveland is creating miracles in Ecuador. In Quito, Ariana Simbaña received a 3D-printed mechanical hand that allowed her to form heartfelt gestures; Elvis Pilatagsi Achatuña discovered a new sense of independence after a devastating accident, and Samantha Chiluisa's heartfelt wish to write became the catalyst for this groundbreaking partnership.



## Beyond Medicine

Jefferson Aguirre's journey is emblematic of the transformative power of our missions. After losing all his limbs, he defied all odds to walk out of the hospital on prosthetic legs, an accomplishment that left volunteers and staff in awe. Jeff Crider encapsulated the sentiment: "Hope. That's what our volunteers provide." Our aim remains clear - to continue this collaborative work, touching more lives on every mission.

Read the full story at  
▶ [imahelps.org/robotics](https://imahelps.org/robotics)



# **A TOUCH OF THERAPY**

## **A Volunteer's Perspective**

My Experience as a Psychotherapist in Quito  
By Dr. Marilu Romero



## Healing Beyond Wounds

In the heart of Quito, amidst the intricate tapestry of daily life, a psychotherapist embarked on a journey that would redefine her understanding of resilience, strength, and hope. Dr. Marilu Romero offers a raw and immersive account of her work in Ecuador. One might wonder, what does it mean to offer therapy in such a context? How do these sessions unfold, and how do they impact the lives of those who walk through the tent's flaps? Dr. Romero recalls, "My first patient was a man with no arms and no legs... As I sat in front of (him and his wife), I was at a loss for words. Words seemed so flimsy in the face of such a permanent loss."



### Mental Health Chronicles

This is just a glimpse into the myriad experiences that Dr. Romero encountered. From understanding the cultural dynamics of therapy to harnessing the power of talk and somatic therapies, her narrative offers profound insights into the challenges and triumphs of mental health care in such unique settings. It's about the people she meets—their stories, their struggles, their indefatigable spirit. It's about looking trauma in the eye and finding a way forward.

Delve deeper into this captivating journey and witness the transformative power of therapy in action.

To read the full account of Dr. Marilu Romero's time in Quito, visit

► [imahelps.org/dr-romero](https://imahelps.org/dr-romero)

# ROBERT'S LEGACY

## Robert Openshaw: A Legacy of Steps Taken and Lives Changed

In a hospital in Quito, Ecuador, 27-year-old Jefferson Aguirre stood upright, freed from his wheelchair's confines. The force behind this miracle? Robert Openshaw, a dedicated prosthetist from San Bernardino, California. Anita Tello shared a sentiment as Robert fitted her husband with prosthetic legs.

"My children's biggest dream is that their father come home today with both legs," Tello said through tears. "It looks like their dream is going to come true."



### A Decade of Dedication

Since joining IMAHelps in 2007, Openshaw has transformed over 400 lives across six countries. Each prosthetic limb he crafted not only brought physical restoration but breathed life into dreams. In Paraguay, Michel Romero's story stands out: left legless after confronting his father's killer, Openshaw equipped him with a prosthetic designed for intense activities. Openshaw's dedication went beyond the call of duty. For 13-year-old Jonathan Herrera of Ecuador, he hand-crafted a prosthetic leg using local materials. Such stories define Robert: persistent, compassionate, and innovative.



### **A Surprise Announcement**

During the summer mission of 2023, as evening settled and heartfelt stories were shared, Openshaw revealed the unexpected news of his retirement from medical mission work. Though one chapter closed, the legacy of his transformative work remained powerful, destined to resonate for generations.



## **A Legacy Continues**

As IMAHelps turns its page, Robert Openshaw's legacy will forever be a testament to resilience and hope. As new prosthetists join our mission, his footprints remain an inspiration

For more about Robert Openshaw, visit  
► [imahelps.org/roberts-legacy](https://imahelps.org/roberts-legacy)



# EMERGING LEADERS



## Leadership Evolution

IMAHelps has experienced a significant shift. Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr., after years as a dedicated volunteer, steps up as President and CEO, succeeding Ines Allen's 23-year leadership tenure. Concurrently, Jeff Crider, another long-serving member, assumes the Vice President role as Tracey Allen shifts to Secretary and Treasurer. Ines continues to guide the future, adopting the title of Chairwoman Emeritus.

## IMAHelps



### Upholding the Vision

Dr. Barrios and Crider are determined to elevate IMAHelps. Dr. Barrios shared, "Both Jeff and I are committed to building a sustainable, global healthcare organization..." His commitment is evident, as exemplified by missions like the transformative surgery for Enrique Galván in 2019. Likewise, Crider, with diverse roles since 2008, has penned the organization's storied journey.





## THE ROAD AHEAD

### Advancing Through Research

The 2023 mission to Quito, Ecuador, signifies more than medical aid. Dr. Barrios, partnering with UC Irvine medical students, aims to refine care through strategic research. He notes, "The students will develop a survey...to tailor care for future missions." This initiative underlines IMAHelps' dedication to optimizing care delivery.

## IMAHelps



### Shaping Tomorrow

Recognizing the need for youthful dynamism, IMAHelps introduces an Associate Board. Dr. Barrios advocates for innovative thinking and the board, with talents like Jennifer Padilla, embodies this spirit. They stand poised to carry IMAHelps into the future.

Read more about IMAHelps' journey and the promising future at  
► [imahelps.org/the-road-ahead](https://imahelps.org/the-road-ahead)

# IMAHHELPS HISTORY



## Celebrating IMAHelps' Heritage

Jeff Crider, a dedicated IMAHelps volunteer, chronicles the impactful journey of the nonprofit in his book "A Vision of Hope: The First 20 Years of IMAHelps." This heartwarming narrative traces the organization's origins, its missions, and the profound change it has brought to countless lives. All sales directly support IMAHelps, ensuring continued care for those in need. Several of Jeff's clients underwrote the cost of printing the book so that all book proceeds can be used to purchase medicines and supplies for IMAHelps missions.

Get your copy of this inspiring story at  
► [imahelps.org/store](https://imahelps.org/store)



## **ENDOWMENT ENDEAVOR**

### **Visionary Support**

For over two decades, IMAHelps has operated solely on donations, using the majority for medicines and supplies. Now, thanks to philanthropist George O’Leary, IMAHelps embarks on establishing an endowment. Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr., the organization’s CEO, sees this as a pivotal step for ensuring the longevity and sustainability of IMAHelps as a nonprofit organization.



## A Commitment to Growth

IMAHelps is broadening its horizons with plans to fundraise both for its operational requirements and a long-term endowment fund. “We realize it’s going to take years for us to generate the kinds of legacy donations and support we need for an endowment,” Dr. Barrios remarked. Encouraged by George O’Leary’s initial generosity, the organization remains dedicated to transforming IMAHelps into a sustainable global healthcare beacon.

Read the full story at

► [imahelps.org/endowment-endeavor](https://imahelps.org/endowment-endeavor)



## IMAHelps

# Please Share Your Thoughts With Us

The leadership of IMAHelps wants to be as responsive as possible to our volunteers and donors, which is why we have launched this new quarterly newsletter to keep everyone up to date on our activities.

If you have an idea of an article you would like to see in a future newsletter, please email **Jeff Crider** at [criderpublicrelations@gmail.com](mailto:criderpublicrelations@gmail.com)

If you have ideas on ways we could improve mission planning, outreach and fundraising, we'd love to hear your thoughts and suggestions. Below are names and emails for each of our volunteer staff and board members with their respective titles and areas of responsibility:

- **Dr. Cristobal Barrios, Jr.**, *President and CEO*:  
[cbarrios@uci.edu](mailto:cbarrios@uci.edu)
- **Jennifer Padilla**, *EMT, COO and Mission Coordinator*:  
[jpwarz927@gmail.com](mailto:jpwarz927@gmail.com)
- **Jeff Crider**, *Vice President, Communications Director*:  
[criderpublicrelations@gmail.com](mailto:criderpublicrelations@gmail.com)
- **Yardena Trevino**, *Secretary and Director of Donor Relations*:  
[yardena@desertmedaesthetics.com](mailto:yardena@desertmedaesthetics.com)
- **Tracey Allen**, *Treasurer*:  
[tdasam6@gmail.com](mailto:tdasam6@gmail.com)
- **Dr. Doriana Cosgrove**, *Surgery Team*:  
[doriana@desertmedaesthetics.com](mailto:doriana@desertmedaesthetics.com)
- **Dr. Gin Goei**, *Dental Team*:  
[ghgoei@yahoo.com](mailto:ghgoei@yahoo.com)
- **Dr. Nina Maw Maw**, *Internal Medicine Team*:  
[ninamawmaw@aol.com](mailto:ninamawmaw@aol.com)
- **Robert Openshaw**, *Prosthetics Team*:  
[rflstc95@aol.com](mailto:rflstc95@aol.com)
- **Gloria Soto-Reyes**, *Prosthetics and Physical Therapy Team*:  
[actioninmotion@sbcglobal.net](mailto:actioninmotion@sbcglobal.net)
- **Dr. Todd Swenning**, *Surgery Team*:  
[johnnysawbones@yahoo.com](mailto:johnnysawbones@yahoo.com)
- **Carolina Vasconcelos**, *Dental Team*:  
[cvascousa@gmail.com](mailto:cvascousa@gmail.com)
- **Ana Wood**, *Dental Team*:  
[anarwood@gmail.com](mailto:anarwood@gmail.com)
- **Ines Allen**, *Chairwoman Emeritus*:  
[inesga@aol.com](mailto:inesga@aol.com)



# GRATITUDE IN EVERY STEP



Your support and dedication fuel our mission. As this journey unfolds, IMAHelps is deeply thankful for every hand extended, every smile shared, and every life touched. Together, we build a brighter, healthier future.

**THA  
NK  
YOU**

