

## Summer 2016

6/9/20160 COMMENTS

The summer of 2016 has been a busy time for Health Bridges International (HBI). In June a group of volunteers, including parishioners from Christ Episcopal Church, took part in HBI's annual Team Perú trip. The trip brought together volunteers from around the U.S. and included two weeks of health outreach in impoverished public schools and community activities in Arequipa in collaboration with Father Alex Busuttli.

July saw HBI provide a number of trainings and present at a World Health Organization (WHO) conference in Glasgow, Scotland. Staff from HBI helped to train municipal employees in the City of Arequipa on basic first aid and community safety. HBI partners from Linfield University School of Nursing presented data from a collaborative research study on cross-cultural service learning for nursing students.

In addition, in collaboration with expert trainers from Yale University School of Medicine - HBI facilitated an international course on Emergency Point of Care Ultrasound. A rare hands-on continuing medical education conference for 30 emergency room physicians at Clínica Delgado in Lima.

Also in July, HBI worked with an intern from the University of Michigan to conduct a research study on agencies and organizations in the City of Lima serving street youth. The study, the first of its kind in Lima, included the development of an online portal for organizations to collaborate and learn more about partnering with other youth serving groups in Lima. HBI will be publishing the results of the study in an academic journal in late 2016.

Finally, in August HBI is continuing work on developing a "Center of Excellence" for serving marginalized and high risk youth in collaboration with a Peruvian Government run home for abandon children in Arequipa. The project, a five year historic agreement between HBI and the Peruvian Government, is designed to create a model program for working with highly marginalized youth. HBI is spearheading the project in collaboration with a number of subject matter experts and in-country partners.

To learn more about the work of HBI - including ways you can get involved - follow us on Twitter @HealthBridges or Facebook @HBInt.org. As always, check-out our website at: [www.HBInt.org](http://www.HBInt.org)

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## Reflections - HBI Executive Director, Wayne Centrone

6/9/20160 COMMENTS

This past few days Ben and I have been in Arequipa. We traveled down to the White City with Team Peru and were met by a group of students from Riverdale High School. Needless-to-say, we've been busy with logistics and getting everyone settled.

As I type this message, I am on the last leg of my journey home. Not to fear, Karen will join Ben on Sunday to help with the Riverdale students. He is, however, managing a couple of significant projects.

Our Team Peru group is working with two families in the Alto Cayma area to "adopt" them for the week. No – not really; rather, we are working with Maria, the social worker for the Mission of Alto Cayma, to support two families living in extreme poverty with minor home makeovers. Father asked us to get involved. He feels focused outreach, like adopting the families, is the best way to reach the most underserved people in his Parish.

The first family is actually two families, four adults and four small children, living together in two small huts on a tiny plot of land. The families have been on the radar of the Mission for sometime, but they've been unable to fully connect. We are helping to build the relationships. They are living in significant poverty – with little resources. The team's goal over the week is to help, without pushing, with simple items for their house. Items that can further open the door for Maria and the Mission to get more involved in the families lives.

The second family is a bit more complex. The young husband and wife have three children ages 2, 3 and 6. The six year old, Walter, was born with cerebral palsy and microcephaly. He is significantly disabled. The mother spends all day, every day caring for Walter (see attached photo). The husband, a laborer on construction sites, works when he can to bring money into the household. All five sleep in one room on two beds in an immaculately clean concrete floor house. We will be working on a make over for their house as well – and we are helping with some care needs with Walter by linking his family to one of our partners to fit him for a wheelchair.

The Riverdale group will be taking on an equally worthy project. They're helping to build a home for an elderly woman living alone with no resources. The woman, her age is only defined as "very old," lives alone in a rock walled room about 2 meters by 2 meters. She has no water, electricity, or waste disposal. In fact, she lives on a dirt floor. The team of students, working in collaboration with hired contractors, will construct a room about 5 meters by 5 meters with a concrete floor, area for a kitchen and glass windows. It's a big project that will certainly provide this intrepid group of students a chance to really see how lives can be impacted through community efforts.

A couple of things really struck me this week. The World Bank announced major strides in ending poverty around the world. However, they also stated, "the poverty that remains is unlikely to change." In fact, they stated that people living in the most extreme levels of poverty will more than likely never escape their impoverished class.

I was also impacted to learn about a change in Peruvian law that now makes it illegal to squat on public land. This seems like a real advancement in the legal structure of Peru. The sort of law that is the consequence of entering into a new economic prosperity. However, it means the extremely poor, people living on \$2-4 dollars a day, have limited opportunities for housing. In the past, they could squat on land, maintain their presence on the small plot for seven years, and register with the court to receive the title. Now, a landowner holds the tile and sells the land to a third party broker. The brokers in turn sell the lots for anything from S/2,000 to 20,000 soles (\$600-8,000). Making it convenient for everyone, small banks working in the area provide loans at up to 150% interest rate. Essentially trapping people in poverty for the remainder of their lives and in many instances the lives of their children.

What does this mean for our work? Well, I'm not entirely sure. I do know one thing – the needs of Peru are constantly changing. The Peru of 20-years ago is not the same Peru of today. And, the Peru of twenty years from now will be much different. I can't help, but wonder if the Peru isn't headed toward a similar range of social and economic challenges we now face in the U.S.

Before Ben and I took off for the Team Peru trip, we met with a surgeon living in Long Beach, Washington. Dr. John Kenagy is well known in health care administration for his creative ideas on organizational development and systems change. He wrote a book that offers innovative ways to create cultures of change and transformation. He said something at our meeting that hits home for me as I ponder my experiences in Peru this past week. He said, "changing times don't require new ideas – they just require new ways of thinking about using people, resources and innovations differently."

Sure, we're a small NGO with a limited amount of resources – but we know about helping communities create innovative solutions to address issues facing their growth and development. We know about homelessness and the services and supports that have been shown most effective in preventing and ending homelessness. We know how to help health services providers build their knowledge and skills to be change agents in their own communities.

Where will we be in ten years? I'm not sure. I am, however, certain we'll be using our commitment to building bridges of collaboration and support to meet the changing challenges facing the people we serve. People like Walter and his family.

Thanks for continuing to believe in our work.

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## HBI Blog

The HBI Blog is a rotating journal from our staff. Our Blog is a series of messages from the field, insights from our work, and lessons in service.

## Archives

- October 2021
- September 2021
- August 2021
- July 2021
- June 2021
- May 2021
- April 2021
- March 2021
- February 2021
- January 2021
- December 2020
- November 2020
- October 2020
- September 2020
- August 2020
- July 2020
- June 2020
- May 2020
- April 2020
- March 2020
- February 2020
- January 2020
- December 2019
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- April 2018
- March 2018
- February 2018
- January 2018
- December 2017
- November 2017
- October 2017
- September 2017
- August 2017
- July 2017
- June 2017
- May 2017
- April 2017
- March 2017
- February 2017
- January 2017
- December 2016
- November 2016
- October 2016
- September 2016

## Categories

All

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