

Juan, his Incredible Machine and his Inspiration!

Tecpan, Guatemala

by: Donald Pavlov, Mission of LOVE Volunteer

The week of January 18 to 26, 2014 the Mission of Love team came to Guatemala and worked with an incredibly motivated man from Tecpan, Guatemala. Juan is a married, 40 year old, father of seven children. His children range in age from two to seventeen. In April of 2013, Juan became paralyzed from the waist down in a work accident. Through the coordinating work of Edwin at Way-Bi and Kathy at Mission of Love, a very talented Occupational Therapist, Deb, from Youngstown, Ohio was able to make the trip to Guatemala City and spend the week working with Juan.

The work began Sunday with a visit to Juans home. While there, Deb, Kathy and Edwin led the effort to complete an assessment to see where improvements could be made at Juans house. The team was amazed at the incredible motivation of Juan. Using bicycle parts, a rubber belt and an old circular saw, Juan was able to build a motorized, stationary cycle to exercise his paralyzed legs.

The team then helped load up Juan and his mother for the trek back to Hospital Metropolitano in Guatemala City. Here, Juan would spend the next four days working with Deb and others from the team learning ways to improve his life. Deb not only educated Juan on ways to adapt and increase his productivity, but provided him with a number of specialized tools for paralyzed individuals. Juan never tired no matter how hard Deb and the others worked with him. After spending physically draining hours of exercise and therapy, Juan never asked to stop for a break. When asked if he was tired, he would only reply "poquito (a little) and wanted to keep going.

After completing his occupational therapy and training with Deb at Hospital Metropolitano, Juan returned to his home Friday with the Mission of Love team. The team came to Juans home with wood, concrete and tools to make the improvements Deb identified to make his home more wheelchair accessible and productive for Juan and his family. Juan worked side by side the team. Concrete ramps were put in, shelves and hooks were hung and the house was improved so that Juan could do more of the work that he loved. The Mission of Love team provided Juan with a wide array of woodworking tools and a greatly improved wheelchair. A hospital bed and mattresses were supplied to Juan's Mayan Family, to replace the wooden bed pictured below in which seven of Juan's family would sleep, including Juan on the wooden slats. Can you only imagine your family enduring this type of suffering on a daily basis?

In all my years of occupational therapy, Juan is one of the most motivated and talented individuals I have ever met, said Deb, it was really an honor to work with him.

We are all looking forward to our next visit to Tecpan, Guatemala to see what other incredible things Juan has accomplished.

