

1ST “CENTRO VIDA FELIZ” NATIONAL BIKE RALLY

On Saturday May 1st CENTRO VIDA FELIZ hosted their first invitational mountain bike rally as a benefit for the Vida Feliz Center for the Elderly and the sister organization, Vida Feliz Cycling Club. Mountain bikers from all over Bolivia signed up to participate in the 52 km run through the hills of El Torno, with the finish line in front of the Center.

With help from the proceeds of the race, the Center hopes to purchase a vehicle that can serve the program for the Elderly during the week and carry bike club members to events on the weekend. According to Sulma Becerra, Executive Director of the Vida Feliz Center, the second objective for organizing the event was to broaden ongoing support from local donors for the Center’s program for the elderly, especially for the **People’s Diner**, the nutrition program which has encountered significant challenges this year with the Covid quarantine restrictions and slashes in government support.

The Vida Feliz Cycling Club has already brought local and statewide visibility for the Center, especially since the current national champion in the over 60 category is a member of El Torno’s Vida Feliz Cycling Club. Don Benito currently volunteers with the club training young cyclists every week.

The event was originally scheduled for April 25, but had to be postponed because four days of solid rain had turned the trails into a quagmire. This Saturday’s perfect weather rewarded the organizers with a great turnout: 475 participants rode in youth, amateur, expert and master categories. No injuries of consequence and ALL participants finished (a few with help)!!

Sulma reports that the big event evolved so successfully thanks to the many local professionals and young people from local churches who responded by volunteering their time and skills to help with the logistics of attending 500 cyclists and national press coverage. The elderly also participated by sprucing up the grounds of the Center to host several delegations of cyclists from neighboring states of Tarija, Cochabamba and Oruro. More volunteers manned several food stands on the Center’s grounds and served lunch to ALL of the racers.

The Center has been promoting this race as a “clean green” event, emphasizing to all participants and fans the importance of not leaving trash and residues (the telltale result of most public events in Bolivia) on the rural byways and city streets of the race route. And on race day, there were trash bins and volunteers filling them all along the route.

It was an exciting day for all of us involved with the Center, and we were proud to receive many expressions of congratulation and thanks from participants and visitors who commented on the outstanding organization of the event and the

praise-worthy objectives of the Centro Vida Feliz program for the elderly. We also got several significant new pledges of support for our 2021 program!

THANK YOU! A special word of thanks from the Administrative board of the Center to each of our supporters from **Zion Mennonite church, Roca de Salvacion and Calvary churches!** Last week, Centro Vida Feliz received the money transfer of \$10,410.00 from your fund-raising event in Oregon! Thank you so very much!! This puts our administrative budget on solid footing for the rest of the year! God bless you!!