



AYUDA, INC. IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
THAT IMPROVES THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH
DIABETES ABROAD

In 1984, José Gabriel, a six-month-old boy in Quito, Ecuador, went into a coma and was diagnosed with insulin dependent (juvenile) diabetes. Despite the efforts of his parents, both of whom were physicians, they could not keep him healthy. His parents spent most of the family's income on insulin, but eight years later José fell into another coma. José's family saved money and sent him to the U.S. for treatment where they soon discovered that a lack of education is as dangerous as a lack of insulin. Even considering the serious difficulties of José and his family, he was still much better off than most children with diabetes who live in Ecuador.

In 1994, two teenagers, Jesse Fuchs-Simon and Nick Cuttriss, who met José Gabriel when he came to the U.S. for treatment, went to Ecuador and began a support group to help children with diabetes in the hallway of a public hospital. Two years later, they founded American Youth Understanding Diabetes Abroad, Inc. (AYUDA) with the idea that as youth, they could serve as agents of change for other youth. In the eight years since AYUDA was founded, it has become the driving force for diabetes advocacy in Ecuador. AYUDA established a national annual diabetes camping program, Campo Amigo Ecuador, which completed its fifth year last summer and served more than 110 children and adolescents from 14 provinces. In total, Campo Amigo Ecuador has hosted 550 campers. It was also instrumental in the development of a national diabetes organization in Ecuador. Over the past eight years, AYUDA provided over 1.75 million dollars in donated diabetes supplies and professional medical services to the diabetes community in Ecuador.

AYUDA created a volunteer program that brings individuals to Ecuador who range from high school students to world-class medical professionals. After a competitive selection process, volunteers participate in a formal training program where they improve their Spanish, appreciate Ecuadorian culture and learn about diabetes management. Their training culminates in working at Campo Amigo Ecuador. AYUDA has brought more than 70 volunteers to Ecuador through this program; over 20 in each of the last two summers.

In 1998 AYUDA's workbook, *Manejando la Diabetes (Managing Diabetes)*, was published by the Pan American Health Organization and distributed throughout Latin America. As a result local diabetes communities from all corners of Latin America began to ask AYUDA for help. AYUDA responded by organizing the first international diabetes youth leadership conference, *Campo Amigo Internacional*, held in Lima, Peru in 2003 for nearly 50 youth leaders from 14 countries. The following year the program was held in Santiago, Chile. This year's program will be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil and will include 18 countries. In addition, AYUDA will expand its volunteer program to aid in the organization of the diabetes community in other countries.

True to our motto, ¡Juntos somos más fuertes! (Together we are stronger!), AYUDA's accomplishments would not be possible without the help of our long-time collaborators: Children's Hospital Los Angeles, the Pan American Health Organization, Insulin for Life, the Diabetes Camping Association, Youth Venture, and the Comité Pro Fundación Diabetes Juvenil Ecuador.