



**CHILDSRING
INTERNATIONAL**

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MONTH

KATHERIN



CHARITY NAVIGATOR
★★★★ Four Star Charity

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KATHERIN'S STORY

Imagine being unable to open your mouth, consuming only liquids and soft foods that fit through the hole created by the removal of a few teeth...for 15 years. This was Katherin's reality.

Since birth, Katherin's Mom stood by helplessly as she watched Katherin cry daily from excruciating pain unable to fit medication through the small gap. Her fused jaw caused her to simultaneously fight the ongoing effects of malnutrition and oral bacterial infections. As the only daughter, Katherin's daily life in Guatemala was filled with house chores and caring for her paraplegic mother.

Katherin's neighbors and classmates bullied her by calling her nasty nicknames and pushing her around. The intimidation caused her to refuse to go outside choosing to hide her deformed face from the world. As her self-esteem plummeted she dropped out of school and accepted the fate of her "miserable life" as permanent.



Katherin before surgery

In the fall of 2017, Katherin finally saw a glimpse of hope when she was accepted for treatment through Childspring in Gainesville, Florida. Very shy and timid, she arrived weighing as much as an average eight year old. Over nine months, Katherin underwent two major reconstructive surgeries requiring a permanent tracheostomy tube and having her mouth wired shut. As well, extensive dental work was donated by the same hospital. At the end of this long and complex treatment Katherin could finally open her mouth for the first time in her life!

Katherin has gained over 15 pounds of healthy weight. She can now speak clearly and enjoy foods she has longed to try all her life, as well as chew gum! Yet her transformation is as much emotional as physical. Her sense of feeling healthy spawns a new self-confidence that radiates from within. No longer hiding from her peers Katherin embraces her new life and readily accepts invitations to hang out with her classmates. While in the US Katherin learned to read and write in Spanish and English, and accelerated in math to master multiplication and division problems. She now plans to return to school to prepare to provide a better life for her family.

Thankful to have her prayers answered, Katherin's mom is able to watch her bright, beautiful daughter shine. Katherin is admired in the community for her bravery. Her story of transformation has been shared in the news across the country inspiring others who feel as though they have no hope for a better life. In her own words, Katherin finally "feels alive."



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