The Gift of Speech
Experience the Stories of Changed Lives
To Our Readers:

Over the last few years I have been working in Guatemala as it has a very special place in my life. Not only did I live in Guatemala for 2 years but my wife of 40 years is from Guatemala as well. Nearly 3 years ago we opened a clinic in the city of Antigua, Guatemala where we have sponsored more than 150 kids and young adults with mild to severe speech disorders. These disorders include autism, down syndrome, deaf and hard of hearing, cleft palate and cerebral palsy. All of which severely affect their speech.

In working with these children for periods of 6-24 months I have grown to love each of them and we have made amazing progress with their speech. Children who could literally not communicate verbally before can now say full sentences. One teenager even, with cerebral palsy, is attending college.

I cannot begin to share with you the feelings that I have as I hear one of the kids tell their mother, for the first time, that they love them. Or the gratitude that they express when they give thanks for the help they have received to be able to express their thoughts and feelings. Something that they have always had but could not share with anyone. The growth of confidence in each one of these children is outstanding.

Although we have achieved astonishing success, there are thousands more that still need help and don’t have the financial means to receive it. With over 150 children served in Guatemala and 50 in the United States receiving speech therapy services and advanced technology, we have only scratched the surface of the immense need to help people have the simple capability to communicate. We need your help. I know that there are many places to donate and support. For one minute, I want you to think of how helping someone to speak, to communicate, changes every aspect of their lives, and how difficult it would be to not have that ability that we take for granted every minute of every day. It affects how other students treat them, how teachers treat them, how employers may consider them, their confidence, their social interactions, who they marry and how they will communicate to their future children. Imagine how they will feel when someone that they probably never met, cared enough to change their lives forever!

Please consider the importance of speech in your everyday life and all that it can affect. With your help, even more children will be able to find their voice and receive the gift of speech. In the following pages are the stories of just a few whose lives have been touched.

Thank you.

David B. Larsen
CEO

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Sponsored Institutions
Astrid Barahona
ANINI - Seeking Sponsor

Astrid is considered a social butterfly and is always making new friends at the ANINI organization where she lives. One of Astrid’s biggest passions is riding horses and she even represented Guatemala in the 2015 special Olympics for equestrian events. With her talent, she brought home a bronze medal for Guatemala!

“We couldn’t have been more proud of Astrid when she won her Olympic medal.”
- ANINI Caregiver

Astrid has accomplished amazing things in her life despite the difficulties she has faced. At a very young age, Astrid was abandoned by her family and found by the ANINI organization. It was there where Astrid was diagnosed with Down Syndrome, which, among other things, has inhibited her speech development. Growing up, she was unable to speak and was often misunderstood by her peers or caretakers at ANINI. This caused her to struggle to connect and build relationships with others. Astrid’s cognitive ability improved through various therapies, but her speech was still a challenge. As with many children who have speech disorders, Astrid never felt comfortable communicating with people and began to isolate herself.

“Astrid preferred to be by herself because she was afraid that others would reject her for not being able to speak to them.”
- ANINI Caregiver

Astrid was one of a few sponsored children chosen nearly 2 years ago to receive a speech therapy sponsorship from FAST. She began working with the SmartPalate from CompleteSpeech during her speech therapy. Over time, Astrid developed better oral coordination skills, which is the first step in her speech intervention. With her increased oral coordination, her accuracy has gone up nearly 50% in under a year, where she is now able to produce various sounds. She uses these few sounds to communicate. Astrid still needs more speech therapy and assistance through additional sponsorships which we hope you can help provide. As her language develops, she blossoms and grows to be more social and less isolated. The gift of communication brightens her world and that of all those around her!

“Once you break through her shell, Astrid is one of the funniest and loving children I have ever met.”
- Dave, FAST CEO
Carlos López
ANINI

Carlos is the perfect example of perseverance. He’s a 25-year-old boy who refuses to let his past limit his future. As you can see from his pictures, he’s always wearing a huge smile across his face. As a child, Carlos was a victim to physical abuse by his father. With no way to escape, he was forced to stay in this violent environment his entire childhood. As a result, Carlos’s skull was fractured and his leg was broken. The skull fracture caused Carlos mental damage and delayed mental development. This affected his speech and made communication very difficult. Not only was he mentally disabled by abuse, Carlos was also left unable to walk and bound to a wheelchair throughout childhood.

“Carlos, despite the neurological damage, is very aware of his problem. Not being able to communicate with others was always very frustrating for him.”
- Former Physical Therapist

As Carlos got older he received physiotherapy for his condition, which helped him walk on his own with the aid of a cane. This helped Carlos feel more independent, but still his speech held him back and made him frustrated. Carlos never was able to receive speech therapy, and although he learned how to speak, his pronunciation was never completely correct. Wanting to feel truly independent, Carlos knew he needed to improve his pronunciation.

“The ability to speak is an incredible gift that allows people to express themselves and interact amongst the world. It’s easy to take this gift for granted when you’ve never experienced personal difficulties with speech.”
- Irene, CompleteSpeech Guatemala General Manager

Out of thousands of applicants, Carlos was on of the few chosen to receive a sponsorship from FAST, Ecstatic for this opportunity, he began speech therapy using the SmartPalate in 2015 with speech sessions conducted by CompleteSpeech. Carlos had difficulty learning to control the movement of his facial muscles, making it hard to pronounce vowels and the /r/ and /s/ sounds. After a year of hard work Carlos accomplished what in traditional therapy would have taken years. He had improved on almost every sound he had been working on. He could control his facial muscles, coordinate the movement of his mouth and tongue, and increased his pronunciation of vowels by 70%.

“I could see on the screen where to put my tongue which helped me understand what I needed to do. With lots of practice, I was able to start pronouncing different letters and then words, and then, I realized I could talk!”
- Carlos

By the end of 2016 Carlos could pronounce various sounds including his vowels, the /s/ sound and he is close to perfecting the /r/ sound. He’s expected to graduate from speech therapy in the next few months. Although his condition limits him from reaching full development, Carlos has surpassed all expectations set for him. Carlos accomplished this thanks to his hard work and the opportunity provided to him through a generous sponsorship getting him the speech therapy he needed. Finally able to communicate, Carlos now has the independence he’s been striving for. So many obstacles have been put in his way, but not once did Carlos let it stop him from achieving his goal or from smiling.

Carlos using the SmartPalate.

Carlos with David, CEO of FAST.

Carlos using the SmartPalate.

Carlos with CompleteSpeech staff & friends.
Dévora was showing off her smile.

Dévora is a cheerful 3-year-old girl whose smile shines brightly whenever you talk to her. It’s amazing how she’s constantly happy despite the difficult past she’s endured. Dévora was born with cerebral palsy, and upon discovering her disability, her family abandoned her as a newborn in a garbage bag at a local park in San Marcos, Guatemala. She was discovered and given to the local authorities. Seeing that her health was very poor they took her to the hospital. Dévora was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, and although she received treatment, it caused a permanent delay in her development. After her condition was stabilized, Dévora was taken to live at the ANINI organization.

“Dévora receives very little stimulation simply because she can’t move out of her bed by herself. Her physical condition prohibits her from doing many things on her own.” - ANINI Caregiver

After being admitted into the ANINI organization, Dévora began treatment for her disabilities. She began to receive stimulation therapy to help her develop motor skills. After learning of Dévora’s story, she was selected to receive a sponsorship from FAST in 2016. For the time being, she has begun basic speech therapy with CompleteSpeech. This therapy will help her learn how to control her mouth and tongue movements. Soon, she will be ready to use the SmartPalate System which will help her greatly. Dévora is a very bright girl and with time and determination, she will soon thrive in speech therapy. This sponsorship is allowing Dévora to increase her chances on a better future, giving her the essential skills that she needs. She will most likely need several years of speech therapy but currently has only been sponsored for a year.

“Dévora is a very determined young girl and we are so excited for the progress that is happening and that which is still to come.” - Clara, CompleteSpeech Therapist

Dévora Sofía
ANINI - Seeking Sponsor

Dévora meets with her speech therapist.

Dave, CEO of FAST, meeting with Dévora.
Juan has always been passionate about sports. At age 30, you will still find him running the hills of the stadium in his hometown Cotzoptepeque, Chichicastenango, Guatemala. He loves being active, and frequently plays sports with his friends. Juan is such an optimistic man, you would never guess the trials he has overcome.

Juan was diagnosed with mental deficiency and never developed fully mentally. Juan’s family abandoned him in Guatemala. Only able to speak Mayan in a Spanish-speaking country, he was completely lost with no way to communicate. Luckily, he was found by the ANINI group, an organization that helps orphans and abandoned children and adults, who took him in even though they were unable to communicate with him.

“After finding Juan abandoned by his family, we soon realized he only spoke the Mayan language, and we could only speak Spanish. We had no way of knowing where Juan came from, who his family was, what condition or needs he had.”

- Director of ANINI

When he arrived at ANINI, Juan’s caretakers soon noticed his developmental delays. They understood this would make learning a new language even more difficult for Juan. He began receiving the care he needed for his condition, but the language barrier still complicated his situation. Despite his disabilities, Juan worked hard to learn as much Spanish as he could. He had a difficult time pronouncing sounds and words correctly, making it very hard for people to understand him.

“Even though I tried to say things correctly, no one ever understood me. I got frustrated that I couldn’t speak Spanish well. I just wanted people to understand me.”

- Juan

Juan was one of few people chosen for a sponsorship by FAST in 2015. He began speech therapy with the SmartPalate, which made an enormous difference in his pronunciation. With the ability to see his tongue placement while speaking, Juan understood how to correct many of his pronunciation errors. He could finally express himself clearly. Through the help of the SmartPalate, Juan has regained his ability to communicate and has become the light-hearted guy everyone at ANINI knows and loves. With his improved speech, he can share his life story with everyone around him.

“Many people are in a similar position as Juan. All they desperately want is the ability to communicate. Your FAST donations provide someone tools and services to someone in need in order to develop their speech. Something that most of us take for granted everyday.”

- Michael, FAST Representative
Armando Chacat
Obras del Hermano Pedro

Flashcards provide visual stimulation.

Armando is one of the bravest men you’d ever have the pleasure of meeting. He is a 38 year old who never lets an obstacle keep him from achieving his goals. He was the sole provider for his family doing masonry work, which provided enough for a comfortable life. Two years ago, a single event changed the life of Armando and his family. Armando suffered a brain hemorrhage which caused him to have a stroke, paralysis and coordination dysfunctions. Someone who once relied on his hands to make a living had now lost the control and movement of his limbs. He was unable to perform many basic functions for himself, including the ability to speak. Armando’s Family, overwhelmed with the situation, abandoned him at a local hospital.

“Armando arrived one day and then his family just disappeared. We had no information on them, after several tries of trying to contact them, we eventually gave up. Armando’s situation was simply too much for them to handle.”

- Nurse at Hospital Obras Sociales del Hermano Pedro

After being stabilized in the hospital, Armando was transferred to a home called “Virgen del Socorro.” The nurses took care of him three by a nurse. Even though this was the care Armando needed, he was still discouraged. He used to be the sole provider for his family, and now he couldn’t even feed himself. Emotionally this was very challenging for Armando. His caretakers tried to reteach him pronunciation, but nothing was working. They could see how hard Armando was trying, which made his lack of progress even more discouraging.

“I would try to teach him to say some words that would help him communicate, which, he would eventually say some of them, but with great difficulty.”

- Caregiver at Virgen del Socorro

Luckily, there was hope for Armando. After hearing his unique story, he was chosen to receive a FAST sponsorship and begin speech therapy with CompleteSpeech. He was incredibly thankful for this opportunity and began working right away. Learning how to use the device was very challenging at first. Armando grew concerned this would be similar to his other failed attempts, but he persevered. After the first few months Armando began making large improvements. He relearned control of his tongue and mouth and was able to pronounce several different sounds.

“When I started working with Armando, he always looked discouraged. When he started using the SmartPalate, I realized how motivated he was getting and I began to see him becoming more and more enthusiastic. Little by little he was recovering.”

- Clara, CompleteSpeech Therapist

After only one year of working with the SmartPalate, Armando was discharged from speech therapy. He can now complete sentences, hold conversations, and even make jokes! The progress he’s made in one year is outstanding. On the last day of his therapy, Armando recited a poem to his therapist, thanking her for the many hours of help she provided.

“I couldn’t be happier to finish therapy. I didn’t think I would ever talk again. To the people who sponsored me, Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

- Armando

Armando shares his sense of humor.

Armando Chacat
Obras del Hermano Pedro
Sonia using the SmartPalate.

With her contagious laughter, Sonia is a bright light to everyone around her. All it takes is one look and she will make your heart smile. Even though her 22 years of life haven’t been perfect, she refuses to be anything less than optimistic. Sonia has persevered through many trials in her life, which have earned her the nickname “the fighter.” As an infant she was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, which causes many challenges for her and her family. Although her family tried very hard to support Sonia and provide the care she needed, their financial situation prevented them from doing so. At 9 years old, Sonia was admitted into Virgen Del Socorro to receive the care she needed.

“Sonia is a girl who emanates joy all the time. Since she came to our home we’ve seen her progress with her ability to communicate, but it was always difficult for us to understand her. As a result of her condition, her speech is affected, causing difficulty in achieving her goals.”

- Caregiver at Virgen del Socorro

As a result of Sonia’s cerebral palsy, she has several physical disabilities including partial paralysis, which confines her to a wheelchair. Her paralysis heavily impacts her speech causing misarticulation. Being aware of her limitations, Sonia was scared to speak in social situations, fearing she might be judged for her speech.

“I love talking to people but they couldn’t understand what I was saying to them. At school my classmates sometimes preferred not to work with me because they didn’t understand me. That hurt me a lot.”

- Sonia

During one of his trips to Guatemala the CEO of CompleteSpeech, Dave Larsen, met Sonia at the Virgen del Socorro home. He could see her joyful spirit and her earnest desire to improve her speech. After learning more of her story, Dave felt the need to help Sonia. She was one of the first selected to receive a sponsorship from FAST to begin speech therapy through CompleteSpeech at Obras Sociales Del Santo Hermano Pedro.

“When Sonia told me she would be sponsored by FAST to start receiving speech therapy, I was very excited for her. I know what she’s gone through, and seeing her progress with her speech is a joy for us all.”

- Sonia’s Teacher

Sonia’s paralysis caused many obstacles at the beginning of therapy. She had trouble controlling the movement of her tongue and couldn’t pronounce a majority of sounds. What made the biggest difference for Sonia was the live visual feedback from the SmartPalate. She was able to understand and see what she needed to do in a way she had never experienced before. After lots of practice Sonia gained more control of her tongue and began improving her articulation.

“When I started working with Sonia, it was very difficult to understand what she was saying. But after 6 months of treatment with the SmartPalate, her speech improved by 50%. She learned very fast and although she sometimes failed she never lost her enthusiasm to continue.”

- Carla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

At the end of 2016, Sonia’s speech had improved drastically. People could understand what she was saying, and Sonia was given the confidence she needed to interact with others. Sonia has defied all expectations. All her hard work has finally paid off. If this wasn’t a big enough accomplishment, Sonia is now currently attending college and is studying business administration. No wonder her friends call her “the fighter.”

“No one imagined that someday I would be a college student. At one point, I came to think the same thing. Thanks to the people who sponsored me I can speak better and be understood. I know now that I can do anything that I set my mind to.”

- Sonia

Sonia arriving for a speech therapy session.
Félix is an energetic, 10 year old boy who loves playing outdoors. He has a love for animals and watches the wildlife channel on TV almost everyday. Félix already knows that he wants to be an explorer someday. He lives with his two parents who are very supportive of his interests. At a very young age Félix was diagnosed with profound hearing loss. Although Félix is an ambitious kid, his condition held him back. He has a very hard time communicating, especially with his peers at school. His parents could see his discouragement wearing on his ambition as he grew more and more frustrated with his inability to communicate.

"Félix is a child who likes to participate in class but I’m not always able to sign with Félix, making it difficult where sometimes we can’t understand each other. I could never figure out the best way to help him as we both grew more and more frustrated."

- Félix’s Teacher

As Félix grew older it became evident that public school wasn’t the right fit for him. His parents enrolled him in a school for the hearing and visually impaired called “Pro Ciegos y Sordos” or “For the Deaf and Blind”. Here, he quickly learned to read and write, and though these aspects of his communication were improving, something was still missing. After years of speech therapy provided by the school, Félix was still unable to articulate words correctly. Both Félix and his parents were getting discouraged with his inability to speak. Unable to afford any other means of therapy, his parents were at a loss.

“We have tried to give our son the best we can. We desperately wanted him to receive speech therapy outside of school, but there was no possible way for us to afford that.”

- Félix’s Father

However, in 2015, everything turned around for Félix and his family. After hearing about his story, Félix was one of the select few chosen to receive a speech therapy sponsorship by FAST. He began working with CompleteSpeech and the SmartPalate and his pronunciation improved very quickly. First, he learned how to pronounce single sounds correctly, and then, after some practice, began producing full words like mom, dad, friend, pencil, and teacher. The frustration of being unable to communicate faded, and Félix became the energetic boy everyone knew and loved.

"With using the SmartPalate, I learned to speak correctly. Now I can say what I want. That makes me happy!"

- Félix

By the end of 2016, Félix was able to say complete sentences like “I want to play with you”, “my house is far”, and “I want to go to the zoo.” Félix’s parents are incredibly thankful that their son can finally communicate. In the next three months, he is expected to graduate from therapy. The skills he has learned through speech therapy with CompleteSpeech have given him the opportunity to communicate. He now has, in his own words, “a much happier life.” Félix is back to being the ambitious child with a bright future ahead of him, thanks to his sponsorship by FAST.
Reina Ramirez
Benemérito Comité Pro Ciegos y Sordos de Guatemala

Reina is an adorable 11-year-old girl who loves to smile and play like any other child her age. She is the only child living with her parents in Guatemala. She loves doing all sorts of crafts and attending her classes at school. Reina was diagnosed with profound hearing loss as only 3 years old. She has low self-esteem and confidence due to her inability to communicate fully and gets embarrassed when talking to other people, making it hard for her to make new friends.

"Since the other kids couldn't understand me, I just wanted to be alone." - Reina

Her parents wanted to help her and could see the effects her speech was having on her socially and emotionally. They started researching what they could do to help and finally found "Benemérito Comité Pro Ciegos y Sordos de Guatemala," a private nonprofit institute specifically for children with hearing impairments. At this amazing organization, she received speech therapy services for 5 years. In that time however, she never managed to further her speech ability significantly.

"She was limited to only 4 words she could speak clearly enough to understand: hello, goodbye, mom and dad." - Pro Ciegos Therapist

At the end of 2015, Reina was selected as 1 of 6 students to start receiving speech therapy with CompleteSpeech out of the more than 1,000 deaf and hard of hearing children attending the institution.

"After only 1 year of using the SmartPalate system and receiving speech therapy from CompleteSpeech Speech Language Pathologists, Reina was able to correctly pronounce almost all of her difficult sounds including /p/, /b/, /d/, /j/, /y/, /k/, and more. This had never been accomplished in the previous 5 years of speech therapy Reina had taken. Now, Reina's face lights up when she speaks." - Joshua, CompleteSpeech Vice President

The progress she made was unparalleled. By the end of 2016, Reina was already saying complete sentences like, "on the weekend I visited my grandparents" or that she "like(s) vanilla ice cream." Now she can communicate her emotions, thoughts, and goals like every child her age deserves to be able to do.

"Reina is a very intelligent girl. It always surprises me to hear how clearly she talks to me now. Thanks to her speech therapy with CompleteSpeech and the SmartPalate, and her FAST sponsorship, she now has more opportunities possible for her than before, when she could only say two or three words." - Reina's Second Grade Teacher

Reina's parents and teachers are amazed to see the progress she has achieved in such a short amount of time. Not only has her speech improved, but her self-confidence has sky rocketed, and she now is happy to have friends to talk to and play with.

"Now that I can talk, my dream is to be a teacher to help other children like me." - Reina

Reina has an additional 6 months of therapy estimated by her speech therapist in order to resolve the last sound she is working on, the /r/ sound. All that Reina has and will accomplish is due to her strong desire to overcome her challenges and the happiness it brings her. All she needed was a little support, understanding, and an opportunity that was provided to her by Sponsors like you.
Carlos Mutas
Benemerito Comite Pro Ciegos y Sordos de Guatemala

Carlos is a well rounded boy who enjoys several hobbies including spending time in the kitchen and preparing delicious desserts. He’s only 12 years old, but hopes to become a great pastry chef one day. Besides baking, Carlos loves being outside and playing football with his friends and watching movies. Carlos lives with his two parents with whom he’s very close to. Carlos playing football with his friends and watching movies. Carlos lives with his two parents with whom he’s very close to.

Carlos hasn’t always been the social kid he is today. At birth, he was diagnosed with profound hearing loss which heavily influenced his relationships with peers growing up. He was extremely shy and never enjoyed being around many people out of fear that they wouldn’t understand him.

“I really like the movie Happy Feet, because nobody understood the penguin for being different. That’s how I felt.” - Carlos

Carlos’ parents saw that public school wasn’t the right fit, so they enrolled him in a school that specialized in education for the deaf and hard of hearing. Although his parents didn’t have the means to afford this, they worked as hard as they could to provide their son with the best opportunity possible. Carlos learned how to read and write but his speech never completely developed. The school he attended provided speech therapy but he never made sufficient progress. His parents wanted to help his speech but simply couldn’t afford it financially. They did some research and discovered the FAST sponsorships through CompleteSpeech. They submitted an application for Carlos immediately, and in 2015, he was one of the first applicants selected for the sponsorship.

“It was a great blessing to know our son would learn to speak with the therapy provided by FAST. He actually enjoys using the technology CompleteSpeech has, which makes this process even better.” - Carlos’ Mother

At the beginning of therapy, Carlos could only communicate through signs and gestures. Within only 10 months, he was able to say complete words including /m/, /l/, /t/, /s/, /a/, /o/, /u/ and /z/. At the end of 2016, Carlos had progressed even further and could say entire words. This was outstanding improvement considering he started completely nonverbal. Carlos began developing relationships with people. This is when he truly broke out of his shell and became the social child he is today.

“His confidence has increased a lot, now he participates in class, talks with his peers, and overall is much more confident.” - Carlos’ Teacher

Carlos doesn’t have much therapy left; they expect him to graduate in 3 months! His parents are so surprised, hearing their son talk is a joy they never thought they’d experience. Being able to speak has changed Carlos’ whole life. He’s making friends and his dream of becoming a famous baker can now become a reality thanks to sponsors like you.
Evelyn Bor
CompleteSpeech Clinic - Seeking Sponsor

Evelyn is a little shy at first, but after getting to know her, you’ll see she has the sweetest personality. She’s a happy 6 year old girl who absolutely adores her family. Evelyn, her mom, and her grandma have all lived together for nearly Evelyn’s entire life. Evelyn’s father abandoned their family before she was born, leaving her mom to provide for the family. Raising off one person’s income and raising a child has been very challenging for her mother, but she is an amazing woman who would do anything for her daughter.

Evelyn has struggled with developmental issues since birth. She wasn’t progressing with the other children her age, which made her mom and grandma very concerned. Evelyn’s mom took her to several different specialists to figure out what was causing the delays. After many appointments, doctors, and tests, no one was able to diagnose Evelyn. It’s apparent she suffers from developmental delays, but without a definitive diagnosis, her doctors were unsure how to treat her symptoms.

“We’ve visited a lot of doctors to try and find out what was causing Evelyn’s learning disabilities. No one has been able to tell me exactly what my daughter has, which scares me. I have no idea how to help my daughter, which is a terrible feeling for a parent.”

- Evelyn’s Mother

Evelyn struggles with her language and motor skills. At four years old she learned to walk, but only with the help of special walking apparatuses. In regards to speech, she was fairly limited with what she could say. She could only say a few words including “mom,” “dad,” “hello,” “yes,” and “no,” but not much more. Speech therapy sounded like a great option for Evelyn, but since they were living only off of her mother’s income, it was too expensive for them to afford. After lots of research, her mom came across the speech therapy sponsorship offered by FAST. She was extremely excited about finding this opportunity and quickly applied Evelyn for the program.

“Evelyn desperately needs speech therapy but her family is unable to afford the treatment she needs. You could be the donor who helps Evelyn get the therapy she deserves through a FAST sponsorship. Donate today, and give Evelyn the gift of speech.”

- Evelyn’s Grandmother
Angel is one of the happiest little kids you’ll ever meet. He’s a smiling 2-year-old boy who absolutely loves his family. One of his favorite things to do is watch his grandma cook and be her official taste-tester. He lives with his two parents and one older brother. He and his brother are extremely close and every afternoon they play soccer together. Angel is blessed with a loving family, but not everything has been easy for him. He was born with an extreme case of cleft palate and cleft lip. Knowing this had to be corrected quickly, Angel’s parents immediately sought help.

“Seeing that my baby had this horrible defect in his mouth was very scary for me. I knew what this would entail for his future and I wanted to do anything I could to fix it. My husband and I searched for the best way to help Angel.” - Angel’s Mother

They took Angel to the Children’s Stomatology Center led by Dr. Rodolfo Asensio, a world renowned surgeon specializing in operations for children with cleft palate and cleft lip. Angel achieved a full reconstruction of his palate, but the doctor still predicted his language development, along with swallowing and mastication capabilities, would be impaired.

“A cleft palate can cause serious language complications, even if it’s fully repaired. It’s essential that children with this condition receive proper care, or else there’s a serious chance it will hinder their development.” - Clara, CompleteSpeech Therapist

It was at Dr. Asensio’s clinic that the family learned about FAST. In November 2016, Angel was fortunate enough to be chosen for a sponsorship by FAST. He quickly got to work starting speech therapy with CompleteSpeech. Because of his young age, it was determined that Angel wasn’t ready to start using the SmartPalate, but there were still plenty of things to work on. He started in the “Timely Stimulation of Language” program which was well suited for his young age. Before speech therapy, Angel could only point or make gestures to communicate with people. After just a few months his progress was tremendous. Angel could say multiple words clearly including “hello”, “goodbye”, “I want that”, “give me”, “Mom”, “Dad”, and “I love you.”

“When I met Angel, he didn’t like other people talking to him. He was very shy and just wanted to be with his parents. Now he greets us all and is happy to be around other people.” - Nestor, CompleteSpeech Representative

Being able to communicate with those around him broke Angel out of his shell, and his personality was able to shine through. His parents are so thankful for the improvements they’ve seen in him, and know that none of this would have been possible for Angel without his sponsorship from FAST.
Moises doesn’t let his trials get in the way of his dreams.

Moises is a 19-year-old boy who has a passion for technology and dreams of being a technical engineer. Moises has kept a consistently optimistic and cheerful attitude throughout his life despite all of the trials he has endured. He was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at a very young age, which delayed nearly all of his development, including his language capabilities. Realizing he required more care than they could provide, Moises’s parents moved him to a home specifically for patients suffering with cerebral palsy. There, he was able to receive the attention and care he needed for his condition, and even though Moises doesn’t live with his family anymore, his parents still visit him frequently to show their love and support.

“Moises had been given speech therapy for a couple of years in the first home he lived in but the progress was minimal. He was frustrated when he couldn’t communicate well enough for people to understand him so he preferred most of the time to simply not to talk to anyone.”

-Caregiver at Casa Esperanza

Moises's Father

Cerebral palsy can cause a plethora of problems in a patient’s life. Despite all of the difficulties Moises has faced, his inability to speak correctly was by far one of his greatest struggles. He had a very hard time controlling the movement of his mouth and tongue, causing serious problems with his pronunciation. Others had a very difficult time understanding what he said.

Moises using the SmartPalate during a therapy session.

Moises loves going to speech therapy.

Everything changed for Moises in 2015. He was sponsored by FAST and began receiving speech therapy using the SmartPalate. Prior to this, Moises spent two years in therapy with no progress. In only six months he gained far better control of his tongue and mouth movements than ever thought possible. Now, a little over a year later, with pronunciation that’s clear and easy to understand, Moises is expected to finish therapy in the next few months. Even though his condition limits him from ever reaching full speech capabilities, Moises tries to always overcome and push his limitations. His sponsorship allowed him to reach goals that were thought to be impossible before. 

Moises using the SmartPalate during a therapy session.

Moises’s Father

“I was happy when I saw my tongue made the right contact on the screen and what I said was understood better. That made me so happy.”

-Moises

The SmartPalate technology is truly what helped Moises’s speech and language development progress further than ever before. Being able to see his tongue placement while speaking gave him a new perspective that was easy for him to understand. With the progress he’s making now, Moises is expected to finish therapy in the next few months. Even though his condition limits him from ever reaching full speech capabilities, Moises tries to always overcome and push his limitations. His sponsorship allowed him to reach goals that were thought to be impossible before.
Luis Morales
Brillo del Sol

Luis, an energetic 8-year-old boy who loves adventure and is always playing outside with his friends. Luis dreams of becoming a racecar driver someday. He lives with his loving parents and brother. The closeness of his family helped Luis through very difficult times growing up. Luis was diagnosed at birth with Hydrocephalus, which resulted in serious developmental delays. All of this greatly affected his speech and language development.

"When Luis was born, the doctor told us that he had Hydrocephalus and thank goodness they caught it in time, which saved his life. Although he survived, the doctor told us there would be developmental consequences later in life. I knew this would be an ongoing challenge for the rest of our lives."
- Luis’s Mother

Among the issues that Luis faced were his physical disabilities. He could barely walk, move his head or arms, or control his mouth. Being such an enthusiastic boy, these disabilities suppressed his personality and stifled his development. The trouble he had with controlling his tongue and mouth made speech very challenging. His parents sent him to speech therapy for two years, but there was little progress. Luis and his parents were left disappointed with his inability to communicate and lack of improvement after two years of therapy.

"We did our best to give Luis the attention he needed to improve his language but the progress was slow and he wasn’t advancing as we had hoped he would. It was very difficult to see our son struggle to speak with no way of for us to help him."
- Luis’s Father

Discouraged by the lack of progress, Luis’s parents focused on his intellectual disabilities instead of speech. They enrolled him in a specialized educational center, and although this was beneficial for Luis, his speech still did not improve. Noticing the trouble he had with language and speech development, the director of Luis’s education center informed his parents about FAST.

"I saw how desperately this family needed the sponsorship, so I had to inform them of this incredible opportunity. I knew Luis had the potential to speak, all he needed was a little help."
- Director of Brillo del Sol

After learning more about FAST, Luis’s parents knew the tools provided by CompleteSpeech through the FAST sponsorship would help their son in ways traditional therapy never could. They applied for the sponsorship and in 2016, Luis was selected out of hundreds of other applicants to start receiving speech therapy. After just five months of using the SmartPalate, Luis corrected all of his pronunciation issues and was released from therapy! His parents, once discouraged, were now overjoyed and incredibly proud of their son’s progress. Luis can finally express himself and is open to a new world of possibilities. Nothing can stop Luis from having the adventures of his dreams.

"It was very easy to learn. All I had to do was look at the computer and I could see where I had to place my tongue, and then I did it. I did something that I hadn’t done in all the speech therapy I had received before, I love being able to talk to other people and am thankful for the chance I had to work with the therapists at CompleteSpeech."
- Luis
Sergio Álvarez
Brillo del Sol - Seeking Sponsor

Sergio is an adorable 9-year-old boy who loves the arts. He has a passion for music and can always be seen dancing or making sounds with his hands like a stereo. He has no other siblings and lives with his two caring parents. Sergio and his mom have a special connection and she has been right beside him through all the challenges in his life. Shortly after Sergio was born, his parents noticed something different about him. His development wasn’t progressing like normal and they grew concerned. After taking him to a specialist, Sergio was diagnosed with mental and psychomotor disabilities, meaning he would face physical and mental challenges for the rest of his life.

“Seeing my son unable to do the things normal children did worried me. After hearing his diagnosis we tried to give him all the help we could, but our lack of money prevented us from providing what he needed.”

- Sergio’s Mother

As Sergio grew older it became apparent his speech was highly impaired. Pronunciation was very hard for him and controlling his facial muscles was nearly impossible. His parents knew Sergio needed speech therapy, but amongst paying for all his other needs, it was far too much to afford for their little family. Instead, they sent Sergio to physical and sensory therapy where he learned a small amount of speech but it wasn’t nearly enough to help him significantly.

“I saw the anger Sergio had because of his speech. He tried so hard but speaking was very difficult. It was hard to see him so frustrated and not be able to help.”

- First Grade Teacher

In 2016, Sergio was given an amazing opportunity. He was selected to receive a sponsorship from FAST and soon began speech therapy using the SmartPalate. As the beginning of therapy, Sergio had a difficult time controlling the movement of his mouth and tongue. He substituted other sounds for his /p/, /f/, /l/, and /r/. His progress started out slow and steady, but after some practice his improvements were tremendous. Since starting therapy, Sergio’s improved leaps and bounds in all speech areas after only one year of therapy, which would have taken two to three years minimum to treat in traditional therapy.

“Using the SmartPalate System has allowed Sergio to have more control of his tongue and his mouth helping his pronunciation greatly. It’s so satisfying to see his progress. Sergio and his parent are so thankful for his sponsorship opportunity.”

- Dave, FAST CEO

Sergio is still working on improving his speech but he’s progressed enough to be able to have normal conversations with the people around him. Now, he’s able to share his love of music with anyone who is willing to listen, not to mention start dancing if the mood strikes him. Sergio’s FAST sponsorship not only benefitted him but all those around him who are now able to get to know him better.
Francisco Morales
Brillo del Sol - Seeking Sponsor

Francisco Morales is an 8-year-old boy who goes by the name “Paquito.” His family describes him as a caring spirit and he loves being around people. Although young, Francisco has endured far more than most people will ever have to endure. After his father’s death, Francisco was diagnosed with development delays.

“It’s amazing that after all they’ve gone through, the Morales family is still enduring. Francisco is an amazing boy who constantly sets goals for himself and pushes himself to achieve them. He understands he has a hard time learning, but refuses to let that stop him from accomplishing anything.”

- Kendal, FAST Coordinator

It took a lot of perseverance, but Francisco was determined to work through his condition. At school he became proficient in math and reading, which was a huge accomplishment. The one thing still holding him back was his speech. Despite all his hard work, his pronunciation wasn’t progressing. Francisco was an optimistic child, but being unable to communicate affected him socially. He was afraid of talking in front of his peers and insecure about his speech.

“People don’t realize how having the ability to speak, or lack thereof, can influence your life in so many ways. Not only speech is affected by improving a person’s ability to communicate, but many other aspects of life will have a positive influence from this including confidence, understanding, ability to social, making friends and much more.”

- Priscilla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

Francisco is a great example of not letting your past define your future. Francisco has overcome his challenges and is currently an honors student at his school. He pushes himself to do the best he can in all his classes, including his speech therapy. With gratitude, Francisco is taking the wonderful opportunity he has been given, and making a
Cristofer is an 8-year-old boy who lives in Amatitlán, Guatemala with his loving family. His parents are his biggest supporters and always strive to provide him with the best opportunities possible. At a very young age, Cristofer was diagnosed with profound hearing loss. At first he couldn’t hear any sounds, but after receiving a donation of hearing aids he began picking up on certain noises. Even with the help of his hearing aids, Cristofer continued to have difficulty developing his language. Despite all of this, he’s still a very independent child whose teachers describe him as being curious and bright.

“Going through childhood with hearing impairment is a big challenge, which makes Cristofer’s story even more incredible. Despite his adversity, he’s an intuitive and self reliant child, who has a bright future because of those characteristics.”

- Dave, FAST CEO

Cristofer’s parents wanted to give him a proper education in an environment best suited for his condition. In kindergarten they sent him to a school specialized in education for the deaf and hard of hearing so he could learn basic speech skills. Despite the specialized instruction, he still struggled with correct pronunciation. The family already lived with a very low income and paying for Cristofer’s schooling put an even bigger financial strain on them. There was no possible way for them to afford speech therapy for Cristofer. Aware of the family’s situation, instructors at Cristofer’s school referred them to the CompleteSpeech clinic where they knew FAST could provide a speech therapy sponsorship.

The family saw this as the perfect opportunity and took Cristofer to the CompleteSpeech clinic. After hearing his story and receiving his application, Cristofer was awarded a speech therapy sponsorship by FAST. Once equipped with the SmartPalate, Cristofer could see in real-time the position of his tongue, which helped him correct his pronunciation, and his speech dramatically improved.

“I have seen the SmartPalate reach as many children’s understanding when traditional therapy methods have failed them. It’s amazing to be a part of this opportunity given to these children and it’s even better when we see them in and out of therapy in a matter of months.”

- Priscilla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

In 2017, Cristofer graduated from his speech therapy and his improvement was so significant that he left his specialized deaf education school to attend his local public school. Cristofer is a very bright boy who now has the ability to express his thoughts and ideas to others. There is no doubt that he is on track to accomplish incredible things in his life. All he needed was a little boost from his speech therapy with CompleteSpeech to make it all happen.

Cristofer Galindo
Benemerito Comite Pro Ciegos y Sordos de Guatemala
Karen Garcia
CompleteSpeech Clinic - Seeking Sponsor

The SmartPalate shows instant visual feedback.

The speech therapists at the CompleteSpeech Guatemala Clinic.

Karen is an exuberant five-year-old who loves playing with her friends. Every little girl dreams of being a princess someday and Karen is no exception. She loves watching princess cartoon and imagines herself as a member of the royal family. Karen lives with her two parents, who have supported her throughout her life. When she was born, her parents noticed an odd marking on her lip. At the doctors told them to ignore it, her parents paid little attention to it until it began to grow. They quickly took her back to the doctors where they identified the lump as a tumor that needed to be removed.

“When Karen was born, the doctors told us it was a birtmark that would most likely disappear while growing up, but instead it became a small lump. We took her to a specialist who told us it was a tumor. Hearing the word tumor is frightening in itself, but it being in regards to my child, I was absolutely terrified.”

- Karen’s Mother

Karen’s tumor required two major surgeries before it was completely removed. This was a lot for the little girl to handle, physically and emotionally. Thankfully the whole tumor was removed. Unfortunately, it left her mouth severely scarred and damaged. This made it hard for Karen to move her mouth and lips, which inhibited her from speaking correctly. Her condition was so specialized that traditional speech therapy techniques provided little to no help. Karen’s doctor had heard of the CompleteSpeech clinic and FAST. He knew about the unique speech therapy technology offered and highly recommended that Karen apply for the sponsorship.

“I knew Karen wasn’t receiving the language help she needed here. I’d heard of the SmartPalate system and knew that would be a better option for Karen’s condition. I also am aware of how expensive this process is for her parents, so the sponsorship is exactly what they needed.”

- Karen’s Surgeon

In 2016 Karen was selected for a speech therapy sponsorship provided by FAST. During her initial evaluation, the therapist observed that Karen could only pronounce a few sounds and had difficulty understanding others speech. Karen is working as hard as she can, and slowly but surely, her progress is increasing.

“Working with Karen has not been easy, but after some hard work, she now understands what I’m saying. I know that the rest of the treatment process we have planned for her has the potential to really improve her communication.”

- Carla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

Karen is now able to follow instructions and can respond to people by using signs. Although her verbal speech is still limited, she can now understand and communicate with others. She even tries singing to her parents, which is a huge step in the right direction. There’s still a long way to go, but with patience, hard work, motivation, and the help of sponsors like you, we know Karen will achieve great things.
Madelyn Chiquitó
CompleteSpeech Clinic

Madelyn is the cutest little girl with the biggest sweet tooth you’ll ever meet! Her favorite desserts always have chocolate, but she loves anything sweet. Madelyn is only 4-years-old, and has the most contagious smile. Considering the trials she had already faced at such a young age, it’s amazing how optimistic she is about life. When Madelyn was a year old her father died of a heart attack, which left her mother to care for their two daughters. As time went on Madelyn’s more struggled to find work and soon wasn’t able to financially support them. The court sent Madelyn and her sister to a home with more stable environment. Other than meeting their basic needs, the new home did little good for Madelyn. She received hardly any stimulation or interaction causing her language and speech development to delay.

“I could visit my daughter from time to time when she stayed at the government home. After a few visits I realized her language was not developing like the other children her age. She could only communicate through sounds and gestures. I knew something wasn’t right and I needed to get her help.”

- Madelyn’s Mother

After discovering Madelyn’s developmental delays, her aunt fought for custody of her and her sister. Thankfully custody was granted, and the two sisters were able to live in a much healthier and loving environment. This allowed them to visit them more frequently, which boosted the moral of the entire family. Madelyn started going to preschool, and although the interaction with other kids helped, her language was still underdeveloped. She had a hard time speaking and understanding the speech of others.

“Madelyn is a very sweet girl and it breaks my heart to see her struggling since she can’t communicate. If she tries to express her needs to me, I have to guess what she wants and have no way of understanding her completely.”

- Madelyn’s Teacher

Madelyn’s teacher had heard of FAST and thought Madelyn would be a good candidate for a sponsorship. She told her mother about this opportunity, who was thrilled with the news. In December of 2016, Madelyn was taken to the CompleteSpeech clinic in Antigua, Guatemala and was evaluated by one of their therapists. Madelyn was selected to receive a speech therapy sponsorship which began in 2017. She’s only been in therapy a few months, but is already making outstanding progress.

“Now that Madelyn has started therapy with the SmartPalate, she has much better control of her tongue movements. She can say a few sounds like /p/, /d/, and /t/. There’s no doubt that the more time we spend on her speech the clearer it will become.”

- Carla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

We are able to see this great change take place and are so thankful to be a part of it. Stories like Madelyn’s are the ones that inspire and motivate us to continue helping families who won’t stop fighting. We invite you to donate to FAST and help provide more children with a better future.
José Flores
CompleteSpeech Clinic - Seeking Sponsor

José is an adorable 3-year-old boy who lives with his mom, grandma, and aunt in Antigua, Guatemala. His mom is the sole provider for that family, so most days José spends his time with his grandma and aunt. José's parents are divorced, but his dad still comes to visit him regularly and is part of his life. At 10 months old, José's mom noticed he wasn’t developing like the other children. She took him to the doctors where they diagnosed him with Cerebral Palsy. This diagnosis meant José would face several challenges for the rest of his life. The doctors predicted that he would never be able to walk, that he would have a hard time controlling his limbs, and would struggle with language and speech development for the rest of his life.

"José's condition requires a lot of attention and care. It has been far from easy for us to provide him with everything he needs. Medical bills are very expensive, and we just don’t have the money to afford it."
- José's Mother

As predicted, José never developed the ability to walk, so he is bound to a wheelchair. He began receiving speech therapy which was helping some, but ultimately, José wasn’t progressing the way his parents had hoped. He learned several new words, but his pronunciation was almost unintelligible. His parents hoped to keep him in speech therapy to see if he improved but soon it became too expensive. José required a wheelchair, and his parents could not pay for both the wheelchair and speech therapy. Seeing that their son would be immobilized without a wheelchair, they chose to stop his speech therapy.

"People don’t realize how much the inability to communicate affects every other aspect of a person’s life. Their confidence, social interactions, and energy are all affected negatively by the lack of being able to communicate. Even more so in José’s case, where his communication is so impaired that he can’t ask for simply things like food or a blanket."
- Joshua, CompleteSpeech Vice President

José’s parents heard of a sponsorship opportunity provided by FAST. They took him to the CompleteSpeech clinic to meet with one of the therapists for an evaluation and to apply for a sponsorship. José is someone who needs your help in order to get approved for a sponsorship. This would help José progress further and faster than ever before.

"José was evaluated and a speech therapy plan was put into place so that he starts working on vital parts of his speech first. Considering his young age, he will enter the early intervention program. With the support of his family, I have no doubt that José will be very successful in therapy."
- Priscilla, CompleteSpeech Therapist

Many families are in a similar place as José’s parents. Parents who have a strong desire to help their child, but their financial situation limits them from doing so. FAST aims to provide as many sponsorships as possible, but we can’t do it with your help. Speech truly is a gift, and by donating to FAST, you’re giving the gift of speech to someone in desperate need.
11 year-old female client
She had lateralized /s/ and /z/ phonemes. She was amazing! She was extremely motivated while attending 8 summer term sessions using the SmartPalate. She had the technology figured out in just a few sessions and would set it up and run through her drills without the clinician assistance. At the end of summer, it was recommended that she continue treatment in the fall, but after attending one session, she was dismissed from treatment. She only required 9 sessions using the SmartPalate to remediate the lateralized phonemes.

12-year-old male client
He had been receiving speech services since age 3 to correct a lateralized /s/, /z/, /sh/, and a really stubborn /l/ problem. This family came from Evanston, WY for 4 treatment sessions in June, and 8 sessions in July. The child was released from treatment with perfect speech after using the SmartPalate in 12 sessions. This client was being made fun of at school, was really struggling with his speech, was really discouraged, and hated his school speech therapy because he couldn’t see it helping. He was very skeptical when they came for an Outpatient Evaluation, and his mom didn’t know if she was going to be able to talk him into trying it. When the supervisor got her SmartPalate and showed him how it worked, he was excited to try it. He said, “Mom, this is so cool! I think this will help.”

16 year-old female client
“She has been in speech therapy since she was 18 months old. They have specifically been targeting her /r/ productions exclusively for 5 years through the school district. We got the opportunity to do the SmartPalate therapy at USU. It was amazing. It quickly corrected her /r/. She mastered the /r/ in everyday speech to a non-familiar listener in one semester. We did a once a week monitor the following semester to be sure it stuck. The technology and immediate feedback made all the difference for her. We had done everything anyone suggested with little benefit. Thank you! She is thrilled to finally be released from speech, and I haven’t had anyone ask me if we adopted her from Australia in almost a year.”

Sponsored Institutions
FAST is proud to sponsor individual students as well as universities and institutions. Over the past few years, we have been able to see the results of 5 sponsored speech programs in different Universities. Here are some of the experiences shared by the Communicative Disorder and Deaf Education Department at Utah State University (Ask a FAST representative for the full 14 student and outreach program report):

Communicative Disorder and Deaf Education Department at Utah State University (pictured on left page)
The University of Reno, Nevada (UNR) was awarded a FAST sponsorship in August 2015. This sponsorship was for 2016 - 2017 and included various services and products by CompleteSpeech. Prior to the awarded sponsorship, UNR had no experience with the SmartPalate System by CompleteSpeech or FAST. The following is an excerpt of one success story from the summary report we received from UNR reviewing the stories and progress of some of the students they used the SmartPalate with.

EH’s Story

Number of Sessions: 12

EH began sessions at the UNR Clinic Summer semester of 2016 working into the Fall semester of the same year, having attended 4 years of speech therapy prior to her time with us. She had been working on /s/, /z/, /s/ clusters and lateral lisp prior to coming to UNR. As per her IEP we continued to work on these areas during her time with us. EH was selected as a candidate to receive the SmartPalate system as she had continued difficulty mastering these speech sounds through traditional therapy in their school speech therapy sessions.

The SmartPalate was primarily used as a warm-up tool. EH did not have any difficulty with the SmartPalate System in therapy sessions. Her mother also stated that she had no issues using the system at home either. Although we utilized the SmartPalate more in her second semester, we generally started each session with 10 - 15 minutes of attempting /s/ in isolation, as well as pairing /s/ with vowels. Her primary goal with the palate was to eliminate the “pancaking” of the back of her tongue.

“The SmartPalate helped EH finally figure out what she was doing wrong. She had a visual aid showing her that she was ‘pancaking’ her tongue instead of creating a ‘tunnel’ for her /s/ sounds.”
- Parent of EH

In the beginning of her treatment period, EH required up to 10 minutes to eliminate her “pancaking” using the SmartPalate, taking longer without it. In the second to last session with the SmartPalate, EH eliminated her “pancaking” in 3 attempts. In the last session EH did not demonstrate any “pancaking” at any point during that session and immediately matched the correct /s/ placement.

“The SmartPalate program has proven to be an invaluable tool for my client. The clarity it can bring to an often abstract concept is priceless.”
- Jessica, Student Clinician