



Palm Desert Rotary Club helping Honduran man get new hip

INDIO — A Honduran man is scheduled to undergo a hip replacement surgery this morning at JFK Memorial Hospital, the culmination of a local Rotary club's five-year quest to help him.

Henry Nolasco, 24, was injured seven years ago when he was thrown from the back of a pickup truck as it fell into a ravine.

“I had surgery back then, but it wasn't so good,” Nolasco said Monday at the La Quinta home of Ron Cofer, president of the Palm Desert Rotary Club, where he has been staying.

The pins inserted into his hip weren't enough to keep his shattered left hip in place and, over time, that leg shrank about 4 inches.

“After one year, it had changed my legs and I began to have a problem,” Nolasco said. He limps, and his hip aches after about half an hour of walking.

There was no money for additional treatment; the family had already sold its home and land to fund medical care for him and his brother, who broke his

collarbone in the same accident.

Nolasco was introduced by the fire chief of his hometown of Siguatepeque to Gustavo Gonzales of Palm Desert, who with the Rotary had just helped a girl from the village get a prosthetic leg.

Gonzales, whose wife is Honduran, has a home nearby and travels there twice a year to help with water system projects.

Gonzales spent years looking for a doctor and hospital who would take his case, while Nolasco worked with a couple of churches in Honduras that were unable to help.

Gonzales said Nolasco remained upbeat throughout the search.

“Bright guy, super nice, full of positive,” Gonzales said of Nolasco.

“As far as he was concerned, he was going to find someone to do it,” he said.

Last fall, local orthopedic surgeon Dr.

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Ghassan Boghosian came to speak to the Rotary, and Gonzales pulled him aside to tell him about Nolasco's case. After determining he could help Nolasco, Boghosian offered his services pro bono, and everything else fell into place.

"I asked the implant company if they were willing to donate, and they were, same with the anesthesiologist and JFK, all the way down to the techs and nurses. It was really great to see how excited everybody was and willing to donate their time," Boghosian said.

The Rotary club in Siguatepeque helped secure a six-month visa for Nolasco, and a local TV station held a telethon for him.

Palm Desert Rotary raised money for travel and living expenses.

Nolasco, who teaches English and computer classes in Honduras, arrived in California on Memorial Day, and has visited Disneyland and been to the top of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.

This morning, he will receive a hip that will align his legs, and he could walk with a walker by this afternoon.

The artificial joint should last him about 25 years if he doesn't do any hard running as with basketball, a sport he loves to play.

That's OK, he said. "I love golf."

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Henry Nolasco, 24, of Honduras talks Monday about the hip surgery he is having this morning. / Crystal Chatham, The Desert Sun

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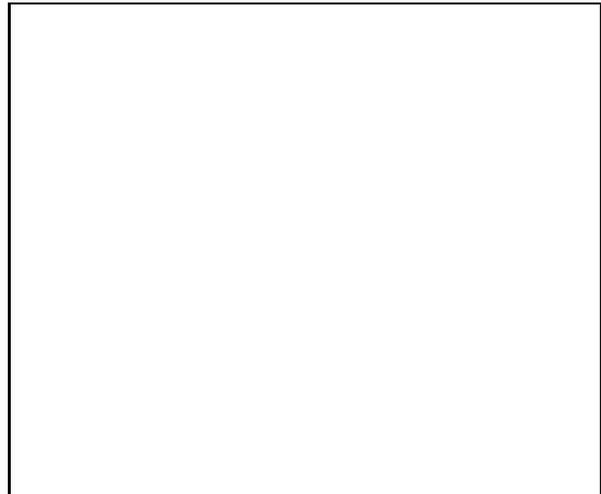
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