

Grant 11 Project Abrazos February 2021

ADDOR is pleased to announce a grant in the continued fight against Huntington's disease (HD), by making a donation to the Factor-H foundation in support of their Abrazos (Hugs) Project in South America.

Project Abrazos (Hugs) AT-RISK KIDS & YOUTH PROGRAMMES

In 2015, while Factor-H's founder Ignacio Munoz -San Juan delivered food to the HD community in the region of San Angel, Colombia, he met two young children, Eduardo and Olver. Eduardo had been abandoned by his parents several years back and he lived with his grandmother, who also cared for her dying husband and her oldest son, 18 at the time, both battling HD. Eduardo had to walk for an hour every day to attend school. Olver was also abandoned and being raised by his grandmother. After learning their stories and witnessing their joy after receiving some toys, Ignacio realised he could not return to his hometown in Los Angeles without doing more for them.

Abandonment, poverty, and the haunting of Huntington's disease were at the intersection of these boys' lives, much like so many in their communities. These families typically do not have money to buy the children clothes, school supplies, provide proper nutrition or health care. Their living conditions are extreme, usually lacking access to fresh water, electricity and adequate housing.



This is why and how Factor-H started Project Abrazos, a programme that is celebrating five years of helping 40 kids at risk from HD in this region of Colombia.

The project has lived through some gruelling times: Olver died of a preventable disease simply because he could not get to a hospital in time and a couple of siblings needed to be taken in by a family member because their mother with HD was unable to care for them. However, over the years, a few children have graduated from the Abrazos programme, giving them hope for a better future, and now the project team aims to help them go to university or get a technical education, to further their sustainability.

The programme has since expanded to include children in Maracaibo, Venezuela, the region with the most prevalence of HD in the world. Most importantly, the more than 18,000 Venezuelans who participated in research provided the genetic and clinical data that led to the discovery of the HD gene in 1983. In essence, we all owe so much to these communities.

The aim of Project Abrazos, which now sponsors 157 children at risk from HD in Colombia and Venezuela, is to improve their living conditions and provide them better access to health and education. Factor-H is also seeking to shape a new generation of at-risk youth who will be less afraid, more informed and empowered to change their lives and those of their affected relatives.

In the poorer communities of Venezuela, Colombia and Peru, there are hundreds of children from HD families living in extreme poverty. At this moment, the program is unfortunately unable to sponsor every at-risk child though it is one of their goals, including adding more learning centres for those who are not in school or have fallen behind due to the pandemic and several other initiatives. **The cost of sponsoring a child is about \$25per month.** With this money, they manage to cover assistance for clothes, school supplies, and some food supplements. Through a network of volunteers and clinicians, they try to provide medical assistance.

So with any money donated, Factor-H brings hope to so many children and helps the Foundation achieve their goal, that one day, all at risk HD children will receive their support.



The kids Project Abrazos brings out the best in humanity – laughter, hope, love and innocence. As Factor-H says “We are very lucky to have the chance of loving and being loved by these incredible little humans!”

For further information about Factor-H and their work go their website at factor-h.org

ADDOR is very pleased to donate \$625 to the Factor-H Project Abrazos and help the at risk HD children of South America.

If you would like to help in the fight to defeat HD, fund research and help others like Project Abrazos

Please donate at addor.co.uk