



**December 17, 2004**

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## **“Family to Family, a Christmas gift from the heart”**

**Londonderry, NH** - On Saturday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at the 99 Restaurant in Londonderry over a simple lunch, The Devon Nicole House with the help of Stronghearts of Maine, opens a new chapter in their history by presenting the first DNH Grant to the Brito-Peña family for \$2025. With thousands of dollars in medical expenses, travel costs and funding a 7-month stay in the US, the help is certainly needed and appreciated. And it comes just in time for Christmas.

Rodrigo Brito-Peña is a 5-year-old boy from Chile who will be spending this Christmas with his family waiting for his 3<sup>rd</sup> heart operation at Boston Children's Hospital. His parents Randy and Ana Maria, sisters Valentina (17) and Catalina (10) have given up a lot for Rodrigo. They will be spending 7 months away from their home in Chile. The doctors at Children's Hospital Boston recommended strongly that Rodrigo stay stateside in case complications should arise between his heart surgeries.

“Family, giving and helping others is what the season of Christmas is all about” said Thomas Missert, President of The Devon Nicole House. In August the Brito-Peña family stayed at The Devon Nicole House at Children's Hospital Boston, a home-away-from-home founded by the Misserts of Windham NH in memory of their daughter. Devon passed away after 5 days due to complications at birth.

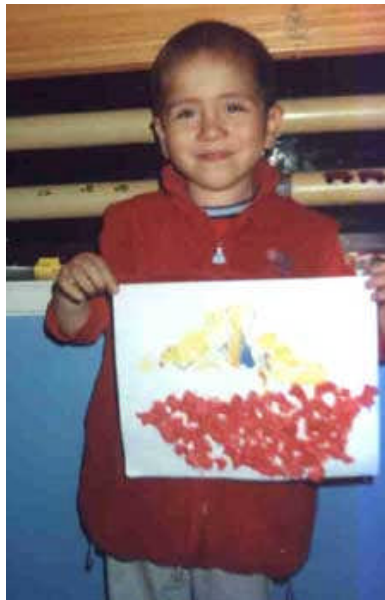
“After 4 years of work, prayers, the help of many big-hearted people and Children's Hospital Boston, we realized a dream this year when The Devon Nicole House at Children's Hospital Boston opened” said Thomas Missert. “We really feel that the people staying at Devon's house become part of the family. What we are now hoping to do, is to reach out and help some of these families with the tremendous financial burden they can incur.. just trying to save the life of their child”.

The Devon Nicole House is not the only group that understands the spirit of giving. The Shohegan High School Spanish Club, under the guidance of Spanish teachers Bernie D'Amours and Kim Vitchkoski raised money to help pay for Rodrigo's surgery. The funds for the first DNH Grant were donated to the Devon Nicole House from Stronghearts, a charity founded in memory of Seamus Duffy who was born with a congenital heart defect. (Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome).

“We will continue to raise funds to support the operations of The Devon Nicole House at Children’s Hospital Boston,” said Thomas Missert. “We hope to expand on Devon’s wish to help others through the DNH Grant Program. Our ability to help is only limited by the support and generous donations we receive.”

More information about The Devon Nicole House is available at [www.devonshouse.org](http://www.devonshouse.org). If you are interested in helping or making a donation to DNH, please contact Tom Missert at 603-594-1385 or [tom@devonshouse.org](mailto:tom@devonshouse.org) or write to The Devon Nicole House, PO Box 901, Londonderry, NH, 03053. Devon Nicole House is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The next major fund-raiser for The Devon Nicole House is their annual Valentine’s Charity Dinner, Saturday February 12, 2005 at the Andover Country club. Tickets are still available.

Flyer from SHS....



## **Help Souhegan High School students to save Rodrigo's Life**

Rodrigo Brito-Peña is a 5-year-old boy from Chile who will be coming to the U.S. in August for a heart surgery at Boston Children's Hospital. The SHS Spanish Club, under the guidance of Spanish teacher Bernie D'Amours, is helping to raise money to pay for Rodrigo's surgery, which will cost \$140,000.00.

Four years ago, Spanish teacher Kim Vitchkoski met the Brito-Peña family when their sons were roommates at Boston Children's Hospital. Both boys were born with Heterotaxy Syndrome, a rare condition that involves congenital heart defects and other complications. Since that time, the two families have become very close. Kim's son has had the same surgery that Rodrigo needs and he is doing very well! The Brito-Peñas came to stay with the Vitchkoskis in February 2003 when they had a checkup in Boston. Kim took the opportunity to bring Catalina, their 8-year-old daughter, to all of her Spanish classes that week.

"My students were really excited to talk to Catalina in Spanish. I was so proud of them! She even joined in to play a vocabulary game with the students. Of course, they all wanted Catalina to be on their team," says Kim. "I feel that destiny put us in the same room for a reason. I've been able to interpret for them at some of their cardiology appointments and over the phone. Most recently, I was able to translate Rodrigo's website into English."

Since the Brito-Peñas' health insurance from Chile is not valid in the U.S., the family is desperately seeking help to pay for their son's surgery. The SHS Spanish club members are compiling recipes for a cookbook, and proceeds from this cookbook will help to defray the enormous cost of this heart surgery, which is needed to save Rodrigo's life.

Rodrigo needs your help! Please support the Spanish Club and help to save this little boy's life! You can see Rodrigo's story on the web at : [www.rodrigonet.tk](http://www.rodrigonet.tk). Click on "Ayudemos a Rodrigo" and you can look at the English version of the website. To order a cookbook, donate money, or volunteer to help raise funds, please contact Kim Vitchkoski at [kvitchkoski@sprise.com](mailto:kvitchkoski@sprise.com) or call 673-9940, x624. ¡Muchísimas gracias!