

Baja news September 2009

Welcome again to our life at the mission in Mexico. We had postponed this letter until we had more news about the new Disabled Children's Learning Center (Mephibosheth). We are so happy to tell you that the final drawings are approved and that staff has started to remove the trees to make space for the building in the corner of the prayer garden. We showed the children that a start was made and that gave them also an idea where their new building would be. We are excited and are looking forward to further developments. We will keep you posted.



Do you remember Zaida, the girl who had surgery last year to strengthen her legs by inserting rods in her bones? After many months Zaida finally decided not to use her walker anymore. It was so difficult for her to let go of it because she used it for so many years. She didn't use it for school, but still would take it home. How difficult it was for her to let go of her comfort zone. But finally one day she said "NO MAS", left the walker at the mission and walks everywhere without any aid.

In the mean time Lupita, who has Cerebral Palsy and also needed a walker for support and balance, was watching Zaida and one day she told us that she also could walk without a walker. We were sooo surprised to see her go without. When we met Lupita almost 3 years ago she was crawling around or her mom was carrying her. She started to learn to walk with a walker and now she walks or runs without the walker. We are thankful for the progress in these girls. We celebrated this with a "fiesta" for both of them.

One of our staff members, Cristin Voght organized an occupational program for the children. For nine weeks we took the children for a couple of hours to a different department. We visited the maintenance shop, the carpentry shop(the children were even able to put a birdhouse together which they could paint and take home), the mechanic shop, the warehouse, the construction side, Patrick the bee keeper, the fire department, the print shop and even the police station in town. It was so successful! The staff of each department did such a wonderful job by explaining what their work was about, which tools they use, etc.. The children learned so much and were so excited. We as staff treasure the times to see the happy faces of the children.



Because of government regulation we did have to close the program for two weeks during the Swine flu scare, but none of the children or staff was affected by it.

For children's day, April 30, we took the children to the swimming pool. It was such a wonderful day. This time the kids didn't stay in the small pool, but staff took them all to the big pool. They all loved it! We heard them saying we have never been in a deep pool before and they were just laughing and screaming. After that they were treated with an ice-cream but only half of them were able to enjoy it. The other half of the kids had fallen asleep during the ride. We as staff feel so privileged to work with those children. We receive so much joy and love from them.



Besides all the fun we have in our program we do also some serious studying. As we mentioned in our previous letter, we tried to have the same curriculum as the regular schools have and using the same books. With the help of the principal of the mission school we were using also their exams. But when the children were doing the exams according to their age we found that it was too difficult for them. None of the children were able to finish their exams successfully. We suspect two reasons for this; they started school later in life and we have to accept the fact that because of their handicap there could be learning limitations as well. The principal advised us to try a different program that is also supported by the government and is for children lacking education when they were young. In the coming weeks we will have a meeting with a lady who is teaching this program. In the mean time we continue to work with the books we have. Ultimately, the primary goal is to show and teach them the love of Jesus and to develop the gifts that God has given them. Through that not only their lives are changed but that of their families as well.

Every month, Nancy Benning, from the Los Angeles area comes to the mission and teaches the orphanage children violin lesson. She is also willing to teach our children. We started with Luis who is able to borrow a violin from Nancy and he is enjoying the lessons. We are also blessed with a piano for our program and Kenneth started to teach one of the girls to play that instrument as well.

We thank the Lord for giving us so many opportunities!

We are also thankful for all the dedicated staff. They are just wonderful! We work in total with 7 full-time staff. A nice mix of three Mexicans, one American and three Canadians. It is Babel all over again!!

The other part of our work of course is the outreach to the disabled persons in the community. It amazes me that there are always new situations, new patients in need of help. The need for wheelchairs is always there, adaptations to regular wheelchairs are needed regularly. Many walkers, crutches and personal care items are distributed. A great number of adult diapers are given to those who are incontinent because of injuries or old age. We are so thankful for the donations we receive to be able to continue this service because adult diapers are simply NOT available here. We do notice that there are fewer patients with open wounds on their bottom because they can now stay dryer and cleaner than before. What a blessing that is for the patients and their families.

The work in the shop is never ending. Special equipment is daily on the work bench being that for new construction, overhaul or repairs. Sergio, my right hand in the shop is doing remarkably well. He learns fast and is eager to not only do the work but also to design. He is getting a great deal of satisfaction when we are delivering the items he worked on.

One prayer request we have is for Sergio. As you know, he lost both legs when a 10 000 volt live cable landed on his legs and due to lack of money for bus transportation he was not able to receive the last surgery in 2003 to prepare his stumps for prosthetic legs. He desperately needs surgery to finish the incomplete job. Please pray that there will be an opportunity for him to go to the USA or Canada to receive what he needs. The song we so often recite says: God will make a way where there seems to be no way. We hang on to that for Sergio as well.



I like to finish this visit with you while you are enjoying a cup of coffee or so with a story that touched my heart to the core and made me so thankful to do the work here at the mission.

Please meet Paul. A young man in his mid thirties, mentally challenged, honest to the core of his being, always a smile on his face, always talking even though hard to understand and every day at the mission with his three wheeled bicycle with improvised trailer to pick up scrap metal. Helping wherever he can at the mission, Paul has become part of us.

Because he is using his bike daily and loading it with every piece of metal he can find, wear and tear is a normal part of life for him. Not only on his body but also and especially on his bike.

So, one day in March, the bike gave up, the frame broke and the drive train was worn beyond quick fixes. Paul was very sad as you will understand.

I promised him to do whatever I could to fix it again since there are no parts available and no other three-wheeler either.

It was a major undertaking to make, repair and modify parts.

After five weeks of walking every morning and afternoon for 45 minutes and checking every day we could give him the good news that his bike was finished including a new paint job, new bearings, chain, pedals etc. Even his ripped seat was replaced with a new one.

After he tried his "new bike" he called the people of the maintenance department to the bike shop and taking his cap off, placing his hand on my shoulder, with tears rolling down his cheeks he thanked the Lord for his "new bike", my life and prayed a blessing upon me.

I must say dear family and friends; this honest and heartfelt prayer was the most valuable pay-check I ever received. I will never forget that moment.

We thank our Lord for the blessings He gives us to enjoy, the thankfulness we are receiving from the people we serve and the progress we see in the lives of the children.

Thank you so much for your continued support for the mission either in prayer, in encouragement and in deed.



Blessings to you and yours from:

Dirk and Mary Kos

Vicente Guerrero

Baja, Mexico

P.S. For more information about the mission and the needs, log on to ffhm.org