



**OCTOBER-
NOVEMBER
2008**

Dando Amor, vida y esperanza



MISIÓN MÉXICO NEWSLETTER

www.lovelifehope.com

★ *GENERAL Misión México Update*

Saludos cordiales a todos;

It is hard to believe that it is this time of year already. Less than two months until Christmas! We have achieved a lot this year, with the new house, more children, new schools etc. but, one always feels that we should have achieved more. Maybe it's because we feel we are racing against time; that the children are all growing up and they are still not prepared for the future. Each time you start feeling satisfied, there is another blow and after you pick yourself up you realize there is still so much to do. It becomes a little overwhelming as we are just two people who would like to be everything to these children but, cannot. It is impossible, so we do need to rely on others to help in the children's development.

At times we have the help of a psychologist but the visits are not consistent and of course, every child here needs this sort of attention and one psychologist just isn't enough.

Fortunately, we do have some group sessions with different people coming to talk on a specific subject, which are wonderful and are really helping the older children, though the kids need more individual attention as they are carrying so much baggage from the past.

One young boy of eleven years is seeing a psychiatrist each week and is slowly making progress for which we are thankful for.

The last few weeks have been draining with a number of the children pushing boundaries and causing unnecessary stress and strain. There are 28 teenagers, from 13 yrs to 19yrs all living under the same roof!! Generally speaking they are good kids but it just takes one to upset the normal running of the place and cause the happy atmosphere to disappear. Generally speaking, we would say that it affects us more than the 46 children living here, though they do notice when we are feeling low and it is hard to be 'bubbly' for the rest when one child is rebellious.

When I started this newsletter, we were going through a tough time with some of the older kids but everything has settled down and things are back on track. The new kids have settled in and the others have accepted them as family.

Moving here has been made such a difference to the children. There is space for them to move, to run, to play. It is no wonder there were so many problems in the old place as everyone was on top of everyone. Now the kids are finding new interests, such as Angel, who is developing a keen interest in insects and Hector, who is keen to know all about the plants and trees. Not long after we get up at 5am, the 'Angel' age group (there are around six boys), are out in the garden looking for insects and investigating in children's natural science books what type of insect it is. In the early morning, Sammy, Yimy (both 4yrs) and Junior (2yrs) climb up on the top bunk in their room to look at books or watch the squirrels that go from tree to tree in the garden.

Kids sit on the garden benches and read stories and we find others in the chapel reading the bible. There are also many more additional classes and activities that the children are enjoying.

The boy's dorms consist of an area downstairs with two sets of double bunks and one triple bunk. Above is a small mezzanine floor which has a triple bunk, desk and wardrobe.

Moacir's room is upstairs and he was so thrilled to move in and commented, 'I never dreamt that I would ever have my own room'. He is sharing the small space with two others! Thanks to all who made it possible.





★ EDUCATION Update

SPORTS Update ★

A LITTLE BIT OF CULTURE-BACKGROUND:

On the 1st and 2nd of November, Mexico celebrates a 'feast' called 'The Day of the Dead'. Preparations for this day commence in late October. Altars are made, decorated with candles, floral tributes and photos of the departed. There are shrines everywhere, even in the supermarkets; the city is awash with colour and light. It is believed that the spirits of the dead come back to earth on these days and the candles and flowers guide their path.

In all the bakeries there is 'pan de muertos', bread of the dead. Over the two day feast, the cemeteries are overloaded with people celebrating, and I mean 'celebrating' the life of their dearly departed.

For years we found the tradition very strange and a little 'off-putting' but, now we look at it with great interest. It seems to be a tradition that keeps alive the memories of loved ones.

A number of our children have lost their parents; Maria's mother was killed when the overloaded truck she was travelling in went over the side of the hill, Dulce's parents both died of AIDS, Narcisa's father died of some strange sickness, Margarita's father committed suicide. Luis was around 4yrs when he found the body of his mother floating in the river. Marisol's father died but she doesn't know how. And, Jania's mother died of AIDS and her father was murdered. So many sad stories.

They all wanted to visit the graves of their parents, though only Dulce and Margarita's 'papas' were in the local cemetery.

Amid all the festivities at the cemetery; music, singing, food, ice cream and a growing mountain of rubbish, the girls found the graves of their parents and decorated them with flowers.



SURFING: It is wonderful to see so many children learning to surf. Sometimes it looks like a Noosa beach (Qld., Australia), well not exactly, (I'm stretching the truth a little!!) as here we have sand that is almost black and the beach is not that clean but, when you look at so many surfboards out on the waves (compliments of Global Surf Industries, U.S.), it could be a Noosa! The kids are fortunate to have the beach all to themselves, except for the occasional fisherman and passing herd of cattle. Of course you would think that in the water there would be plenty of room for everyone but as always they all clump together and get in each other's way.

We were so happy to see Maria (15 yrs) advancing in her skills and going for a reasonable size wave when one of the new kids got in her way and collided with her board. Maria coming out with a fractured jaw in two places! At first, with the amount of blood, we thought she had lost a couple of teeth. Her teeth are fine though now her jaw is wired together, top and bottom and will be like that for 5 weeks. Everything she eats has to be liquid and through a straw. Maria likes to talk a lot so this is a big test for her!

SWIMMING: Four kids from the refuge, Leonardo, Jose, Isaac and Maria, swam in the 5km Canyon Sumidero Competition recently. Maria won the bronze medal for her age group and there was great satisfaction for all the kids in completing the race.

There were swimmers from all over the world competing in the 15km Final World Cup Marathon Series and the kids were happy to meet a couple of Australian swimmers, one being Brendon Cappel who came second in the World Cup Series. As I write this, Alan is in the Capital of Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutierrez with eight children who are competing in a swimming competition. Three of our older boys won bronze medals in two relay races. Also, our younger boys won bronze at this event.

A big thank you to Club Aquarios, Tapachula for their wonderful support of the refuge. This club is giving 20 of our children free training. That is incredible!!! Most of our older children, that is, 14yrs-17yrs, are in training; going to the gym (at the pool) in the mornings and swimming in the evenings. Keeping the teenagers active is vital. By training these young people, 'Club Aquarios' is not only teaching these kids to swim but is also looking after their fitness and giving them a grand lesson in discipline, helping in their formation for the future.





★HEALTH Update

Other than a few minor problems, all the children are well. We are very grateful for all the vitamins that we have received for the children and also for Alan and me. It does make a difference.

Sammy (4yrs) has had his second operation on his eye. This time a doctor from Rotary Tapachula offered to do the operation and Rotary itself paid for the hospital fees for which we are very thankful.

Sammy's left eye was still crossed after the first operation and needed to be straightened a little. Now his eye is turned out the other side but the doctor assures us that it will straighten within the month with exercise and if not he will do another op.

As I mention often, this work can only happen if we get support. Without YOU this refuge would not exist. Thank you to all who continue to help the refuge.



EVENTS Update ★

Christmas cards are available for purchase by contacting info@lovelifehope.com. The cards are drawings done by the children here at MM and are being sold in packets of 10 for \$10. The money raised will support the refuge.

Thank you to Envoprint in Canberra who have assisted us in this project and also to MAWAI and Santos Wish who have generously supported the print work for the cards.

The Hola Film Festival is supporting us this year – thank you. The festival runs from mid November-mid December in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide. Please support the film festival by going along. Christmas cards will also be available to buy at the festival screenings. For further details please visit www.holamexicoff.com

Thank you too to MAWAI, Ere Perez, Santos Wish and Tanya Gordon who continue to support us financially through their businesses and activities.



Please forgive us if we haven't answered your email. We have great intentions but far too many distractions!! We do enjoy getting mail and even if we don't answer, know that we really appreciate you writing.

**God bless you all, with love,
Pam and Alan Skuse and all *Misión México!***

