



Misión México NEWSLETTER

FEB
2017

Greetings from Mexico!

Greetings to all and welcome to the first 2017 Misión México newsletter. We hope you all had a very enjoyable Christmas or Hanukkah, and New Year. Our Misión México team wishes you all, a year filled with LOVE, LIFE and HOPE!

It's now nearing the end of February 2017 and we at Misión México; that is, house parents, staff, volunteers and children, have another exciting year ahead of us. The children are growing so fast; one minute they are playing with dolls and cars, the next minute they are wearing makeup and reading car magazines! I feel like life is on 'fast forward' and before we know it, it'll be July again, and then soon after, another year will be gone!

For now, we'll reflect on 2016 and the wonderful year it was. Each and every day at MM brings us surprises and challenges, often at the same time! Last year was jammed full of wonderful moments, and also trying times, but through every trial, a lesson was learned. And because of those incredible, wonderful moments, our spirits were lifted, and that was the fuel that kept us going.

The Christmas/New Year season was yet again a most memorable time with the children being truly blessed with our delicious, traditional Christmas Eve tamales, amazing Christmas Day banquet and a New Year's Eve Hawaiian party, with our very own 'mocktail' bar, where the children learnt how to mix healthy drinks for all. To welcome the New Year in, we enjoyed an incredible fireworks display that lit up the heavens for all to see.

Our MM family enjoyed carols by candlelight on Christmas Eve while some of the children reenacted the Christmas story. How cute were our little ones as they set about to bring a visual feature to the carols. The wonder of Christmas morning with the tree surrounded with gifts was a magical sight for tired eyes and weary souls. Excitement filled the room as each and every child was presented with their gifts. The happiness was contagious, and we adults enjoyed every moment as we watched the children unwrap and discover their new treasures.

Over the holiday season, volunteers organized numerous outings, and in-house games and activities to keep the children occupied and content. It was a mammoth task, but the enthusiasm was obvious and the children benefited with going to new places and learning new things. Volunteers and supporters financed and supplied everything for the children's amazing Christmas Season for which we are so very grateful and truly humbled.



www.lovelifehope.com

The day after Christmas the Misión México family invited the community children from Villa del Sol, to Misión Surf for a fun day of soccer, games, sausage sizzle and gifts. It is so very important for the children to learn about giving and not always receiving, and that day our children really did shine and experienced this incredible blessing we can be to others.



Art

For the second half of 2016, the incredible Melody James and Dom Attard ran an art program called the **Chido Project** for Misión México's children, and the children from the impoverished village, 'Villa del Sol'. Some of the children from the poor community had never been exposed to art before, or even for that matter, to holding a pencil or pen. This project certainly had it's challenges, but not only did it introduce the children to art and open their minds to explore different art forms and techniques from around the world, it also built a sense of community and showed the locals that people really do care. An amazing array of masterpieces was accomplished over the period and can be viewed on facebook [@chidoproject](#). *"A huge thank you to Melo and Dom for your love, patience, dedication and creativity; you are truly missed"*.



Outreach

A few months ago, a team from **The Place** church in California, came to the Misión Surf project to work for the local community of Villa del Sol. This community outreach was to support, encourage and unite the locals. Thankfully the accommodation at Misión Surf was ready for guests, so we were able to house our visitors in relative comfort while they worked at making a soccer field for the local community, and also managed to plant some coco palms at the Misión Surf grounds. This is the second year that this team has come to Tapachula and we look forward to their next visit in July this year.



Misión Surf Project

The Misión Surf building project is nearing completion. It's been a long slow process due to the fact that it has been built only as funds were available. The main support has come from the **Compound Board Shop in Florida, U.S.**, and **Guzman y Gomez Restaurant in Australia**, and has been furnished through grants from the **Australian Embassy in Mexico**. Also, over the years Compound has brought teams of incredible, hard working volunteers down from Florida to help in the initial construction process of the building.



Unfortunately, we had a setback due to beach erosion problems caused by the bad design of the ocean rock walls that the government has built in the area. After six months of working in extreme conditions, building a huge retaining wall, some ex-Misión México young men and a few local workers were able to protect the property from the encroaching tides. Once this work-training project is completely up and running, we envisage that it will help Misión México become self-sufficient, provide work experience and employment for Misión México's young adults, and create a surf culture in the local impoverished community, which in turn will help the local economy through the tourism it will create. We are so very thankful for the incredible support that we have received for Misión Surf, both financial and through labour, and also the patience that was required for the completion of this amazing project.



Health

During the year we have had a number of health, optical and dental problems attended to. Cesar has had numerous medical tests and examinations to investigate his medical needs. As an epileptic child with attention deficit, he requires expensive daily medication. His growth and speech problems are still being investigated. We recently had a campaign called **#Climb for Cesar** where our boys in the Youth Transition Program (YTP) climbed the 4100mt **Tacana Volcano** to raise funds for Cesar's ongoing treatment. How proud we were of each of the boys, as they embraced the challenge and made it to the top, slept in the crater in freezing conditions and descended the volcano the next day. Our staff, who led the climb, did an amazing job of organizing and supervising this event. A big thank you to all involved and to those who donated so generously toward Cesar's cause.

Genayda also has a developmental problem that we are looking into with specialists. It appears that her growth problem may be related to malnutrition rather than genetics.

Misión México is fortunate to have a number of doctors who treat the children for free or give MM wonderful discounts. Their concern for the children has been fantastic and we are so thankful for their support.

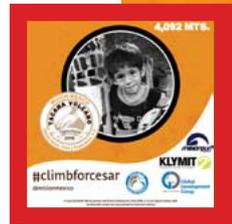
Optical attention for children's eyes is constantly being monitored and glasses prescribed when needed. We are very thankful to have an optometrist in Tapachula who has been giving MM great discounts for new glasses.

Dental attention is ongoing with dental marathons happening approximately every six months to check and address any problems. This project consists of numerous dentists giving up one or two Sundays to treat the children for free. We provide the materials but thankfully there are no costs for labour. Yessica is now wearing braces to straighten her once overcrowded teeth. Tere and a few others have yet to be attended to for this same problem. Orthodontics are costly and due to the expensive nature of the treatment we need to fundraise. Due to this we try to stagger the process, but in saying that, it is imperative that there are no lengthy delays in their attention and treatment.

An Emergency

Just before Christmas one of our older boys from the YTP tried to 'spread his wings' but learnt a very valuable lesson through it. Hector and three other friends were all travelling on the same motorbike when it was involved in an accident. Thankfully nobody was killed, and considering none of the youth were wearing helmets, we believe it to be a miracle. Hector seemed to come off the worst and has been slowly recovering.

The time spent in the local General Hospital Emergency ward was an experience in itself and something we would not like to experience again. After numerous medical tests (from the private sector) it appears that there will be no major lasting side effects of the accident. One of his eyes was seriously off center but with 3 X daily eye exercises it is slowly straightening up. His hearing is also slowly recovering but we are waiting on his next visit to the ophthalmologist for some answers regarding this.



Education

In September 2016, the beginning of the new school year, we employed a new home-school teacher, **Karina Ochoa** for our children with learning disabilities. It has been a successful transition from our previous much-loved teacher **Kim Dahl**, whom we are very grateful to for her year of dedicated teaching.

As with any home, we have our fair share of problems related to education (except ours is multiplied ten times plus) so we have employed a homework tutor, **Ana Garcia**, to help the children each afternoon with their studies, which is certainly paying off with the children's grades improving.

Marysol Pérez, Misión México's health supervisor and education psychologist, is doing an absolutely amazing job organizing and monitoring the children's health and education, but she certainly has her hands full keeping on top of all the problems related to the children's schooling. Here in Mexico, they expect you to attend a 'general' meeting once a month; and with 30+ children in school, that's quite a handful. Then there are meetings for any child with behavior or learning problems, which in this household is quite often, so you can see that Marysol's position here in Misión México is imperative to the smooth running of the children's education.

Lupita Skuse 18 yrs, whom we adopted several years back, has now moved to Australia and is learning English at TAFE. Once her English is up to standard she intends to study tourism or hospitality. Lupita is living with family and is loving the Australian way of life.



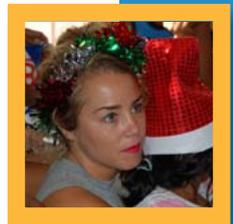
YTP

There is so much happening with the **Youth Transition Program**. If you would like to read all about the program please see our recent [YTP newsletter](#).

Staff

Besides **Marysol Perez** in education, we now have other people in place helping with the smooth running of the refuge and they are doing an awesome job.

Our general manager, **Paco Chavez** oversees construction, development, legalities and the running of Misión México and Misión Surf. He also sources local interest and support; **Luke Owen** is the leader for our Youth Transition Program and instructs the boys on how to prepare themselves to live independently. He organizes outings to challenge the young adults and instructs the pre-YTP students in living skills; **Melissa Biggerstaff** works in the area of events, fundraising and sourcing grants and donations. Melissa also seeks to find people for projects that will benefit the children. **Luanne Ingram** works in the finance area, keeping our books in order and preparing everything for the monthly visits to the accountant; **Sophie Marvell** is our new Volunteer Coordinator who responds to applications, interviews and coordinates the temporary volunteers. She is responsible for the volunteer's wellbeing and also sources sites to find volunteer applicants. Sophie has taken over the position from **Emma Fleetwood** who did a fantastic job in this field. Thank you Emma for supporting Misión México in such a professional manner; we wish you well on your next adventure.



House Parents

As Alan is approaching 67 years and I, 64 years, we have decided it is time to step-down as 'house parents' and take on the role to be more like the 'grandparents'.

We have been in this position with Misión México for the last 16 years. It has been an amazing journey and one that has helped us to grow and change. Now we are looking for new house-parents. Obviously, this is an extremely important role, and due to the nature of the refuge, that is, caring for girls and boys, this position needs to be filled by a husband and wife team who can love unconditionally, and create a 'stability' for the children in Misión México's care. Alan and I will then be able to focus on the establishment of the Misión Surf Project and get that up-and-running.

If you are interested in this position and feel you could give up a couple of years and love some awesome kids, please write to us for more details: info@lovelifehope.com

Legal

Misión México, Dando Amor, Vida y Esperanza A.C. is a non-profit organization. We have been very blessed to have a local Public Notary who does any legal work for Misión México free of charge.

An Honour

In August 2016 Alan and I were invited to the Australian Embassy in Mexico City to celebrate 50 years of Diplomatic Relations between Australia and Mexico and to share a little of our story. It was to a distinguished audience with guests of honour, **His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and his wife, Her Excellency Lady Cosgrove**. Directly after my speech the Governor General presented me (on behalf of Alan and myself, as Alan was unable to attend) with the **Governor's Medal**, in recognition of our work with the disadvantaged children of Mexico and Central America.

It was such an honour (and complete surprise) to receive this presentation. It made me think that this honour was not just for Alan and myself, but for all who have been part of Misión México's journey.

Fundraising

Due to the many amazing fundraising events throughout 2016, for which we are overwhelmed and so very thankful for, a separate newsletter related to this will follow in the next couple of months.



Thank you

It is true, Misión México has a lot to be thankful for! Every child now has the opportunity to have a good education, to receive dental and health attention. Each child is now able to dream; to dream of a better future for themselves and future generations. Though, to help those less fortunate is a blessing, and as I have said many times, it is a team effort, as 'one can only do so much alone, but as a team we can change the world!'

Thank you to all who support Misión México in any way. Without your support it would not be possible to do this work, but because of your amazing provision, we are all making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate and making change a reality.

May God bless you all in abundance.

Pam and Alan Skuse

Founders and Directors of the Misión México Refuge.

