

Casa Hogar de los Niños

Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico

Vol. I No. 1

Dear Friends

For about 35 years we have had volunteers like you from all over the world come to our Orphanage, but have done very little to communicate back. I would like to change this, as there are many exciting things taking place down here! In this inaugural newsletter, I would like to talk about some history and current events at the orphanage, as well

as the current state of Tijuana.

A very special thanks to everyone who has personally visited and helped the orphanage! I hope you enjoy my articles below and learning more about Casa Hogar de los Niños.

Tony Ralphs
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Recent Service Groups

This past February, Union Church from Seattle, WA came to our Hogar and stayed four days. 18 volunteers of all ages worked to-



Finished Home

gether to build a two room home. This family oriented group was

united in task and spirit to complete their house and serve the poor families of Tijuana. James B. Notkin was the leader, and he has been coming with his wife Renee for about 17 years.

In March we had 27 students from Pennsylvania State University. This group was college students and they have been serving in Tijuana for about 8 years. There was some fear from a few of their parents, and so a couple students

did not come. The orphanage is located in a poorer part of Tijuana it is somewhat dangerous and there are no guarantees. Even though the neighborhood may not be the nicest, it always proves very impactful on all volunteers. Below are several statements from students who have shared thoughts on their service experience. Their comments are very indicative of what the orphanage and its surroundings have to offer.

Coming to Hogar de Los Niños is an experience unlike any other. The children and the culture are something I will never forget or take for granted. - Andres P.

This was an outstanding experience. The interactions with the kids were unforgettable and the encounters of Tijuana were very eye opening and truly made me appreciate how blessed my life is. - Christopher C.

Although I spoke no Spanish when I arrived, the language barrier was not an issue because the children are all so friendly, and the mothers here are very welcoming. - David A.



Pennsylvania State University

Without a doubt it is the best week of the year for me and for the students who give their time, talent and treasures to spend the week with the children of the orphanage. I would encourage any group who wishes to experience the love of the children to spend a week here and give them the love that they so freely give us. - Lauren W.

On the various work projects I realized how lucky my life is and how happy the kids were with just necessities. I would recommend coming to the orphanage for a life changing experience. - Pei W.

Casa Hogar de los Niños
Colonia Pedregal de Santa Julia
Tijuana, Mexico
www.hogardelosninos.com

New and Exciting Things at the Hogar

Our new facility is almost complete! The sequence of pictures below show an accelerated progression of the construction (www.hogardelosninos.com for more construction pictures). Now, the only things left to do are a cement patio in front, some painting, and perhaps a cement road down to the back entrance. I have heard people say that our new building is beautiful, but question why it is so big. That is a very good question. My aunt passed away and left a good sum of money for the future of the orphanage. There were many different ways to use it, but certainly one way was to build a great building at the orphanage that eventually could be used to help support the orphanage long term. My goal is to have a wonderful home for the children, and also a place where we can host groups and individuals who

come to visit and volunteer with us. Over the years we have had so many people come to our place, and it has had such an impact on their lives. Without a doubt the orphanage has been absolutely blessed by these individuals in the process.

Many other ministries in Tijuana have their roots in the orphanage; among them is Corazón, a group that has been responsible for building many houses for the poor of Tijuana. The founder of Corazón stayed with me on the old school bus that I used to start the orphanage (www.hogardelosninos.com for complete history). The largest ministry to be associated with the orphanage is Homes Without Boundaries, which still actively comes to the orphanage and stays with us. Homes Without Boundaries is another house building ministry in Tijuana that

builds about 90 houses per year.



Tony with kids at the old bus

However, even more important in my mind, are the hundreds of young people who have ventured to the orphanage and had their first taste of missionary work in a third world culture setting. Some volunteers stay with us for weeks, months, or even years and have worked with doctors, community children, or special needs kids. With our new facility, I would like us to reach out and have more volunteers come to stay with us. As you can see with our new building, we have comfortable room for everyone!



Week 38



Week 60



Week 69



Week 132



Week 80

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Violence in Tijuana and its Impact

Many people have become too frightened to come to Tijuana. I can certainly understand this reaction, considering the horrible publicity about Tijuana and Mexico at the current time.



Orphanage Neighborhood

Our city has become in many ways a city of darkness. I say this in a spiritual sense that darkness represents evil. Fear has become so omnipresent. Our orphanage is one light on a hill in a city filled with darkness. I have been working in Tijuana for almost 35 years, yet in all that time I have never seen one gun fired in anger or a single violent crime. I know that violence exists, and there are crimes taking place, but near the orphanage it is rather peaceful. This could be because the



Kids at Halloween

orphanage is in a poor section of town where very few people of interest to the drug cartels live.



Orphanage Neighborhood

Many of you know my wife Pilar. She is a Mexican with has many Mexican-American friends who



Tony & Pilar Ralphs

live in the United States. Some of them will not go to Tijuana anymore and constantly tell my wife she should not go either. She continues to go to the orphanage because of her love for children and to people who need help. I hope and pray nothing happens to my wife or myself when we go to Tijuana, but that is in God's hands. Americans are not the



Sahara & Halima (Sisters)

targets in Mexico; the vast majority of violence occurs between drug cartels. In fact, there has never been any violence directed towards volunteer groups while staying with us.

A critical function of the orphanage is to provide a loving home for orphaned and aban-

doned children. The longer we can keep these kids in school and in our home, the better chance there is that they do not become involved with drug cartel operations. This is an active way that



Rene, Alex, & Chewy (Brothers)

we can positively contribute to the future of Mexico. I hope and pray that our orphanage is a "Light on a Hill" for many who want to see conditions improve for the poor people of Tijuana.



Luis & Alex



Fabiola Gallegos

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