



News of the Niños

March 23, 2009

Comayagua, Honduras

Dear Padrinos, executive board, and friendly supporters,

Please receive our respectful regards and gratitude.

It is with great joy that we write to give you good news; overall the children are very well and very determined in their studies. Thursday, March 19 we celebrate in our country Fathers' Day. So to each Padrino of the children, and especially Mr. Allen, HAPPY FATHERS DAY! We give much glory and praise to our God for his provision through you. Thank you very much!

Last weekend we had a terrible fright. Astro the horse at the Granja (farm) disappeared. The children looked for him all one evening and part of the night. He had disappeared on two other occasions. The children found Astro. It seems he has a girlfriend in a nearby village. The guys are taking disciplinary action so Astro does not commit such misconduct.

The groups that came to work have worked very hard. The wall project at Misericordia is completed. Only small details remain to be completed in the Transition House. Greg and Janet are ready to begin the project. The young people are excited and eager to live in their Transition House.

We give glory to God for his divine provisions through our family and each one of you for accepting our children as your own sons and daughters.

We are so grateful to all our friends and padrinos for the shoes. Thank you!

We greet each of you with gratitude for the Hogar Nazareth, Hogar Granja (farm), Transition House, Casa Buen Pastor, Casa Misericordia, The school of Grandfather Jerry, Kinder Nazareth, Casa Superacion Universitaria for the boys and girls, Vallarta Tegucigalpa, and Niños Misquitos, Garifunas de la Costa Misquita.

May the Lord Bless You,

With love, Carmen and the children

Carmen and the children

"Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me." Mark 9:37

A Morning in the Panadería *by Dave Hiskes*

Each year as we have gone back to Honduras and visited Hogar, we have seen a lot of changes in the orphanage facilities. This year there seemed to be more than ever. The biggest change was evident even before entering the gate - the completed *panadería* (bakery) building. Unlike the cinder block gray surrounding the rest of Hogar, this building is colorful. It is enclosed by a fence instead of a wall, which makes the entire building visible from the road. It is beautiful!



The completed building may look even a little more attractive to people knowing they won't be spending another week there mixing concrete and mortar, as many did during construction. I guess we were fortunate this year, the work group we were with missed out on all the heavy lifting jobs. On top of that, we spent one morning in the *panadería* helping make cookies, which I enjoyed.

The bakery is a large room occupying a good part of the first floor of the building. About twenty *niñas* were helping the *panador* that morning. Most were involved with mixing ingredients, preparing the dough, and forming the cookies. A couple were helping load and unload the ovens, and a couple more were packaging the finished products. Our work group came in to look around and some of us decided to stay and help. I have never worked in a bakery, and my baking experience at home is pretty much limited to frozen pot pies, pizzas, and home made cookies - cookies that are as much like the ones my Grandma used to make as I can make them. So, despite my overall lack of baking experience, cookies are a food group I know well.

Ingredients are stored in a small room in the bakery, along with a scale hanging from the ceiling for weighing them out. The recipes for 14 items are posted on the wall next to the scale. The *ninas* are entrusted with weighing out the ingredients. Because I could reach the scale easier than them, I was permitted to do this as well, under their watchful eyes. I was surprised the cookie recipe didn't call for eggs.

After gathering the ingredients, they are dumped onto one of several large stainless steel tables for mixing. The mixing is done using the "volcano" method that those familiar with mixing concrete and mortar would recognize: form a ring with the dry ingredients, pour the water in the middle and carefully work the dry stuff into the water so that the ring is never breached by the water.



After mixing literally by hand, the dough is run thru some sort of dough rolling machine, and then returned to the table for the cookie forming operation. The cookies we made are about three inches in diameter with a decorative curl design around the edge. I would have guessed that a mold or some tool was used to produce the curls. Instead the *ninas* produce each curl with their fingers, one curl at a time, about 30 curls around the edge of each cookie. Since this took more time than anything else, several of us *Norte Americanos* were put to work forming the curls. However, with the average adult *Norte Americano* thumb being two to four times as large as the thumb of the average *nina*, a lot of our efforts earned an "*otra vez!*" (try again)

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NEWS FROM CASAYUDA
by Nelly Zelaya, Executive Director

The mission of CasAyuda foundation is to gather and integrate children and adolescents with disabilities through education and empowerment, with programs and projects that reinforce their abilities, enhance their strengths, and better the conditions of their lives. We serve the children and adolescents of Comayagua and surrounding areas who have several types of disabilities including cerebral palsy, deafness, mental retardation, autism, down syndrome, and assorted physical disabilities. It is our vision and task to provide formal literary programs for their educational development, vocational training, social activities, all to enhance the worthiness and foster the self esteem of each student.

The economic situations of this new year have forced us to face limitations in our growth and the services we can provide. This school term we have regrettably been required to dismiss five of our employees, 3 teachers, and 2 childcare providers, all who have been very important people in developing the work we have been doing. As a result, our teachers today are teaching two grades, which we know will not maximally benefit our students to their greatest capacity.

Our enrollment is 70% of last year's enrollment. We are saddened that we cannot offer education to all of the children on our waiting list. The spaces for the boarding school for the deaf are also reduced. In past years we had 25 students from various communities of the country, and now we can only serve 12. We sincerely regret not being able to follow up with the growth we have had due to the economic situation. All of this moves us to request your support for CasAyuda, which is necessary for us to give the educational attention needed by many children in the regular education system. We cannot give this educational opportunity because of our limited staff.

In spite of these obstacles we are pleased with progress we have made with our students this year and their individual accomplishments. These include formal education, vocational development, spiritual formation, swimming, community extension, providing a secure educational environment for the students of CasAyuda, providing basic necessities for the children, reinforcing administration, expanding services for our benefactors, and forming strategic alliances.

All of these accomplishments are possible only through the consistent donations and support of many institutions like All God's Children. May God bless the heart of the generous giver and All God's Children for supporting us since 2002 and for helping us when we needed it most!

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The *ninas* patiently demonstrated the technique, and showed that with practice we would be able to form the curls with our eyes closed, behind our back, or on two cookies at the same time. But none of us advanced to that level.

The *ninas* seemed to enjoy the work. They kept busy and moved along the steps in the process without prodding or instruction from the *panador*. The finished cookies weren't as soft and sweet as I remember my Grandma's, but I now appreciate the decorative edge design.

I would have liked to spend some time checking out the rest of the *panaderia* building, but the opportunity did not present itself. Besides a room that is used by work groups for lunch, there is apparently a library & some offices. For people who contributed to the construction of the *panaderia* building but haven't had the satisfaction of seeing how it turned out yet, I offer this opinion: It has turned out to be a beautiful building, and it is being used for the worthwhile purposes of producing baked goods and giving the *ninas* an opportunity to learn.

CHARITY NAVIGATOR 2009 RATING

Janne and her family from Rhode Island recently became sponsors of 3 Hogar children. She and her husband wanted to teach their own children the importance of giving to needy children in other parts of the world. They asked to sponsor children of like gender and age so that their three kids might feel a personal connection with those at Hogar.

About the same time AGC received a letter from Alina, a high school junior from Pennsylvania who was given an assignment in her World Cultures class to find a commendable charity and make a brochure about it. After choosing AGC for her project she was kind enough to write to us, explaining her choice:

"After looking around at all the charities on the list, and doing some research on them, I found this one to be the best. I discovered that the organization uses 98.3% of their money for the actual program...The things this organization does also really affected my choice. I think the fact that you guys are educating the kids and spreading the love of Jesus Christ will really impact the future of Honduras."

Nice stories, and there are others like them. But what is most noteworthy about them is the way in which Janne and Alina learned about AGC. Janne and Alina have little first hand knowledge about AGC or Hogar. They have not personally met anyone associated with AGC, a Hogar child or sponsor, or even any work team members. Their information about AGC and its ministries came only through Charity Navigator, an acclaimed online evaluator of thousands of charities, which performs this important service in order to promote intelligent and effective charitable giving. Charity Navigator, itself a 501(c)3 organization, rates charities based on their financial health and growth, organizational efficiency, and ratio of administrative expenses to program giving. Recently, Charity Navigator (www.charitynavigator.org) informed AGC of its sixth consecutive four star rating, noting

"Only 2% of the charities we rate have received at least 6 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that AGC consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way, and outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation differentiates AGC from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust."

Janne's family sponsorship is not the first to come to AGC through Charity Navigator, and AGC has received many other undesignated donations from sources aware of our organization only through its Charity Navigator rating. It's pretty amazing, isn't it?

We don't want all of this to sound self-congratulatory. Rather, we hope to assure all of our sponsors and donors that their gifts are used for the purposes for which they were given, of the need for humble but prudent giving, and the sometimes unexpected ways that God provides.

Board Bullets

March 2009

- The Board received reports from 7 work teams who served Hogar Nazareth, Hogar Amor, CasAyuda and the children and staff of each. Among the projects: a new boys dorm at *la granja*, landscaping and flower boxes at Hogar Nazareth, the exterior wall for the future site of Misericordia and Casa Pastor outside Hogar. Many of the staff were given special attention with dinners out. A 3 day excursion to Copan was provided to ten girls in recognition of their exceptional work at the bakery.
- Worthy of special mention is the heroic work of Dr. Jill Ingelse & the staff of Meyer Eyecare of Blue Island, Illinois who gave eye exams to every child at Hogar and provided 50 pairs of eyeglasses and contacts for a follow up group to distribute.
- Greg and Janet Brewster will begin their service as resident parents at Transitional Home in May.
- The Board identified completion of the boys dorm at the granja, and the furnishing of Transitional Home as the capital improvement goals for this year.

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For the history of Hogar de Ninos, and more information about AGC visit our Web site: www.agcltd.org

New Sponsorship / Donation Form

Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____

I would like to sponsor a child fully for \$100/month _____

Partially for \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____/month

Sponsor a teacher at CasAyuda for \$100 _____/month