



# News of the Niños

Comayagua, Honduras

Dear Godparents, friends and benefactors, Board of Directors

Receive from the Hogar Nazareth a respectful greeting hoping that God is blessing you abundantly.

It is with great joy that we write to you and are able to express our gratitude. We thank God for each moment the Lord has manifested His providence for us through each one of you.

We are so excited that last Saturday we had a blessing at the Transition House, " Casa Esperanza (House of Hope)" It is unbelievable how God provides for all of our needs. Thanks to all who collaborated on this project, from which many young people will benefit having the great purpose of work and study from God. It must have been a great moment for Mr. Allen, Mr. John, members of the Executive Board, and the whole group experiencing the blessing of this home. Thank you so much! We always remember that you are with us in our joys and our difficult moments. We also give glory to God for having brought Greg and Janet Brewster to this project. They will be the directors of Casa Esperanza.

We also give thanks to Mr. Allen, Pastor Juan and Greg for their wisdom, and how they united the other men (Angel, Pedro, Dennis, Ramon) who gathered in reflection and prayer with the young men from the Granja (farm)! There were no women, only men! Many of the young men have had certain difficulties, but we know that with the meeting they had our young men have been healed spiritually.

We also send with this letter good news that today the Medical Group from Honduras communicated that they will reinstate Arlin's case now that there are new scientific advances. We ask you to pray with us.

The project at the Mosquitia Coast is moving along. We request your prayers for the Buen Samaritano (Good Samaritan) project in this area, which can help many needy people. We come to the Misquitia Coast with the mission of education, and with the Lord's will that they will know The Way. In the area of health, God has been showing us the needs of many sick children in that region and we cannot be indifferent to them. Several children have had operations on their heads at the Government Hospital, and are doing well after surgery. Today they operated on one of the women of the region who had cancer. According to the doctor who performed the surgery she will be fine. We have been required to seek support from the Government Hospitals. With the help of God, our children will receive the operations they need to be restored to health.

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

## TRANSITIONING TO HOPE AND A FUTURE *by John Hiskes*

Special days like this don't come along that often, especially in Honduras. June 13 was the day for the dedication of *Casa Esperanza*, better known to all of us as the site for "transitional housing." It's no longer just a site but a completed development, no longer just overgrown vacant land but a lovely home for the maturing teens of Hogar de Niños.

Ten years ago A.G.C. purchased the land, an acre or two not far from the central business district of Comayagua, envisioning a home for the older children who could live semi independently while pursuing advanced education or working in town. At the time the Board and Carmen received vague assurances from a Spanish philanthropic organization to provide funding for the construction of the buildings. Somewhere along the way, the same young Dutch architectural students who built the dorm at Hogar drew up architectural plans for the home. When the commitment from Spain failed, thankfully a handful of Chicago families stepped in to subsidize the project. In the end, it all came together.



As we have seen in the past, Hondurans know how to celebrate and this day called for celebration. The secure, yet attractive front gates opened to welcome the visiting work team and other guests into the campus specially decorated for the occasion. Lively music over the speaker system accompanied visitors through the areas festively decked out with balloon arches, floral arrangements, banners, and tables filled with refreshments and appetizers. Guests included most of the Hogar teens and staff, Franciscan Friars, and representative members of both the A.G.C. and local Hogar Board of Directors.

Before and after the program the buildings were open for inspection. The two separate buildings are uniquely designed to avoid an institutional look. The prominent architectural features are the absence of the traditional right-angled

rooms and walls, grand staircases, and tastefully coordinated colors. The buildings each include 3 living units on two levels, for a total of 12 apartments. Each apartment has two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a spacious living and eating area. They are light, airy, and comfortable. Yes, it looks like this one was done right!

The ceremony itself was capably directed by young Mario Hernandez from the granja. After opening with prayer and a moment of silence in tribute to the benefactors of Casa Esperanza, Mario introduced the various speakers. These included Oscar Gomez (representing the niños), A.G.C Board members, Carmen, and Brothers Paul and Isaac from the Franciscans. God's faithfulness and answers to prayer were common themes in the remarks, which recalled the events and processes leading to this historic day.

Also participating were Greg and Janet Brewster (*see Greg's comments in the related article*), who arrived in Comayagua just a few weeks earlier to begin a five year commitment to serve as the resident house parents/administrators of Casa Esperanza. The Brewsters moved from Louisville, KY where they were empty nesters after having raised their three children. Greg and Janet will be living at the transitional home, and are employed by Hogar at a level commensurate with the other senior staff at Hogar. As Allen Heerema mentioned in his remarks, God's selection of Greg and Janet, and their giant step of faith in response, was just one more example of His timely provision for the needs of the home.

And what about the name? "Esperanza" translates to "hope." For many years each Hogar high school graduate has received a Bible inscribed with the words of Jeremiah 29:11,

"For I know the plans I have for you", declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Great words for young graduates. But as the text suggests, it isn't just hope that we need to offer but a plan for the future as well. Providing a plan for leaving Hogar for our young adults has frequently been a challenge for us, and where a plan has fallen short so has their hope. We pray that Casa Esperanza will be that plan which provides the hope and future that our niños need.

God has put these children in our lives because He has a job for us to do, and our plan for doing that can best be summed up by Colossians 3:17 that says, "In whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father, through Him." Our plan is to let God use us as He desires. To us, this means at least three things:

- We want to be followers of Christ. Micah 6:8 asks, "What does the Lord require of you?" and it gives the answer, "To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." With God's help, we will live to glorify Him.
- We want to be servants of God. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." With God's help, we plan to teach the residents to be His children, to walk in His way, to accept His truth, and to live His life.
- We want to be ambassadors for Christ. In Paul's letter to Philemon, verse 6, he says, "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." With God's help, we will encourage and join the residents in "paying it forward"; showing Jesus to all we meet through service and witness in the community.

The mission of *Casa Esperanza* is to provide a Christian home environment which will promote independence and personal maturity for the residents, while emphasizing the blessings that God has provided to them and seeking to glorify Him in every way. We believe that the Lord desires each resident to grow in faith, to honor God in all aspects of life, to become solid Christian citizens and to learn to build a Christian home. Only with God's help can we hope to achieve these goals, so we pray for His blessing on this mission - that Janet and I will be able to mentor these young adults in the continuation of spiritual growth and in the gaining of the practical life skills they will need to succeed on their own, independent of Hogar.



## Childhood Memories in Korea *by Ken Hooten*

Recently my son Graham and I were invited to join a group of 25 men and children on a mission trip to All God's Children's ministries in Honduras. There was a small construction project to work on, but mostly dedicated time to spend with the boys and girls at the orphanages. This was my first mission trip and I was unsure of what to expect, but I was looking forward to spending time with my eleven-year old son learning to serve together.

The trip was amazing and so much more personal than I expected. I too, was raised in an orphanage (Korea), and adopted at the age of ten. My visit with the orphans in Honduras brought back vivid memories. I saw myself clearly in the eyes and faces of the young children at Hogar. While not all my personal memories are pleasant, I am deeply moved with gratitude as I count all the specific individuals who touched my life and helped me be where I am today.

There were many parts of our visit to Honduras which were similar to my early years in Korea. Climbing the hills in Comayagua and handing out clothes to the local families reminded me of my time living with my mom and dad. We used to climb up and down hills to fetch water from a well and lived in a single room mud and straw hut with no electricity or plumbing. We foraged through the woods trying to find wild mushrooms or anything else edible. Watching families in Honduras wash their clothes by hand, along the aqueduct, reminded me of how we did the same with handmade wash boards. Hearing some of the sad circumstances of how the children arrived at the Farm and Hogar reminded me of how my mother left when I was little and my father died when I was six. My great aunt, who then was caring for me, eventually gave me away to a stranger who took me to an orphanage in Seoul, Korea. When I saw Luz, a crippled girl who couldn't even walk last year, now walking on crutches reminded me of how I got an injured leg in the orphanage and couldn't walk for many weeks. I remember being scared that I wouldn't walk again. Even the joy and hope in the faces of the little children at Hogar reminded me of my hope of being adopted by people who loved me, and how I dreamed of having a

family. I did realize my dream when a family from Wheaton, Illinois (Dwight and Jean Hooten) adopted me in 1973 when I was ten years old.

Several years ago, after Janet and I got married, I decided that I wanted to try to return to Korea and visit my orphanage, New Hope Boys Home (NHBH). Not knowing exactly how to find the orphanage I started with an old letter I found written by Jack and Kathy Holm (the missionaries who founded my orphanage). I managed to track down one of their sons which led me to Jack and Kathy in 1996. What an absolute joy it was to see them, to hug them and to thank them. Jack Holm was my Al Heerema! Jack was like Santa Claus to us kids, handing out candy and always being so kind.

We learned the Holms did not go to Korea to start an orphanage, but simply as missionaries. When they arrived their hearts were broken as they saw local young boys begging, homeless and roaming the streets. They began NHBH and over the years, several hundred boys have been adopted by families in Europe, Australia and the US. The Holms went to Korea not knowing what God had in store for them, but they had the desire to be faithful to God's calling.

When I met Mama Carmen and heard her story of leaving the convent to care for two homeless girls, all I could think about was Mr. Noh, my Mama Carmen. Mr. Noh was a pastor in a rural Korea, but after years of faithful service he moved to Seoul to become the superintendent of New Hope Boys Home. He cared for me and hundreds of other boys through the years. In 1996, I decided to go back and visit my orphanage and also hoped to see if I could trace my way back to the village where I lived before the orphanage. Jack Holm instructed me to write Mr. Noh and give him my Korean name and birth date to see if he might be able to dig up my personal records. A few weeks before our trip I received a beautiful letter from Mr. Noh in which he said, "It was I who brought you to the orphanage".

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Just as Mama Carmen initially took in two little girls, it was Mr. Noh, who I found out, knew my great aunt and took me to the orphanage to provide care she couldn't. Hundreds of boys went through my orphanage and experienced the love of Jesus through Mr. Noh.

My parents, Dwight & Jean, passed away a few years ago, but not a day passes without me thinking of them. The ripple effect from their lives of faithfulness continues to grow, and it is so exciting to see some of the character and passion of my parents growing in our children. My dad was my best friend and my mom was the most courageous and Godly person I've ever met. What they lacked in financial resources (my brother and I still fondly recall how they managed to raise six children in a 3 bedroom/1 bath house, and we shared a sofa-bed all through high-school!), they made up for in unconditional love.

They had three natural children (blond haired blue eyed girls) and over a period of ten years, adopted three children from Korea. MaeLynn, adopted at about a year old, was abandoned as an infant and had severe physical issues resulting from malnutrition. David, adopted at 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  years old, was a physically abused child because of his mixed racial background; he is  $\frac{1}{2}$  Italian and  $\frac{1}{2}$  Korean. Mixed racial kids were the subject of much abuse in the Korean society. Finally, I was the third child adopted at the age of ten. My parents also took in, and helped raise, an African American child, and start a ministry for special needs children (which now has a national reputation for excellence). My parents' passion was simple - to love the unlovely and to have the courage to act, all of which was rooted in their faith.

Finally, in our traveling group, there were two young ladies who came on the trip with their fathers. Susan is about to finish her senior year in high school and head off to college. Kelly is in high school, as well, and her heart is already set on becoming a physician so she can serve in the mission field. The strength and faithfulness of these two young women reminded me of my sister Ellen, one of my parent's three natural children. The simple fact is that I would not be in America were

it not for Ellen's courage and faithfulness. Somewhere between my parents' initial application to adopt me and finalizing the paper work, the Korean government concluded that I was too old to be adopted. Days of waiting turned into weeks and months as the adoption was delayed. I remember the deep sadness and anger I felt as I figured they had changed their minds. Unbeknownst to me, my family was equally frustrated because the U.S government has placed a moratorium on any families receiving more than two children from Korea and I was "stuck" in Korea. Ellen, during her high-school trip to Washington DC, tried to see the two Illinois Senators without having an appointment. She managed to stop Senator Stevenson (IL) in an elevator and explained to him how she had a brother in Korea and the Korean government was not letting him come. She also managed to track down Mrs. Percy (wife of Senator Charles Percy, who at the time was the head of the Foreign Relations Committee) and through her got the same message to Senator Percy. My parents received a telegram from Senator Percy the next week indicating that the Korean government has issued me a visa, and I arrived in the U.S. seven days later. I saw boldness, strength and faithfulness in Kelly and Susan, and it is exciting to think how God will use them. My expectation is that they will rescue someone like me one day.

I have often described my life as winning not one but multiple lotteries. A person might defy the odds and win the Lotto once, but what are the chances of winning multiple times? The point being that this has very little to do with luck and everything to do with God's plan and purpose for my life. As I reflect on the amazing life I have today, and see the little children in Honduras, I think the difference between those children and me are the many "ordinary people" who chose to be faithful so God could do extraordinary things through them. My hope and prayer is that all of you (Mama Carmen, Al Heerema, board members, supporters and volunteers) will some day be so blessed to see the fruits of your faithfulness. My hope is that many years from now, when these young boys and girls have grown up to be Godly men and women, you will also have a reunion with them where you will be rewarded with kisses and hugs of gratitude for giving them life.

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We thank each person who donated shoes for the people in Mosquitía. Thank you very much friends!

The third of September we have a medical brigade coming to the region, consisting of specialists from the medical professions: an orthopedist, a cardiologist, an ophthalmologist, a gastroenterologist and two general practitioners who will give two days to the Misquita population.

Also in the month of September we will commemorate the Day of the Children. We will have a happy time on the beach with pre-school aged children. We will sing, have competitions, and also eat some special things. The doctors will join us for this gathering. Chema has plans to take the young people to play soccer. There will be two soccer tournaments, one in the village of Ivans and another in the village of Palacio. The boys are so excited and working hard so that they can pay the expenses.

Each one of our homes loves you. We are grateful for each and every one of you who make up our great family. We pray that God bless you greatly,

Carmen and Children

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For the history of Hogar de Niños, and more information about AGC visit our Web site: [www.agcltd.org](http://www.agcltd.org)

**New Sponsorship / Donation Form**

Enclosed is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to sponsor a child

fully for: \$100/month \_\_\_\_\_

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\$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 \_\_\_\_\_ /month

## Board Bullets

May 2009

- The earthquake in May was felt in Comayagua but no damage was sustained at any of our properties.
- Three representatives of a local department store which is an affiliate of Wal Mart were given a tour of Hogar facilities recently. They have generously agreed to donate significant amounts of food on a monthly basis.
- The women at Misericordia and Buen Pastor are producing dozens of attractive purses made from pop tops. We are exploring various possibilities for marketing these in the USA.
- Work teams to Hogar have been putting the finishing touches on Casa Esperanza for its opening, and also moving the new dorm at the granja closer to completion.
- Kevin Burnham, a young man from Western Michigan who is a construction project manager by trade is spending several months at Casa Amor overseeing work projects there.
- The fifth annual All God's Children Open to benefit Hogar will take place on October 2 at Pine Meadow Golf Club in Mundelein, Illinois. The event will be a 4-person scramble and will include golfing competitions and prizes. Go to <http://www.golfdigestplanner.com/8820-AGC5thAnnualOpen> to register.
- Seven work teams will be visiting Hogar and Amor this summer including a youth group from Faith Dyer.

## AGC Board of Directors

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