

## Lasting Impressions.....

“A Volunteer’s Experience at Hogar”

By Matt Monaghan

*Matt is a journalist from Salem, Oregon who spent 5 months volunteering at the ranch this summer. He not only learned about Mexican culture and improved his Spanish skills, but also made many friends. He shares few of his experiences with us.*

I returned from Hogar Infantil in late September after living and volunteering at the orphanage for five months. Rather than go on about how it changed my life (make no mistake, it did) I think this space would be better served to tell some stories about the tremendous group of kids I came to love.

The Three Amigos: Ernesto, Israel, and Horacio are between six and seven years old and this fall started elementary school together at Primaria Benito Juarez. One afternoon the amigos came to my room, smiles on their faces and backpacks weighted on their shoulders, asking me to help them with their homework. I had no experience teaching kids, but how hard could it be, I thought? After my first day with them I realized that just getting them to sit still and pay attention was going to hard, never mind actually helping them learn to read and write. Ernesto wanted to color everything whether the directions called for it to be colored or not; Israel found out how much fun (and sticky) glue can be and Horacio couldn’t stop laughing at the both of them. A few weeks of this passed and I feared that I wasn’t making much progress with any of them. I wondered whether the daily circus was worth my time. But when the day came for me to leave, I found out it was. As I was to get in the van to go to the airport, the amigos raced up to me and gave me three folded pieces of paper. Inside of each was a written message from each one thanking me.

Oswaldo: Oswaldo is 10-years-old and came to Hogar about one year ago. I liked him immediately for his shyness and one hot afternoon we found ourselves alone sitting together on the patio. After a few quiet moments, Oswaldo turned to me and said in English, “You like music?” Stunned at his sudden question in my language, I looked at



Continued page 3

### Inside this issue:

Lasting Impressions ..... 1  
Ranch News ..... 2  
Katrian, Rita, Jose and Rosita ..... 3  
Tis’ the Season ..... 4

- UNPAID OFFICERS
- DIRECTORS
- David Guinn—President
  - Paul Roach—Vice-President
  - Ron Speck—Treasurer
  - Katie Morgan—Secretary
  - Leslie Guinn—Director
  - Johanna Wilson—Director
  - John Murphrey—Director
  - David Pease—Director
  - Cindy Morman—Director

P.O. Box 7049  
Salem, OR  
97303—0031

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Corp

www.hogarinfantil.org

# RANCH NEWS

by Carlos Macias



The Guinns with the girls on their special day in front of the new chapel

Greetings to all in this exciting time of holidays and special celebrations with family and friends. As we wind down from a beautiful *quinceañera* celebration in our new chapel this summer, the children have settled back into the familiar school routine. We have many new smiling faces with us. 15 new, very needy children came to us earlier in the summer, and we recently took in 3 new kids from a children's home that closed down in nearby Cintalapa. These three children are protected by the Department of Legal Defense for Minors, due to the abuse they experienced with their families. They say that Hogar is *una casa maravillosa* and are very happy to be here. We are equally happy to welcome them as a part of the Hogar family.

The latest *locura* (excitement, craziness) around here is our new bus. It is beautiful and spacious, and the children are constantly trying to find any excuse to go out for joyrides. Since they are now getting to ride twice a day to and from school, they seem to be satisfied. We are so thankful to have safe, reliable transportation for our precious cargo.

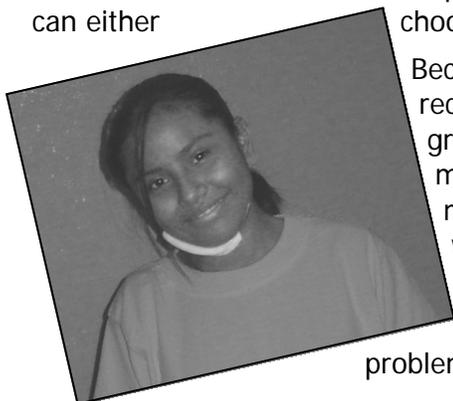
We have tried something new for some of our older students entering high school. 4 boys and 3 girls have enrolled in Cebetis Technical School in Tuxtla Gutierrez. This is a wonderful opportunity because they can either



choose to finish their education with a specialized degree or go on to college.

Because we take the children's health seriously, two of our young people have recently undergone minor surgical procedures. One young woman had a growth removed from her neck, and thankfully the biopsy came back not malignant. And one of our young men had his nose straightened after many years of sinus problems. We are thankful that both are recovering well.

The rest of our daily life goes on as usual. The girls' dance group continues to practice and show off their talents at gatherings, our water problems are now solved and our *milpa* (corn) crop is doing well. We thank all



Continued page 4

## Katrina, Rita, Jose and Rosita

Then Stan, Pakistan, and Wilma. What a year this has been for the devastating effects of nature! We know all of our tios and tias have great big hearts and have given generously to these needs. We at Hogar Infantil want to reassure you that if your charitable dollars have been stretched thin and you are unable to give at this time, we have sufficient reserves to see us through. No child will be turned away who needs a home. Jose and Rosita, and everyone else, will still have food, clothes, medical care and be going to school. Because of the widespread charitable need at this time we will postpone a planned old fashioned "Membership Drive" to spread the word of Hogar Infantil's work until later in 2006. In preparation for this we have started the website [www.mygiftoflove.com](http://www.mygiftoflove.com) (currently forwarded to our main website) and welcome you to pass the name to anyone who would be interested in the cause.

Hurricane Wilma hit Mexico right as the Guinn's were to see their daughter married in Playa del Carmen, Mexico (near Cancun). Thankfully, most of the guests were evacuated and Laura married Terry Riedinger in Merida on October 22 in a celebration put together in less than six hours by David and Leslie. Hurricane Stan did significant damage to Chiapas, especially near Tapachula. Hogar Infantil, fortunately, was spared any damage. Many other families and places however, were not spared. We will help the affected areas as we can. Hogar Infantil will be in contact with agencies in Tapachula to see if there are any children needing a home.

We also want to reassure you that your dollars to Hogar are carefully spent. We do not have a big staff, advertising budgets, or offices. Our goal is to have 95% of every dollar you give go directly to program support for the children. We understand that your donation represents a sacrifice for you and your family and that you trust us to be good stewards of that donation.

---

## Lasting Impressions . . . . "A Volunteer's Experience at Hogar" - Continued

Oswaldo and said, "Yeah." But before I could ask him where he learned English, he surprised me again by asking which I liked more, Led Zeppelin, or the Rolling Stones. Pausing to make sure that indeed a 10-year-old Mexican boy just asked me a question about 1960s British rock bands, I finally said, "The Stones. You?" "The Rolling Stones," he said. We both were quiet again and I smiled. Oswaldo was grinning, too. He looked at me knowing I had a million questions to ask him so finally I gave in. "Where did you learn to speak English?" I asked. "Mexico City." "And where did you learn about the Stones," I asked again. "I used to work with my dad on the street selling CDs," he said, reverting back to Spanish.

Benito: Benito is 15. He came to Hogar in the summer with his brother, Juan. What makes Benito special is that he is deaf. Don't think that stops him from doing everything the other kids do, though. One weekend Carlos took the older boys to the swimming pool to reward them for five grueling weeks of working in the cornfield. It took all of us about five minutes to find out Benito was the fastest swimmer of everyone and completely fearless when it came to doing flips off the diving board. But his bravery went beyond the swimming pool. One day he spotted a 3-foot iguana lying in the grass, which he pointed out to me. But Benito wasn't just content to look observe the iguana, he wanted to capture it. Fat chance, I thought. So Benito snuck up on the animal and sure enough finally trapped it. In disbelief I ran up to see the harmless iguana hissing at

Benito. He reached down, grabbed it by the back of the neck and started walking away. "Where are you going with it, Benito," I asked. "My room, he said. I want it for a pet."

Graduations: In July several Hogar kids graduated from primary, secondary, or high school. Among the graduates were Catalina and Marisol, two smart, beautiful, teenage girls who are sure to go on to do great things in their lives. Both had two of the highest grade scores at their graduation and are a testament to how hard kids at Hogar work on their studies. Marisol recently entered a high school in nearby Tuxtla Gutierrez that focuses on the science and technology. She is interested in a career in the medical sciences field. Catalina's goes to the high school in Coita where her favorite class is English.

If you're interested in a non-monetary donation to Hogar Infantil here's what the kids are in need of: Backpacks (mochillas is Spanish): Each child at Hogar needs a backpack to hold their school items and during my stay I noticed many of the kids had backpacks in poor condition, shoulder straps broken off, or zippers that no longer worked. Sandals (chanclas): The kids spend the majority of their time wearing cheap, plastic sandals that wear out very quickly. It wasn't an uncommon sight to see a child wearing sandals that were missing sections of the sole. Regular shoes for school are also in need. School supplies: Each child at Hogar gets a couple pencils, pens, and notebooks to start the school year with, but it doesn't take long for these things to get used or lost.

## Ranch News *by Carlos Macias - Continued*

of you who have donated specifically for the construction of the girls' dorm – we are getting close to our goal of \$50,000. We can hardly wait to break ground, but we are first making sure all our plans are in place and we have researched all options. We hope to begin construction in the coming months. And, of course, everyone is getting excited about the upcoming Christmas celebration. We invite any of you who are able to join us on December 10. It is always a gift for us to get to know our friends from afar. We ask that you keep us in your prayers, as we also pray that you and your families are well. We have been especially concerned for all those who may have been affected by the violent storms that have struck your country and ours. May you always feel God's presence in your daily lives. Hasta Pronto!



## Tis' the Season.....

Well, it's that time again when many of us begin thinking of buying gifts, filling stockings, and making batches of fudge and peanut brittle (or at least eating it!). Maybe your family doesn't celebrate Christmas, but rather Hanukkah, Ramadan, Kwanzaa or another celebration. Whatever your tradition, it is a time of year for friends and family to come together and have a good time. Probably the biggest yearly tradition at Hogar is the annual Christmas party. Imagine lots of food and goodies, presents and smiling faces. This year's bash will be Saturday, December 10, which means that Santa and Mrs. Guinn (oops...Claus) will be leaving a couple of days before to get everything ready. As always we would love for you to join us for the party. Santa's sleigh, which looks suspiciously like a Beechcraft Bonanza, will be departing from it's Texas hangar south to Chiapas on December 8. If you wish to give a gift or two to the children, please mail it in time to reach Santa Guinn by that time. Some tips:



- Santa is happy to do shopping for you. These donations of money go to the Oregon address. There is a Sam's Club in Tuxtla and we can purchase sports equipment or bicycles that can be used by many children.
- Individual or group gifts can be mailed to **Santa Guinn, 6405 Secretariat Ct. Granbury, Texas 76049**
- It is not necessary to wrap gifts. It makes it easier to get through customs if they aren't.
- We are restricted by volume and weight as to what we can carry.
- Books and games need to be in Spanish.
- Between our children and the staff and their children, we have all ages. And, yes, teenagers are harder to shop for, but we need gifts for them too! Please no remote control cars, batteries go too quickly.
- If you wish an acknowledgement for tax purposes of the non-monetary gifts, if you can include a card with your address, Mrs. Claus will be very appreciative!

May you share peace and joy with your loved ones this holiday season...