

Mexico Child Link

DEC.
2008

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Dear Supporter:

I am writing to you on behalf of Mexico Child Link to give you a project update and ask for your continued support.

Fundraising

Many businesses are suffering in the current financial climate and some major UK charities have reported significant losses through cancellation of corporate sponsorship or loss of funds which were deposited in Icelandic banks. Fortunately, the income of our small Charitable Trust depends upon a very reliable group of long term donors, supporters, and fundraisers. We hope to be able to maintain the quality and range of services we provide, even though fundraising has become more difficult in the current environment.

Our partner organization in Mexico, Fundación Trébol, has continued to attract support within Mexico. The project receives donations from local businesses and organizations such as Walmart, which provides the project with fruit and vegetables. A voluntary organization from Puebla linked to *Caritas* has offered to help out with general maintenance and repair work.

The children and young people

2008 has been a stable year for the project, which is a great credit to Karina Durana the project director who took over in June 2007. The staff group has seen few changes and the young people in employment have remained in the same jobs throughout the year.

The youngest child Israel (7) is a very endearing youngster and he has kept everyone entertained with his mischievous antics. He caught a live mouse and brought it to school with him in his schoolbag. Unfortunately, it got crushed under his sandwiches and schoolbooks. He was most upset that his teacher had to dispose of his sandwiches! In another incident, he claimed that his school



Israel and friend

sweater had gone missing and his teacher and classmates spent a considerable amount of time looking for it. Next day, on arrival at school he was caught removing it from a cardboard box where he had hidden it himself. Israel has a great interest in wildlife, especially the many insects and lizards which

are to be found in the vicinity of his house. He often gets distracted during his work in the vegetable patch when he comes across an interesting worm or bug.

Mario (10) is Israel's older brother and he is in his second year at regular Primary school. He finds schoolwork difficult but he really enjoys school and tries his hardest. He has some difficulties concentrating, but has integrated well with his school friends.

He gets on well with his peers and enjoys work on the farm, especially with the sheep. He can express himself well, and his language is very clear. Like his younger brother, he is prone to make mischief and is a happy child.

Emmanuel (17) is the most able resident. He has finished school and is taking a computer course in the afternoons. He has also learned to go to and from his course independently using public transport. He helps out on the farm during the morning.

Rodolfo (24) works in the Cinia factory where he has learned to use a wide range of gardening tools such as lawnmowers and strimmers. He is a very able worker and is usually designated team leader. He is vocal about his workplace rights and he has been known to go directly to the director to complain if he has been asked to work extra hours without extra payment. He is good at managing his wages and will save up for something he wants without expecting it immediately. Rodolfo is good at most sports he has tried, and is captain of his works football team. He takes great pride in the appearance of his house and the project site and will cut grass and tidy up in his free time. He would like to find work nearer to home and he has expressed a desire to do a computer course like Emmanuel.

Juan Gabriel (pictured) is 17 and has shown a great deal of improvement both emotionally and socially in the last year. He is cooperative in the house, can follow instructions, and helps to prepare meals under the supervision of the houseparent. He participates well on the farm and he enjoys transporting alfalfa to feed the sheep. He also brings out the scraps for the compost heap. He finished the special



school which he attended in Atlixco last June, and he goes to a speech therapy class one day a week, as well as attending courses run by DIF (Social Services) in Puebla. The courses include occupational therapy, dance therapy and some use of computers. He finds tasks involving motor control very difficult but in spite of this, he enjoys the dance classes. Juan will never be able to use public transport unaided, but he has learned to recognize many landmarks in Puebla and can identify the bus stop where he has to get on and off. Juan has very limited language and finds it hard to integrate, but in spite of this, he is the project's unofficial "Meeter and Greeter." He assumes the role of guide when visitors arrive at the project site; greeting them enthusiastically at the gate and accompanying them inside.

Lucero, (17) who is deaf, left school without learning to read or write. She is now attending a local school part time where the teacher is using a teaching method based on adult learning in order to give her another chance to acquire reading and writing skills. She is very keen and has made some progress.

She gets on very well with her peers even though not everyone can understand sign language. She very much enjoys working with the animals and also likes sowing seeds and tending the vegetable garden.

She attends speech therapy in Atlixco and competes in the Special Olympics.

Oscar (17) attends a course in Atlixco two days per week which includes speech therapy and work on coordination and motor control. His language has shown some improvement and he can now recognize most of the basic colours. He can use a computer to play matching games with shapes.

Marisol (23) has been working in the CINIA factory for three years and she is an enthusiastic worker who has received many positive reports. She enjoys her work and has no difficulty starting the day at 5.30AM. She prepares her own lunch to bring to work. Marisol has a good sense of humour and she told one of the factory supervisors that she was going to adopt her as a mother as she was always telling her to comb her hair or wash her face. She takes great pride in her appearance and she can mend or alter her own clothes. She has a boyfriend, Ernesto, who works in the same factory. She has made good progress in the use of public transport and money management. She can now use some of the public transport routes in Puebla to get to and from work. Puebla is a large city with a population of around two million. She has grown much more confident and can clearly express her likes or dislikes to staff, friends and colleagues.

Esteban (26) is still working on the ranch where he has been employed for several years. He is the most physically active of all the residents and he is very sociable; often stopping for a chat and a *torta* (sandwich) with workmates on the step of a local shop on the way home. The other residents have a great deal of respect for him due to his hard work and calming influence. He looks after the fruit trees on the project site in his free time and he would like to plant and look after his own fruit trees some day.



Paty (25) is still working at a launderette close to the project site and she very much enjoys her job. She sometimes finds it difficult when there are staff changes, but she has a steady routine and gets on well with her housemates. She goes to Puebla on her day off to participate in activities run by DIF which she very much enjoys. She has made friends with other members of the group in Puebla.

We haven't been able to find work outside the project for Argelio (24). He tends his own vegetable plot and he is going to sell his own vegetables. He attends a DIF course in Puebla with a focus on improving his coordination and motor skills. The activity he most likes is dance.

Josefa (28) used to live in the project but now lives in the village of Coyay with her partner Luis. She had a second child earlier this year. Alma (23) lives independently in Puebla and is working in CINIA.

Employment

The four young people who work; Paty, Esteban, Rodolfo and Marisol, contribute to the upkeep of their home. Each of them has been able to accumulate some savings in a personal bank account. Esteban would like to live more independently in a house with his friend Argelio on the project site and we are still looking for funding to help construct it. He would like to use some of the money he has saved to help furnish his house.

Project visits

- Colette McGinnity made a 2 week visit to the project during August 2008.

- Frank Woodard, a supporter from Alabama, made a visit on November 25th
- A group from supporter organization Mex17 made a project visit in November.
- Jonathan Getty will carry out a project evaluation visit in January 2009.

Childhope

The leading children's charity Childhope has developed a special child protection "Toolkit" for use by UK NGOs who work with an overseas partner. The aim of the document is to create a more child safe organization. A version has recently become available in Spanish and we intend to strengthen our child safety procedures by introducing this programme to our partner organization Fundación Trébol.

Website

The website found at www.mexico-child-link.org continues to provide useful contacts and some donations. It is regularly updated with the latest news and information from the project in Mexico.

Financial support for the project

During 2008 we were able to support our project in Mexico through grants of:

£ 6,619, January
 £10,209, April
 £ 9,175, July
 £10,180, October

Thanks are due to the following individuals and organizations who gave support during 2008

The Moore Trust
 David Hamilton Autos
 Paget Trust
 Newell Stores
 Roslea Choir
 Michael McGoldrick
 Paul Vander Schalie Foundation
 Edgcumbe TRC
 JW Russell, Estate of Sybil Brian
 Wallace High, Lisburn
 Carn Court Roslea Coffee Morning organised by Annie McGinnity

St Tierney's, Roslea
 Pat Blake
 Vincent de Paul Society, Roslea
 Legacy from Estate of Molly Smyth
 Willy Brown
 Teahouse Group CLFS
 Rosalind Robinson
 Mr & Mrs Mc Clean
 Ulster Bank
 Coopers Technology College
 MKB Russells
 Maurice Dawson, accounts
 Luis Medina
 Adam Taub, Quinceañera video
 MKB Russells for payroll services
 Retailers, Asda, Sainsbury, Tesco, Supervalu, Bow St. Mall
 ...and a special thanks to June Getty & May Blair who raised over £9,000 through collections. Thanks also to our many regular monthly donors and contributors.

The Mexico Child Link Trust is a UK registered Charitable Trust, governed by a group of seven trustees with an interest in learning disability. Mexico Child Link is an independent charitable organisation, not linked with any religious or political group. UK donations are fully tax deductible through the Gift Aid programme and US donors can ensure their donations are fully tax deductible by supporting us through CAF-America.

Mexico Child Link works in partnership with Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C., an independent Mexican charitable foundation, which we helped to set up and now partially fund and advise. This close relationship allows the project in Puebla to be run efficiently by Mexican staff trained in the field of learning disability.

Mexico Child Link provides a range of services for people with or affected by learning disability. The core project is a home for abandoned & orphan children with learning disabilities, near the town of Atlixco. Many of them are ex street children. The children live on a small farm in 2 specially built adobe houses where they are cared for in a family setting.

J Getty, December 2008