

Mexico Child Link

DEC.
2009

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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.

2009 has been a good year for the project with a stable and hard working staff group committed to helping the children and young people fulfil their potential. Some of the young people have changed jobs, but the encouraging thing is that they have been able to find new employment, even in the middle of a deep recession in Mexico.

Project Visit

Colette McGinnity, pictured above with staff, children and residents, visited the project during August. The staff organised a party to celebrate her 50th birthday.

General News from Mexico

The level of violence continues to be a worry and shows no sign of abating. There is an ongoing turf battle between drug traffickers for control of territory in Northern Mexico. The murder rate in Ciudad Juarez is now the highest in the world with almost 2000 homicides recorded in the first 10 months of 2009. This is in spite of the presence of 45,000 troops sent to improve security in the city. The two main drug cartels are thought to have up to 100,000 foot soldiers between them. In January 2009 the U.S. Joint Forces Command warned that both Mexico and Pakistan were states which could suffer



“sudden collapse” due to the level of violence and criminal activity. Fortunately, Puebla State in south Mexico where our project is situated is in a quieter part of the country.

Nursery Fire in Hermosillo

On June 5th there was a fire with tragic consequences in a Nursery School in Hermosillo. Forty seven children were killed, and an investigation found that the building had a long list of failings involving smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and emergency exits. The Nursery, which was government funded and run by the wives of two high ranking state officials, had passed an inspection the previous month. The authorities have belatedly decided to take a more rigorous approach to health and safety issues in children’s institutions, and the Fundación Trébol project will be reviewed along with other organisations entrusted with the care of children.

Feliz Cumpleaños

Lucero & Oscar (pictured below aged 4) both turned 18 this year. They were amongst the first intake of children to the project in 1996.



Lucero helps in the kitchen and has made progress managing money and doing her own shopping. She is on a waiting list for employment at the CINIA factory where Marisol works. There are plans to send her on courses to learn both hairdressing and cookery. She has had to drop athletics training as this was organised through the special school she used to attend. We are looking for other opportunities for her to continue in sport.



Oscar, pictured opposite, is unlikely to be able to work outside the project due to the level of support he requires, but he has recently started to help out more formally on the farm and is very much enjoying it. He has formed a team with Argelio and they work well together.

Esteban (27) is still working on the ranch where he has been employed for many years now. He is the most physically active of all the residents and he gets on well with his workmates and housemates. The ranch is just over a mile away and he walks to work, or takes public transport. Staff have been working with him on money management and he can give the driver 3 coins for the fare but finds any form of money management difficult. One of the problems is that some of the



drivers let him travel for free so the next day he expects the same, and will get off without paying, even though a different driver is waiting for the fare. This can cause problems! Esteban tends to be accident prone and we have been trying to establish why. In the last year he has fallen from a horse, slipped on the floor, been bitten by a dog and fallen from the back of the pick-up! He does not have any mobility or coordination problems so we are at a loss to understand why it is always Esteban. He had his hearing checked recently to see if it may have been a factor in some of the accidents but no problems were found.

He loves routines and tradition and he is always the first in line to decorate the house for Christmas, Day of the Dead or any of the other celebrations in Mexico. His favourite outing is a

trip to the cinema. He needs help to decide which film he wants to see and with buying a ticket as he has difficulty handling larger sums of money.

Paty (26) is working in the Project for the moment as she lost her job in the launderette when there was a change of management. She has duties involving cleaning, cooking and washing clothes. She is cooperative and enjoys her work. She sometimes does a days work outside the project if the opportunity arises. She would like to do a cookery course.

Juan (18) has had a stable year and he has shown a great deal of improvement both emotionally and socially. Juan has no language and staff have to make a big effort to understand his forms of communication. He can become very frustrated if he is not being understood. He finished special school last June, and he now 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.

Rodolfo (24) left his job in CINIA at the Start of the year as he felt he was being overworked. Rodolfo is more capable and hard working than many of his workmates and he felt he was being taken advantage of. The director of CINIA said he could have a 6 month break before returning, but he has found a job in the Atlixco branch of Walmart which he prefers. He mostly has cleaning duties but has to work a late shift which does not finish until 10.00pm. Public transport in Atlixco ends around 8.00pm which means that he can't get back to the project in time. He is renting a room near his workplace and he stays there overnight. The independence training worker helps him organise rent and other outgoings. He returns to the project most mornings and has his lunch there. This is a good arrangement as he has more independence yet is still closely connected with the project. This is very important for Rodolfo as he is one of the more able residents and is very conscious of what he has or hasn't got in terms of his own independence. Some of the less able residents do not aspire for more independence than they already have, but Rodolfo is different in this respect. It is a challenge for staff as he needs support to live more independently but has difficulty accepting this at times. A person with learning disability can easily be taken advantage of financially or emotionally and he has had some difficult times with some workmates who are less than tolerant.

Emmanuel (18) completed a course in computing last year. He also had a job in a car wash for most of last year and was able to contribute to the cost of his course. He recently had to give up the car wash job due to bronchitis. He is interested in baking and bread making and would like to do a course. We are also hoping that he can take part in a small scale business such as buying and selling soft drinks so that he can improve his arithmetic and money management. Emmanuel is articulate and has good reading skills and his main difficulties are in the area of arithmetic, money management, weighing and measuring. He has been given responsibility for weighing and recording the donation of fruit and vegetables from Walmart to help him consolidate his skills in this area. He has matured a lot this year and has just about outgrown his surly teenager phase!

Mario (11) is still enjoying his new school and has been making progress. He is in his third year at regular Primary school and is coping well. Mario is a happy youngster, although he can be nervous with strangers or people outside of his immediate environment. His dance classes have stopped for the time being, although he still attends a painting class and a theatre group.

Israel (8) Mario's younger brother is at a mainstream Primary School in la Trinidad. He is well integrated there and has made many friends. His teacher reports that he is a cooperative but mischievous youngster. He is still having some difficulty with reading but has started to show a little improvement, although progress is slow. He is a happy and sociable child who has a lot of friends.

Argelio (26) would like to work outside the Project like some of the others but we haven't been able to find him an appropriate job in a suitable environment yet. He is not always enthusiastic about work, and would find it difficult to adapt to full time employment. He has struck up a good working relationship with Oscar who has recently started work on the farm. He is very tolerant of Oscar, who is in need of a lot of help and support, and it is good for his self esteem to be in a position to help someone less able.

Marisol (24) has been working in the CINIA factory for four years. She is an enthusiastic worker who has received positive reports from the management. She enjoys her work but finds the workload and daily commute difficult at times as the factory is twenty five miles from her home. At times she says she is tired of her job but when she thinks it over, she always decides to stay. She has

to work in different locations in the City of Puebla and she can now get around fine using public transport. She has difficulty with varicose veins and is being assessed for surgery. We are all hoping it will not be necessary.

Fundraising

An organization called Mex17 has provided the project with a considerable amount of support through maintenance work, infrastructure and donations. Karina, the project director, came into contact with this organization through a group called RIA which Trébol is a member of. RIA is a forum for local NGOs and charitable foundations and the group meets once a month. Mex17 has provided, 2 new gas boilers, 10 new mattresses, roof repairs to both houses, a new cooker, a well constructed new stable with a good roof, as well as a stud ram.

The project is still receiving donations in kind from *Walmart* and a couple of other local organizations. The main donor is the local *Walmart* in Atlixco which provides a donation of fruit and veg. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

June Getty and May Blair raised over £8,000 at shopping centre collections.

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

£9,575. on 6th Feb
£9,525 on 6th May
£9,238 on 14th August
£10,494 on 24th November

BBC appeal

Mexico Child Link has been approved to do an appeal on Radio Ulster which will be broadcast in April 2010.

Thanks are due to the following individuals and organizations who gave support during 2009

The Moore Trust
Upper Finaghy W.I.
Paget Trust
Newell Stores
Roslea Choir
Edgcumbe TRC
Wallace High, Lisburn
Cookstown High School
St Tierney's, P.S. Roslea
Corranny P.S. Roslea
Pat Blake
Vincent de Paul Society, Roslea
Willy Brown

May Blair
June Getty
Mr & Mrs Mc Clean
Ulster Bank Connswater
MKB Russells
Maurice Dawson
Cookstown High School
Loughrey College
Fitzroy Presbyterian Church

Retailers: Supervalu, Spar, Asda, Tesco, Bow St. Mall, Lisburn, Springisland, Coalisland
90+ Monthly donors who give from £1 to £50

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 organization, 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 was founded in 1992 by Jonathan Getty & Colette Mc Ginnity, in response to the needs of abandoned & orphan children with learning disability in Puebla State, Mexico. 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. The farm, based upon sustainable agriculture, provides a degree of self sufficiency for the project and allows the children to learn practical skills. The aim is to help them gain employment as adults. If you would like to get involved, or support our work, please get in touch. We are particularly interested in getting involved with local schools and making contact with individuals who have fundraising experience.

J Getty, December 2009