

# Mexico Child Link

CHARITY REFERENCE NUMBER XR18919

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SEPTEMBER 2002

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



Mexico Child Link celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Charitable Trust in May 2002. The charity grew from voluntary work carried out in Mexico during 1990-1991 with children with learning disability.

The initial aim was to set up a home for 12 abandoned children with learning disability. The residential project opened in August

1995, after a three-year period of fundraising. A site in Tenextepec, Atlixco was bought with funds raised by Mexico Child Link and two houses were built with a grant from the Irish Government Department of Foreign Affairs.

## News from Tenextepec



Esteban Ortega, who is now 20 years old, has been in full time employment as a farm labourer for almost 4 years. He changed jobs in June and is now earning more money. His

new workplace is only 100 yards from the project site, which means that he can return home for lunch. The job is ideal for him as Esteban is unable to use public transport unaccompanied.

Dr. Patricia Noonan Walsh, Professor of Disability Studies at University College Dublin, made her 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to the project in August. She visited *San Lorenzo* ranch where Rodolfo Moscoso (17) was on a work experience placement during the summer months. She was able to talk to his employer and get first hand experience of the skills which young people like Rodolfo are gaining. As a result of his placement, Rodolfo has been offered a paid Saturday job on the ranch.



Marisol Jimenez (17) and Paty Perez (19) are in training for domestic work and Josefa is training as a house helper. Josefa García (19) successfully re-integrated into life in Tenextepec after spending some time in the government children's home. Alma Colorado (16) has completed her first year in mainstream secondary school. The involvement with the local mainstream primary and secondary schools has encouraged participation in the local community. The primary school is a de facto community centre



and both children and staff have been invited to community events and got to know local people. Young people and farm staff helped pupils and parents to clear the site for the construction of the new state secondary school, which is located in the small village of *San Juan*, about half a mile from the farm.

Since the residential project opened, Mexico Child Link has developed new programmes through lottery funding. These include:

- a programme to support young adults with learning disability on leaving the residential project
- a carpentry workshop for disadvantaged children, most of whom have a learning disability
- an Advice & Information Centre about learning disability for families and professionals
- a horticulture programme in the local special school in Atlixco
- a special education programme in residential institutions which are home to a number of children with learning disability.

### Carpentry workshop

The carpentry workshop takes place in 2 sessions 5 afternoons a week in a converted store on the residential project site. Over 40 children and young people have attended, most of whom have a learning disability. The remaining children are from the local disadvantaged rural community. To date they have made numerous articles including benches, beds, small tables, bookcases, jigsaws and small pieces of furniture.



Patricia Perez, (19) says *“I am very good at sanding. The teacher gets me to finish off the sanding for the others. I made a serviette holder and I’m making a stool for my room now.”*

The workshop has helped to increase the self-confidence of the participants.



Martha Salvador, Residential Project Director says, *“The children have much more interest in the workshop now that they know they can actually produce things. They have a great sense of achievement and they are very keen to show off and sell their produce!”*

The workshop promotes the integration of children with and without disabilities. It also gives abandoned children a chance to make friends with children from the neighbouring village. The workshop also prepares children for employment in a wider sense.

Patricia Pincle, the workshop trainer says, *“The children have learned a lot, not only in carpentry skills, but also in work habits, respect for the safety rules, following instructions and general social skills.”*



## Farm



The farm now boasts a flock of over 50 sheep and goats. 8 lambs were sold in June. A local farmer donated a stud ram last December. It is

a Dorper/Romanov cross and should provide the benefits of increased weight gain and more multiple births in the flock. The animals are well cared for and are subject to a regular vaccine and anti-parasite programme. Crop production is divided into staples, forage crops, vegetables and fruit. Staples include maize, sweet potato, wheat and peanut. More land has been set aside for vegetable production and a small greenhouse has been constructed. A latrine has been built for the use of the farm workers and the carpentry workshop. The children and young people continue to receive daily training in basic elements of animal husbandry and horticulture.

## Education programme, in residential institutions

The difficulties of children with learning disability in institutions are made worse by the lack of trained staff. They frequently see children as lazy, bad-tempered and awkward and treat them accordingly. Ana Luisa Sandoval the Special Education Worker,



has been working actively in seven institutions, which are home to a number of children with learning disability. She has also visited another two institutions to assess their needs. Fundación Trébol maintains a

database with details of each child who has been assessed. Ana Luisa provides the staff with very practical training about learning disability. She devises individual programmes for children and trains and helps staff to use them. She also works one-to-one with children who have specific problems.

Ana Luisa says, *“Karla, aged 7 years couldn’t walk, stand up or even crawl when I started working with her in July 2001. She can now stand on her own and walk with minimum help. We are now working on fine motor movements and strengthening the muscle tone in her hands.”*

Through the programme, she has been able to bring about important changes in staff attitudes. Staff have come to understand that children communicate with them through specific behaviours and some staff are also more conscious of how their own behaviour can



adversely affect a child’s behaviour. As a result of the programme in the government home, staff are now involving the children with learning disability in activities from which they were previously excluded. In another institution, staff have started to use the children’s names rather than giving them nicknames. The directors of the institutions have praised the programme:

Verónica Cobo, Director, Government children’s home says: *“I am witness to the advances in Karla and to the way Ana works with all the children. I am really very pleased with the programme.”*

Ana Luisa’s enthusiasm, commitment and ability in her post have greatly enhanced the profile and reputation of Fundación Trébol.

## Advice & Information Centre

The Advice & Information Centre opened to the public in September last year. Its main aim is to provide information for families and to direct them to the most appropriate disability services. It also provides information for professionals and students in the field of learning disability and engages in public education and raising awareness. The Centre



regularly publicises its work in 2 Puebla newspapers and through the distribution of information leaflets in disadvantaged areas. Eugenia the Centre Worker regularly participates in radio programmes about disability and 2 stations publicise the Centre's work. In recent months Eugenia has been concentrating more on outreach work, as many parents did not have the money to attend or phone the Centre. Information and workshops about learning disability have been provided for parents in two charities for children with autism and cerebral palsy. Eugenia has also delivered programmes to raise awareness of learning disability with pupils, staff and parents in mainstream primary and secondary schools, which have a number of pupils with learning disability. She has also provided training for Dept. of Education staff responsible for integrating children with learning disability in mainstream schools.

### Fundraising

Mexico Child Link needs to secure alternative sources of funding, as the current Community Fund grant will end in February 2003. Mexico Child Link and Fundación Trébol have both obtained tax-deductible status in the U.S. through *CAF America*, a sister organization of the *Charities Aid Foundation*. We have recently set up a website, which allows on-line credit card donations. It includes information about our project as well as recent photographs from Mexico. Fundación Trébol has also set up a website in Spanish which can be reached via a link from our own site.

#### How can I help support the project in Mexico?

- Check for latest news and information at: [http://mysite.freemove.com/Mexico\\_Child\\_Link](http://mysite.freemove.com/Mexico_Child_Link)
- Make a donation to Mexico Child Link.
- Support our work through a payroll giving scheme or a regular monthly donation.
- Organise a fundraising event on behalf of Mexico Child Link.
- Fill in a Gift Aid form so that Mexico Child Link can reclaim the tax on your previous and future donations. Through Gift Aid, Mexico Child Link can reclaim 28p for every pound donated. Last year alone, the Trust reclaimed a total of £1,852 from the Inland Revenue.
- Contact friends or relatives who may be interested in the work of Mexico Child Link.

### Thanks

Thanks are due to the following organisations and individuals who have given their support:

*The Community Fund* (formerly the *National Lottery Charities Board*), *Monaghan Lions Club*, *Corranny P.S. College Freight Services*, *May Blair*, *Centre for the Study of Developmental Disabilities University College Dublin*, *Nuffield College Oxford University*,

***The Mexico Child Link Trust is a small registered charity based in Belfast. It is governed by a group of 8 trustees, professional people with an interest in development work and learning disabilities (mental handicap.) It supports direct action projects which make a visible and direct improvement in the quality of the lives of children and young people. Mexico Child Link works in partnership with a Mexican organisation, Fundación Trébol de Puebla A.C., which we have helped to fund and develop.***

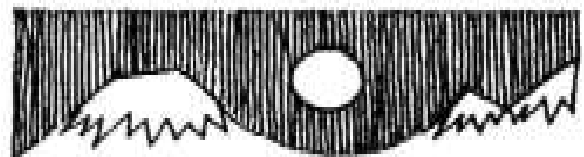
*The Marion Gibson Memorial Trust, Hazel Dickson, Loreto Convent P.S. The Paget Trust, The Hilda Laing Charitable Trust, The Toy Trust, Ulster Garden Villages, Edgcumbe Resource Centre, Wallace High School, Mount Lourdes Grammar School, Dawson Cunningham Ltd. And J.W. Russell & Co.*

Mexico Child Link gives special thanks to the City of London Freeman's School for its very generous donations during the past year.

In addition, thanks are due to all our regular donors who support Mexico Child Link through Banker's Order and the Give As You Earn scheme and the many people who supported us through individual donations, which varied from £5 to £300. Our thanks to all our donors who signed and returned Gift Aid forms.

### Special Thanks

In this the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Mexico Child Link, we give a very special thanks to Mrs. June Getty for her tireless contribution to the work of the Trust since it was set up. We also thank Dr. Bernard Anderson who retired from the trust at the A.G.M. Bernard was one of the original group of 9 Trustees who set up Mexico Child Link. We are very grateful for his support during the past 10 years. We wish him well in his retirement from his post of Head of Geosciences, Queen's University, Belfast.



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