

If you are already a monthly donor, please give the enclosed leaflet to a friend or colleague

December 2003
www.mexico-child-link.org

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.

Residential project



Carpentry workshop



Esteban



Paty



Emmanuel



Lucero

Good progress has been made on the employment front, although the young people still need a higher level of supervision and support than first anticipated. The living arrangements were changed earlier in the year and the older children, and young people are now living more independently in one of the houses. This is a natural development, in keeping with our desire to give them more responsibility, as they grow older.

Esteban has a full time job on a local farm, which he has held for approximately 1 year. Rodolfo, who has just left school, is helping out on the project farm. Argelio has started a new job full time in a tomato producing market garden. Paty and Marisol are working as house-helpers in the project, replacing a member of staff who was employed previously. Alma is at a local secondary school and receives a grant from Quiera, the Mexican bankers association. During the summer she worked as an unpaid nursing assistant in order to gain work experience. Josefa is working as a house helper and has an extra job cleaning one day per week in 2 local houses.

Esteban in particular has been a huge success story for the project. In spite of his limitations, such as inability to use public transport or manage money, he has held down full time jobs near the project site for over five years. Personally, it has been very rewarding to see him grow from a thirteen year old with little or no language or social skills, into a responsible young adult. Young people with learning disability like Esteban have now had the benefit of over 8 years of education and training in the project.

Farm

A local Vet has agreed to buy selected lambs for their genetic potential. If this can be developed, it could be a new source of income for the project. The project currently has a flock of over 60 sheep and goats.

Advice and Information Centre

Our project partners have received a grant of £3000 from SEDESOL to re-equip their advice and information centre on the theme of learning disability.

Mexico Child Link is a UK registered charity which sponsors projects in Atlixco & Puebla, Mexico for homeless, abandoned and orphan children with learning disability, many of whom are ex street children. Our projects in Mexico include; a home for children & young people with special needs, farm based on sustainable agriculture for skills training, Carpentry workshop for children with learning disability, Advice and information Centre on learning disability, Advisory service for orphanages & institutions in Puebla, Horticultural training programme in C.A.M Special Education School in Atlixco.

As many of you will already know, Colette Mc Ginnity left paid employment with Mexico Child Link earlier in the year and has taken up a new post as liaison officer with *Down Lisburn Carers Forum* on Learning Disability. Colette has emphasised that she is as committed as ever to Mexico Child Link but felt that it was time for a new personal challenge after 11 years. She visited the children in August and will be at the project again in late December.

New Website

Mexico Child Link set up a new website in June. It contains a lot of material about the project work being carried out, such as the carpentry workshop and the residential project. There are links to the Mexico Child Link annual report and financial summary, and there is also information on how to donate online, or set up a monthly standing order. There is a lot of background information on the area of Mexico where our project is located, and an information page on the Aztecs for schools. There is also an online photo album with dozens of recent photographs of the project. The website can be accessed at www.mexico-child-link.org.

Thanks due

Magheralin Parish Women's Group organised a very successful fundraising event on our behalf, with over £1,200 being raised. The cross community event involved a fashion show featuring the latest styles from 4 shops in Moira. *The City of London Freemen's School* has continued its long-term support, as well as *St Eugene's Roslea*. *Corranny Old School Reunion Committee* gave a donation as did the *Paget Trust*. Toby Wolfe ran the Berlin marathon to raise funds on our behalf. We also received a substantial donation from the Estate of the late Sybil Brian through *Russells, The Solicitors*. *Edgecombe TRC* also gave support.

Street Collections

We are on target to raise over £10,000 in 2003. Thanks are due to anyone who helped out, especially June Getty and May Blair who have been the main organisers.

Appeal

Our lottery funding ended at the end of February and we need to secure the long term future of the project. The project is currently going through a period of transition, and we are trying to cut costs while at the same time maintaining our programmes. As you know, Mexico Child Link spends funds raised directly on the project in Mexico. We do not have an advertising budget or fundraising department like larger national charities so we are very dependent upon our longstanding donors and supporters. We are currently trying to increase our supporter base.

I am enclosing a leaflet with this update. If you already are one of our long-term monthly donors, please pass on the leaflet and Freepost envelope to a friend or colleague who may also be interested in our work.

I will be in Mexico during December and January.

The main purpose of my visit will be to (a) help with a reorganization of the staff group necessary after the end of lottery funding, (b) organise a fundraising and income generating strategy within Mexico, (c) carry out an evaluation of the progress of the project.

I will send you a further update on my return.

Thanks again for your continued support.

Jonathan Getty
(Co-ordinator, The Mexico Child Link Trust)

