

# Casa Hogar de los Niños

*Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico*

Winter 2010

## Dear Friends

Hogar de los Niños is a home for children and women who have been orphaned, abused, or abandoned. To accomplish this we provide education, protection, shelter, food, religious guidance, counseling, and love.

Since I last wrote to all of you, we have been hard at work to progress our mission statement above and the sense of community around the orphanage. In this Winter 2010 newsletter, I would like to share just a

few examples of what we do to bring about positive change in our home and some miracles we have had along the way. Also, please check out our web site for the most recent orphanage events. Currently, there are stories on St. Raymonds Church and Sacred Heart Church who have greatly helped the orphanage. I hope you enjoy!

Tony Ralphs  
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## Construction & Pavement

We have finally finished the formal construction of our beautiful new building in Tijuana! What a relief. The construction lasted much longer than I expected, and also became a much bigger project than was originally planned. However, we have utilized more of our land than I originally thought, meaning more space for all of our activities and kids. I feel certain that God will show us a way to use these facilities for his greater Glory. I have been praying on what direction we are to go, and I feel a peace about our project, as we are located in an area in desperate need of a community center. Tijuana has become a very sad place in many ways, as people struggle hard to make a living and keep their families going. There



*Upper Playground for Kids*

are so many problems here, and so few places where people can go to turn for help. We plan on having more community activities in our new facility. We have already had big dinners where the bishop of Tijuana and many people have come and a quinceañera for one of our girls.

Since this project has finished, there has been a wonderful new spirit that I have never seen before, and both adults and children have taken great pride in planting many trees and flowers all over our property. We have also had two volunteers come down, and donate a week of their time and labor planting a beautiful garden in our back yard. It is wonderful for me to see the people in the orphanage taking pride in their new home, and trying to beautify it. In 35 years, this is the first time I have ever seen the people living there

actually taking such an active part in making their own home beautiful. Hopefully this will prove to be an inspiration for neighbors. We have also had people from Corona, CA donate clippings that have been growing well there.

One thing that gives me great pleasure is that we finally have a real paved road all around the orphanage. Recently, the road was completely paved. We have come a very long way from the days when there was no electricity, water, sewer, or paved roads. It is now a pleasure to drive to the orphanage, and our cars also will last lots longer.



*Lower Playground Next to Church*

Casa Hogar de los Niños  
Colonia Pedregal de Santa Julia  
Tijuana, Mexico  
[www.hogardelosninos.com](http://www.hogardelosninos.com)

## Volunteer: Elise Otto

*Elise is from Spokane, WA and just finished spending 3 months living/volunteering at El Hogar.*

I am incapable of explaining long division in Spanish. Multiplication, addition and subtraction were easy to communicate, but no matter how many rectangles, dots, or fingers I used, no matter how many math vocabulary words I looked up, whenever it came to long division my efforts were met with blank stares by the kids who I tutored during my time at Casa Hogar de los Niños.

I shouldn't have been surprised that numbers were such a cultural division. After all, the numbers in my life are quite simple. I am a 21 year-old who was spending three months in Tijuana, taking a break from my four years of school at my \$ (very large number)-a-year liberal arts college, after which I will spend x years working, and  $\beta$  years in grad

school. The numbers in Tijuana are different. The day I left Tijuana, nine people were killed in a seafood restaurant in Otay. This represented a surge in violence during December that left 24 people dead in two days. In a city of 3.5 million this may not seem like much, but these people are hung from bridges and decapitated. This last week one revenge killing in a taxi left a bystander, a 14-year-old boy, dead. When I saw this in El Mexicano I couldn't help but think of Carlos the 14-year-old boy I know at El Hogar, Carlos who insisted on wearing a luchadora mask while he and I were digging through the compost pile, looking for roly-poly bugs for his science project.

There is a contrast between the numbers of Tijuana and the reality of my time at El Hogar. I was occupied with playing volleyball or soccer, setting out forks and napkins before lunch, trans-

lating Jonas Brothers and Michael Jackson songs into Spanish, sorting out expired medicine, listening to the second graders practice reading or baking cookies with the older girls. The numbers exist - both in the newspapers and in the histories that everyone here brings with them - but at El Hogar they are second burner to school, what is being served for lunch, soccer, music lessons, board games, punishment, and of course long division. I believe the more that the reality of Tijuana is pushed to the background in the lives of these children, the more capable they will be of changing that reality in the future. Reason enough to keep trying to explain long division.



*Elise Otto & Kids*

## Interested in Visiting Us & Volunteering?

Over the course of the last year, and particularly in the past 6 months, we have seen a sharp rise in orphanage volunteers. It has been great to have people around the orphanage, and I know the kids have really enjoyed them. The volunteers have tackled jobs from gardening to tutoring, and everything in between. All of the volunteers have given themselves away to help make the orphanage atmosphere spe-



*Beach Fun!*

cial, a place where hope and love are overwhelmingly abundant amidst a city in great turmoil. The orphanage can certainly be viewed as being on the front lines of showing God's love to a community in great need.

To help with the increasing volunteers, Kathy King has stepped in as a volunteer coordinator. This is a huge relief, as I have been praying for God's direction in terms of the volunteer role throughout orphanage life and how to make it more permanent and meaningful. I think Kathy is a real blessing! We also

have a new email for prospective volunteers, [volunteercasahogar@gmail.com](mailto:volunteercasahogar@gmail.com). Additionally our website and Facebook page contain a wide breadth and depth of information and fun pictures.

**A sincere and genuine Thank You to all our volunteers!**



*Kathy King*

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## Hogar Event: St. Monica Beach Trip

For many years we have had the wonderful blessing of having the Santa Monica Catholic Church come and visit our orphanage. Last July we had another wonderful trip to the beach with this group. There were about 50 of our children and about 40 people from Santa Monica. It was a great



*Cecilia & Antonio*

time! The kids as always had a great afternoon playing in the

sand and surf. We all went to Rosarito beach in a big bus. I want



*Roberto in the Surf*

to thank Monsignor Torgerson, Cecilia, and all the wonderful people from Santa Monica who over the years have given so much love and support to our children. It is a wonderful blessing to know such great people.

Santa Monica is a church that has been helping El Hogar for I believe more than twenty

years, of our almost 35 years of existence. Father Chuck was the first priest from Santa Monica that brought down groups and over the years so many people has come to visit us. Countless people have shared in our work with both poor children and woman who were not able to take care of their kids for whatever reason. What a beautiful church composed of such loving hearts.



*Water gun Fun!*

## Kelly's Quinceañera

Last July we had a quinceañera. For those who are not familiar with this custom, when a girl turns 15 in Mexico there is a huge party for her. We have had many such parties, and they are always so much fun. Kelly has been with us for a good number of years, and has a sister and two brothers. Kelly wanted a small party so we only had about 70 people, but it was really a lot of fun. We had Father Jaime come and say the mass and he brought a choir of seven with him. The mass was



*Our Chapel All Dressed Up for Mass*

said in our beautiful new chapel on the roof of the orphanage, and then we held the party in our large multi-purpose room. One thing I love about orphanage parties is that they are about everyone. No one is left out; little children dance with adults and everyone has a great time. There is always joy when there



*Tony, Kelly, & Pilar Ready for Mass*

are happy children having a good time. Hopefully some of you can come for one of our parties, and share the experience with us!



*Kelly (center) with Sahara & Halima*

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## Thank You Delia

Last week I lost a wonderful friend of over thirty years, Delia Duarte. She and her husband were one of the first and most faithful friends of the orphanage. They originally found the orphanage through our article in the 1977 Los Angeles Times (full article at [www.hogardelosninos.com/LA\\_Times\\_Article.html](http://www.hogardelosninos.com/LA_Times_Article.html)). They came in a beautiful new car as I remember, perhaps a Cadillac, and I don't think they were prepared for what they saw. We had about 80 children, with no facilities except a big ugly house I had built with four teenagers. When they got there they saw many dirty, but happy children. We had one outhouse for all of us, no electricity, no running water, no phone service, and

no paved roads for many miles, but lots of tar paper shacks and dusty roads. The orphanage had perhaps three cars a day go by it. Both Delia and Arturo were really stunned by what they saw, but for the rest of their lives, they always supported the orphanage. They were part of a large group of people in Los Angeles named the League of the Americas, and had many parties to help raise money for our children. Through this group we got a playground, generator, and many other things to help us with our project, but more than that, they also came down to visit the orphanage. I remember their group in a bus they had rented taking down 60 or 70 children on their laps to a restaurant in Tijuana. They were

such a wonderful group, and all this came from my dear friend Delia Duarte, who even when I was really bad about getting back to her, never forgot us. I feel humbled to know such a loyal and loving person, who never stopped loving the orphanage and our work there. Thank you Delia, and I look forward so seeing you again in eternity.



*Delia Duarte*

## Our Christmas Miracle

In the spirit of Christmas I want to talk about our miracle. We have a lady named Edubigues, who has worked at the orphanage for about 25 years. About two months ago, Pilar and I went to the orphanage, and we could tell she was very sick. Pilar immediately took her to the hospital, just before Edubigues went into a diabetic coma. That night, all the doctors at the hospital were sure she

would die. We brought in all her family, and the children at the orphanage began praying for her to recover. I usually have great faith, but I felt that she would die, too. Many people stayed around the clock at the hospital, and the children and so many others continued their fervent prayers for her recovery. With so much faith, Edubigues continued to stay alive, but now we were faced with the possibility that she

would be blind, or perhaps have her legs amputated. Again there were fervent prayers. Pilar's 50th birthday was rapidly approaching, but she asked for no gifts, just for God to heal Edubigues and she got her birthday gift! All the doctors felt it was a miracle that she is even alive today, and has nothing wrong with her. She has learned a good lesson, however, and is now eating and living a much more healthy lifestyle. It is very hard to doubt the power of prayers, especially when innocent children offer them. Thank you God for continuing to show us your powerful witness through the life of Edubigues.



*Edubigues (center) with family*



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