

Monday October 16, 2006

Hello Friends and Family,

Since I have gotten a bit better at communication, I feel the support coming from all of you a thousand-fold. I appreciate the updates and words of encouragement you have been sending. Thank you!

I must say that I do not miss the snow and cold weather as I am sitting here writing this update in cotton pants, a sleeveless shirt and no shoes. I am nervous about coming back in November and freezing myself to death. However, you all are worth the risk!

So on to my update...

1- Honduran Board:

We remain at the same phase of the foundation's legal process. We do have a few new members on our board since last month and I see this as a real positive move forward. We are having a "Friends of the Foundation" meeting at the end of this month to recruit help and to brainstorm ideas for in-country fundraising. This is a very important time for our board and is a follow up to our inauguration. I will share more next month.

2- Executive Director Activities:

In my August update I explained that I had been asked to sit on a committee to discuss the issues and solutions to the HIV/AIDS/Health care crisis in Honduras. Well, the commitment I have made is quite a big one. We continue to meet weekly and are including more non-governmental and governmental organizations to help with planning for the future. The current antiretroviral medicine crisis was resolved for the short run. What we are focused on now are the other current crises: reagent availability for performing CD4 and Viral Load lab tests, reagent availability for performing basic HIV testing, availability of infant formula for preventing vertical transmission, availability of Kaletra for use in salvage therapy, and over 50 children on a waiting list for starting this life-saving therapy. The issues here are extensive with what appear to be simple solutions (honesty, structure, accountability, commitment). No one wants to take the fall for making a mistake. I continue to bring my bright-eyed, idealistic, North American point of view to the table with a twist of the Honduran reality I have lived now for almost 8 years. I feel I am there to speak up for the children who have no voice and to hold those accountable when the children's needs are not being met. I am learning so much in the process.

The November work team from Texas was cancelled for this year but will be rescheduled for 2007. I am disappointed that I won't have the time with Jill and her team but am looking forward to next year when they come and we have children in the home! The church that was sending the work team to Honduras decided to donate the money that they would have otherwise spent for the trip. Thank you... it is a real blessing!!!

I have been presenting with a group of Honduran professionals to local businesses here in Tegucigalpa about HIV prevention. I talk about not only our foundation's work with children but about human rights and discrimination for those living with the disease.

I have been working hard at contacting people, completing research, and planning the start up of the U.S.-based foundation. In order to set up the federal 501c3 status, I need to incorporate the foundation at the state level which will happen in Michigan this November. Once this has been accomplished,

we will proceed with the federal part and seek the 501c3 status. This process will take a minimum of 9 months.

I have been working with the various satellite team leaders in the States to set up meetings, fundraising events, and get-togethers for my November trip. See the November trip plan for details.

Getting the Honduran side of fundraising going has been a learning experience. I have been meeting with different people each week to get input on resources and contacts that will help us in the future. I have been writing letters requesting support and seeking donations from local businesses. Until the legalization is finalized, I will not be seeking financial support in-country but we are currently able to ask for equipment and items to furnish the home.

The development of the Honduran side of this organization remains a daily responsibility. From developing the policies and procedures of how we will care for the children, to the list of needs for operations, to budget revisions and analyzing when I can take another child into my home. All of these items and more require a lot of time and thought. I am very happy to have the time to do all of this work and am motivated to produce a quality product. My challenge is balancing the U.S. support-raising piece with my responsibilities here. It is a good challenge to have and gives me energy; however, I am still on this big learning curve and often doubt myself. Thank you for your understanding and support.

3- Fundraising Activities:

►Jaimes and Janice of the Phoenix Foundation raised \$5,900 at a party held at the Tricoci family home on September 30th. The money will be going to purchase capital items needed to open the home. This group of nearly 70 friends and colleagues of Cheryl Tricoci also brought baby clothing, infant car seats and walkers as donations for WWC. It was a very successful event!

►Grand Rapids annual AIDS walk on September 29th provided a \$5,000 donation to WWC. Therese Althouse had requested that WWC be included in the list of recipient organizations. The event raised a total of \$50,000 and WWC was one of many very deserving local organizations who will benefit from these donations. I feel very proud we were considered and thank you Therese for speaking up.

►Jill's church, the First Presbyterian Church of Ft Worth, Texas has approved a donation from their mission committee. I thank them for their generosity for the second year in a row. The total is close to \$8,600 and will go toward securing our start up and ongoing operations. This is an amazing blessing!

►Ricardo Pineda from Sacramento, California is starting to motivate local Catholic schools to donate to WWC. He will be showing school administration the WWC video and asking them to consider including us as a charity they support. These schools have a non-uniform day where kids pay a small fee to come to school in regular clothes. The money raised from this event is usually donated to local charities. It is a great way for kids to learn about giving. We are also talking about me coming to California to speak at the schools as a way to model listening to God's call in our lives. Thank you Ricardo as I know your Honduran heart goes out to these children.

►Leonie Webster asked that her local church in the UK support WWC and they have been very generous in sending a donation of \$1,800. I am excited to see where this relationship has the potential to go in the future. Her father is coming in November and I am looking forward to meeting him and talking more about the foundation as well. On top of raising money for her own ministry in Honduras she is looking out for additional support for WWC. Thank you Leonie!

►The St. John Vianney Parish in Brookfield, Wisconsin sent a donation of \$1,000 after Michelle met with their mission committee. While she was in her first week of med school, caffeine overloaded, blind from night reading and arthritic from carrying so many books, Michelle went home by bus to meet with the committee and ask them to support WWC. Based on her presentation, they sent this very generous donation. Thank you Michelle for the sacrifice.

►We have also received individual donations from friends and family totaling almost \$3,000 that have allowed us to continue this work. Thank you to all of you for believing in me and the need for this work.

►Check out the website! It is up to date and beautiful. Thank you to Revolution Agency, Inc. for their hard work and generous donation of the site construction and design, set up and maintenance. I am very appreciative of their team's participation. www.walkingwithchildren.org

4- Update on Miguel:

As I mentioned in my last update we have been working a lot with Miguel on his reactions to his past, modifying current behaviors and helping him to develop his plan for the future. I am very happy to report that Miguel is making positive advances in all areas. He is showing more initiative in his school work. He is planning on graduating from sixth grade so he is turning in homework and studying for exams.

His behavior as it relates to interpersonal relations is showing more maturity. I really see him trying. He is even working on resolving past issues with the woman who raised him by asking more questions about who his parents were and how he might get into contact with extended family he has never known. He is starting to form his own identity as a young Honduran male.

I have encouraged him to get a job during his school break from November to February and he is very motivated about the idea of making money. We have been working together on a budget for him as he will be expected to share in basic household expenses while saving some money in the bank for his future education and fun personal items. He has two friends that will hopefully be working with him as baggers at a local department store and are the second reason for Miguel being motivated to work.

Miguel has still not decided what he wants to do with his future education; high school or a technical school. I believe he has yet to figure out what he wants out of his life, is very influenced by his peers and thus with time and good support will figure this out. Thank you for your prayers as Miguel is showing much improvement in a short time. We anticipate ups and downs as are normal with life as an adolescent but for now the sun is out and he is growing up.

5- November Trip Plan:

The following events are on the calendar:

Saturday Nov 25 - Fundraising Event at a local Bed and Breakfast in Alma

Tuesday November 28 - Meeting with the Executive Director of Camp Heartland

Wednesday Nov 29 - Presentation to a Global Health Interest Group and selling Honduran coffee at Matt's Medical school in Wisconsin

Thursday Nov 30 - Presentation to a Global health Interest Group and selling Honduran coffee at Michelle's Medical School in Wisconsin

Thursday Dec 7 - West Michigan ANAC Christmas party

The following are events awaiting confirmation:

- Fundraiser in Wisconsin with Mary Busalacchi's Team
 - Meeting with high school in Wisconsin about future fundraisers
- Fundraiser in Grand Rapids with Carol Roberts
- Meeting with pastors of Mars Hill Church
- Get-together with group from Catholic Information Center
- Speaking at Catholic Church in Alma
- Speaking at Catholic Church in Wisconsin
- Collection of donations from hospital in Grand Rapids

I know this update has gotten long-winded but I would like to share the following personal story with you:

God has shown that He will not abandon me or His children in our time of need. I can honestly say that I was at my lowest point since starting this new foundation just two short months ago. At that time, I truly had not five dollars in the bank account and was unsure how I was going to pay for food, electricity, rent, school, or medicine for the three of us. I nearly gave up. I was sure that God was trying to tell me that I was not cut out for this work, that what I had done with Montaña de Luz was a fluke and I should just pack up and go home. Well, Honduras is my home; my kids are here so I was not sure what to do. I had two children to support, a project in development and no money. Fun place to be!

Well, it is sometimes at the bottom we find the greatest joy and love. God has been gentle with me and I am thankful. He has also been teaching me many things throughout this experience. I have had to be strong, trust in my faith and try to push through all of the negative influence of my past pain while continuing to move forward. I had too many people counting on me. I was not really sure deep down how God was going to take care of all of this but I listened to those around me, prayed and started to trust.

While experiencing this lowest point, I was in church after working at a medical brigade with a team from Jamaica. The pastor of the group was the guest pastor at the English service that I go to on Sundays. At the end of the service, he called those of us to the front of the church who were seeking additional prayer for direction in our lives and to receive support for the difficulties we were facing. Well, as most of you know about me, I don't do the whole laying on of hands, alter call, falling on the floor, holy-roller religious experience. Growing up in a conservative Lutheran church did not prepare me for charismatic evangelical experiences. Well, luckily I feel very comfortable in this church, have gotten over my fears of the "Charismatic Stuff" and decided to go up to the front of the church. I was actually the first to arrive.

However, I just stood off to the side, quietly saying to God that if you want me to know what to do with my life and this foundation you had better speak up and make it loud because I don't know how to fully trust you quite yet and I am fearful that I may not be doing what I believe you have called me to do. I was asking Him to clear up my confusion.

I was up there for about 5 minutes, repeatedly saying "If you want me to know what to do speak loudly." All of a sudden the pastor speaking into the microphone started saying my name. I thought; "he is not talking to me!" I looked behind me, then to the side of me and all the while kept hearing him say, "Come stand here in front of me," "God is directing me to tell you something." Ok, I have to admit I was a little freaked out. However, I was also curious.

This pastor did not know me or my situation so what did he think God wanted me to hear. How could he know what God wanted to say? Well, I had just been silently repeating for the past 5 minutes to God that if He wanted me to hear His plan for my life then he was to speak loudly. I guess a man with

a microphone was loud enough. For those of you who are skeptical I get it, I really I do, however, this experience has really changed my life.

The pastor began to say that God wanted me to know that what I was doing with His children in Honduras is exactly what He was asking of me. God sees that I have been faithful to His calling. He said I was to be patient. That the difficult times I was experiencing are just tests of my faith and that very soon in the months to come I would be blessed abundantly with people and financial support to complete the work He has called me to do. He would swing open the doors of support. That I am not to doubt my path or where I am as Honduras is my home. That I am not to worry about the financial crisis I am in that He promises to provide.

From this point forward, I have felt a peace about the future of this foundation. In just two short months, we have raised almost \$27,000! That is more than we raised the entire year 2005. My analytical brain wants to rationalize this but my heart and my soul are telling me to hang on because this is just the beginning. God will not abandon us and will continue to prove that in the months to come. Thank you to all of you who have been at the door as it has swung open with loving faithful arms. I would not want to be any other place then right here experiencing all of this with all of you.

Chris