



# Noticias from Santa Maria

A Newsletter from the Santa Maria Foundation

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## Message from Rick Jones

Director of the Foundation

I am very hopeful with the developments over the past few weeks. The Mexican Consul General invited me to a meeting with the Secretary of Social Development (a Presidential Cabinet position in Mexico), Josefina Vázquez Mota. At the meeting, Sra. Vázquez offered to provide matching funds from the federal government to help with some of the capital needs at Santa Maria. The most urgent project is a home that would provide housing for several more missionaries. Please help us make this housing project a reality so that we can have more volunteers to care for the many needs of the children and elderly at the mission. Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year to you and your family!

## Message from Fr. Cliff

Director of the Mission



Greetings and blessings to each and every one of you from our little family of 250 children, special loved ones, and the incapacitated. The majority of American families find it difficult to manage two children (average number of children in an American family) and/or elderly parents. So we attempt to do the impossible: caring for 250 of God's needy children and elderly. Thank you for your love and support to our family!

## Updates from Our Missionaries

Colleen Conway



As I sit in the internet cafe trying every trick I know to access my email account, which happens to be down, I am forced to reflect on how much I have grown in the virtue of patience. Being a volunteer this year in the girls' house has given me a lesson in patience as well. My first week, there was a cricket living in my room and he chirped incessantly through the night. For four nights he annoyed me, and I would plot how I would catch him if he ever peeked out from whatever nook or cranny was his current residence.

But since he never gave me the chance, I didn't end up catching him. I think he died, but not until I had given up and realized that there was not a SINGLE THING I could do. I think God was working through Jiminy or whatever his name was, because I have needed the patience gained that first week for many other things here. For example, when dealing with the girls, I am more likely than not, the only hug they will receive that day, so it's important that I am patient enough to not get wrapped up in discipline and the disappointment of their misbehavior. I have to be patient enough to learn about another culture before charging into problems and trying to solve them the American way. I have to be patient enough to wait for change and recognize that a year is a long time and the marks I leave on these girls will not come from any single moment, but rather a long and constant demonstration of patience with and love for them. I have been frustrated with different aspects of this experience at one point or another, but whenever I have found myself terribly annoyed, I have also found God comforting me in ways I would never have let Him if I could control everything here. I think that's the overarching theme of the last four months: God will give us much more virtue and grace than we have the confidence to ask for, and He will do it through very unexpected methods, like non-functioning internet and small, noisy insects squirreled away in bedroom rafters.



Sarah Kolacz

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share God's love with the children of Santa Maria del Mexicano. It has been a life-changing experience.

I don't know how Rick ever managed to summarize the job description of a Santa Maria volunteer. In short, I take care of the girls, ages 11-24, at the Casa de Jovenes. Little did I know, I would also be a nurse, cook, bug killer, representative, chauffeur, computer and English teacher, peacemaker, disciplinarian, and confidante. I really enjoy variety in a job and am impressed at the girls' remarkable ability to keep me on my toes - even while sleeping!

Arriving at Santa Maria, I expected to find grateful, victimized children welcoming us with open arms. True, there are some kids like that here. But, the majority of my girls at the Casa de Jovenes are there due to behavioral issues that their parents found insurmountable. It took me a while, but I soon realized that this "type" of kid is just as deserving of our commitment and unconditional love as any other. Considering they have been deprived of a healthy upbringing to date, they may very well need it the most. Several months into it and I find myself calling them "my" muchachas and my friends. In such a short time, we have already been through a lot together and, for better or worse, they are the 28 little sisters I never had.

The people of Santa Maria (and the town of Colón, for that matter) are what make eating beans and tortillas 2-3 times/week well worth it. I truly feel privileged to support Madre Guadalupe in her work. It makes me happy to give such a hard-working nun some time for rest and relaxation when I can. In service to her, I am in turn serving those who benefit from her dedication. The religious staff are excellent examples of selfless servants of God and His children. The local staff are apparently tireless (is it in the water??) and often work overtime hours. It makes me proud to say that the collective spirit of the Santa Maria staff and volunteers is centered exactly where it should be -- on what is best for the children. This place is so blessed!

All in all, I thank God often for placing me at Santa Maria for the year. Maybe the (ice) cold showers have put me to the test. And maybe the scorpions and cockroaches got the best of me the first week (or two :)). But, I have grown so much spiritually, emotionally, and mentally here. And the people here (even the 5 yr. olds) have taught me a lot about life. I can only hope that, after a year, I will have given them half of what they have given me.



## Missionary Update Continued



**Thomas Clouqueur**

I have been in Santa Maria for about three months now and it feels like much longer, since so much happens here everyday. When I got here, I was put in charge of one of the two dorms where about 25 guys sleep. Then I was told, a few times, of the absence of an English teacher in the secondary school, so I accepted to fill the spot. I discovered that this was a major commitment, teaching six classes a day, five days a week. These two jobs filled about 22 hours a day, which made life a little crazy. After trying my best for a few weeks, I realized I was losing my nerves. Being with some troublesome kids, non-stop, was quite a challenge. I talked briefly with my supervisor, and we agreed that I would not be in charge of the dorm anymore. I now have my private room and private time, so I can keep myself together. My duties are mainly to teach English and supervise the study time the boys have every night. I also supervise some of their time during the weekends and during meals.

The kids of Santa Maria come here because they were having problems in their homes. Some were abused in their family, some had problems with drugs or alcohol, and most of them had problems in school. Santa Maria provides an environment where they are away from their past, and somewhat isolated, since we live at the foot of the mountains, a few miles away from the closest city. Working here is very difficult because of the range of emotions that can be experienced in one day. One youth shares a life story with me, and I am filled with hope, and a desire to love them. But then I fall into extreme frustration when the kids are disobedient and disrespectful. It is hard to find the right words for them, as they need so much encouragement and also so much discipline. At every moment, I need to be reminded to be patient; that these kids cannot change in one week or month. It is hard not seeing the fruits of my work, and trying to keep hope. Only in my faith do I find the resources to go on and hope. I know Jesus loves these children and I need to be a witness to that love. My change of schedule has helped me find Peace and to be true to myself. I am receiving a lot of spiritual support from the new priest, Father Mike, who arrived about two weeks after I did. He has a great spirit and has a lot of energy. But one of my great frustrations is that we are so short staffed here. We need people to help supervise the children more closely. Thank you for your prayers and support.

### **Thomas' recommendations for some ways that you can pray for Santa Maria:**

#### For the children

- That they may be healed from any suffering they went through in their lives.
- That they may find Peace here at Santa Maria, and grow in their faith.
- That they learn to love themselves and others.

#### For the volunteers

- That they may be filled with God's love for the children, not focusing on the obstacles they encounter everyday, but on the long-term goal of salvation.

#### For the Discerning Christian

- That others may hear the call of the Lord to give their time to the children of Santa Maria.

## Looking for Missionaries

We are accepting applications for missionaries for our 2004-2005 school year. If you or someone you know would be interested in volunteering at Santa Maria, give us a call or visit our website for more information. Deadline for applications is May 1. An application can be downloaded at [www.santamariafoundation.org/application.pdf](http://www.santamariafoundation.org/application.pdf).

## Story from Santa Maria

### Jose's Story

"My name is José de Jesús. I am 10 years old and have been at Santa Maria for about two years. My parents fought often. My mother was pregnant and our new brother was going to be born in a few days. In one of their fights, my father punched my mother in her stomach. She got sick and went to the hospital. My father later told us that she and our baby brother died. I got angry with my Dad because it was his fault. I went running with my brother to the mountains. We cried for a long time. After that, my father started to drink and would hit my brothers and me. We never had anything to eat and our father abandoned us. My uncle found out that we were living on the streets and told DIF (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia), comparable to the Department of Human Services in the U.S. They brought us to Santa Maria. Now we have food to eat and a good place to live. Thank you to all of you who help to make Santa Maria a home for my brothers and me. I promise that I will study and be someone in life."

### Muchas Gracias

Thank you to the students at St. Joseph School in San Antonio for raising \$900.00 for the children & elderly through donations from family and friends.

Thank you to Shurgard Storage at 2550 Thousand Oaks for donating storage for one year to store our brochures, videos, and other items for the Foundation.

Thank you to Lorena Gallegos and Fabio Arce for translating our brochures and donor envelopes into Spanish so that we can spread our message to Spanish-speaking donors.

Thank you to Robert Armstrong for printing our brochures in Spanish. We also thank Robert for converting our video to a digital format so that it can be seen on CD, DVD, and on our website.

### Hot Water in the Casa de Jóvenes!

Thank you to all the wonderful people who donated money for the water heating system. The teenage girls are very thankful that they do not have to take cold showers any more. The system was installed last month as the cold fronts were starting to arrive.

### Video on our website

Our 5-minute video is now available for viewing on our website. It can be seen in English and in Spanish. Each video is available in two formats: a High-Speed Connection (T1, Cable, DSL, etc.) or Low-Speed Connection (Dial-up). Take a few minutes to watch it and see how your support makes a difference.



*Merry Christmas  
from the children and elderly  
of Santa María!  
We pray that you have a  
safe and blessed season  
as we celebrate the birth  
of our Lord Jesus.*