

Far From Snow

Issue 24

March 2010

Mailing Address:

La Casa de Mi Padre

Jennifer Hess

Calle Los Castaños #77

Colonia San Francisco

San Salvador, El Salvador

Central America

Hess4snow@gmail.com

<http://jenniferhess.blogspot.com>

Life at La Casa de Mi Padre

At 1:30PM every day, a previously quiet home in a residential area of San Salvador is transformed into a bustle of activity as 25 children or more return from school. The final ten return later in the afternoon. Here at La Casa de Mi Padre (MFH for My Father's House), 35 children ranging from ages 15 months to 20 years old find refuge within the walls. These children, because of a variety of circumstances, cannot live with their biological families, and found their way to MFH through the court system.

Over this past month the work and program at MFH has unfolded and I have seen the effect of what the staff are doing here. God is being glorified in these children's lives. They have more than just a place to live and get an education here at MFH. They are receiving the greatest treasure of all – the opportunity to know Christ and to grow in Him.

My first week here I was touched by the story of Karla, one of the older girls at MFH. In the group session for the older girls (each age group meets once a week to discuss any issues that have come up and to support each other) she spoke up about her experience in school that week where she shared Christ with a classmate. She had prepared a bunch of verses of encouragement for her and shared from her experience who Christ is and how He makes a difference in our lives and gives the strength to get through problems. Afterwards the counselor shared with me that for Karla this was a huge step because of her insecurity and fears. The joy on Karla's face and the excitement of the other girls for her was awesome to see.

Another day Ruth (also one of the older girls) had gone with one of the staff to take care of some paperwork. As she was standing in line she began talking with one of the women beside her. When the woman heard that she was from a children's home she said, "Oh, you poor thing..." Ruth quickly corrected her and said that God had put her there and that she was not to be pitied. And then she proceeded to share Christ with the woman.

Last week a discipline issue had come up among the boy's home because two of the boys were threatening a third boy. The issue was serious enough that Patty, the counselor, called a house meeting with all of the boys. The situation
(continued on next page)



Photo: *Creativity is key for play*

The In's & Out's of San Salvador

When I first arrived in San Salvador on January 26 and my friends and I got lost just about every time we left the house, I assumed I would never quite get used to a big city. Over the past month I have begun to feel more at home here and somewhat know my way around, though I know that I will continue to get lost.

One of the challenges has been to get to know people outside of work, especially since I'm working into the evenings. I have chatted with a few of my neighbors, but since I plan to move to a different apartment mid-month, I have hesitated to invest a lot of time in getting to know them. I am still in the process of visiting churches to see where I want to put down roots. I have been trying out one small group Bible Study but both there and at church people seem to be rushing to the next thing or content in their current friendships so it is challenging. These kind of experiences definitely cause me to evaluate how I respond to new people when they enter into my comfort zone. Do I go out of my way to welcome them or do I say "Hi" and continue on my path because I am too busy to reach out?

God's Enduring Patience

During my first family visitation day at MFH, I helped a grandmother with her literacy homework, which consisted of sounding out syllables, time and time again. I quickly found myself frustrated that she could just not remember what we had just reviewed. As I considered my impatience, I suddenly realized just how great God's patience with me is. How many times do I make the same mistakes again and again? Yet He forgives me and patiently gives me another chance to "get" the lesson. I was definitely convicted in my impatience that day.



Photo: A teambuilding activity with the young girls

(continued from: *Life at La Casa de Mi Padre*)

was discussed and when it came time to decide on the consequence, Patty asked who was in agreement with what had been mentioned. One boy did not raise his hand, and when Patty asked why, he said that he had participated in picking on the third boy as well and so he was not feeling right about watching two others get punished. He knew that maybe he should be receiving the punishment too. His heart was not content until he was honest.

And finally a very exciting story that comes after four years of investigation. Daniela, a fourteen year old girl here, has been at MFH since age three. She was dropped off by her mother and never heard from her again. Over the past few years she has been asking about her family and wanting to know where she comes from. Kathryn, the social worker, spent years researching and following leads that led to dead ends. Then last week she and Patty found Daniela's family in a community on the beach. Daniela has been in shock since, but on March 1 she met her sister for the first time and many other family members. Her prayer of many years has been answered and she now has the chance to get to know her family. And through her, many of them will know Christ.

Prayer & Praise

- Praise for the work that God is doing in the lives of the children here at the home
- Praise that Evelin, in Honduras, is continuing to walk with the Lord.
- Pray for Evelin as she determines where to live the end of this month when the cabin she is in will be occupied for Easter week. Pray for wisdom and patience for her in parenting Lisbeth.
- Pray for the Lord's protection and strength for the staff here at MFH as many are sick or experiencing challenges within their family.
- Pray that details will come together and that God will be glorified in the upcoming work teams.
- Pray that the Lord will lead a "tío" to MFH to care for a group of boys whose tío leaves the end of this month.



Latin America Mission
P.O. Box 52-7900
Miami, FL 33152

What I Have Been Doing

When I arrived at La Casa de Mi Padre (MFH) a month ago, I entered into the daily routine with the intention of learning how things are done here. I had two main goals of learning from them and their program of working to restore relationships with the children in the home and the biological families outside of the home (as well as address the needs of the children) and also figuring out how I could best bless the ministry. I am still in the midst of the two goals, but I have also begun to find the ways in which I can take part here. This first month has been a lot of observation of how group therapy sessions are run, the childcare trainings, and team meetings. I have spent time with the children in an effort to build relationships with them. Volleyball, soccer, crocheting, chatting, helping with homework, and teaching them Dutch Blitz have been a few of the ways I have connected with them. I have also gotten to know many of the "tíos" (the "aunts and uncles" who stay with the children overnight and help with homework, etc.). Seeing their heart for the children and the ministry here has been encouraging. Because many of the tías are on vacation, I have gotten to stay overnight in the "tía" role a few times, thereby seeing all aspects of life in the home.

Over the next few months I plan to become more involved in the group sessions and take some responsibility in them. I will continue to bring various teambuilding activities to the groups to help confront issues that they are facing. I will also have opportunity to present materials for the childcare trainings. We are entering into a season of work teams so I know that I will be involved in helping with them in logistics and translation.

I have been doing lots of reading in the area of families, counseling, boundaries, etc. Much of it is proving useful as I observe what is going on in the lives and behaviors of the children, but I am also discovering that the Lord has much that He wants to teach me and do in my heart. It is good place to be, but challenging at the same time.

To Read More:

[Finding a Routine](#)
[The First Week](#)