

April 7, 2010

I returned from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala April 1 at 6 p.m. and went directly to bed and woke up at 8:30 thinking it was P.M. and turned out it was A.M. and I had slept 14 and a half hours straight after not having any sleep Wednesday night and most of Thursday. I experienced several earth tremors while there which is not too unusual, but on about February 17th we had a strong one that caused the employees to grab as many children as they could and go out into the open playground area of the day care center. It didn't last long, but gave everyone a scare since it was much stronger than most earth tremors they have there. I got sick a couple of times while there, once from amoebic dysentery and worms and after some very strong medication, I got over that and I hadn't had this illness for many years. Later I got a sinus infection and bronchitis and the antibiotics I took with me cleared this up and I usually get at least one sinus infection while I am there. The day care center had an epidemic of sinus infections and I think I got mine from cleaning kids noses. Ha Ha. We have about 65 kids from 40 days old to 6 years old and most of them had running noses. Eight years ago when we first started helping them they had three kids and one employee. When they first arrive in the morning the temperature is around 60 degrees and they wear warm clothing and about noon the temperature is around 80 degrees and around 5 p.m. when they get picked up by their mothers or fathers they have their coats back on and the temperature is around 64 degrees.

During the last part of my trip we completed a five foot extension to our existing roof so that it would cover the side walk we completed to keep the kids dry while walking to the bathrooms, kitchen and to and from Casa del Niño exit. We also put in a new bathroom with two stools, a shower and two hand washbasins and a large mirror. The new bathrooms are lined with tile and well lighted with a clear plastic window on top. This bathroom was made possible by removing a 40 plus year old tree and a huge tree stump, plus it helped get rid of a roosting place for large black birds. We put in drainage check boxes and directed the surface water away from the buildings with new tile.

We refurbished all the playground equipment and now they all operate like new again. I believe we have the best playground equipment for a day care center in the city. The wooden play house had to have the weather cracks filled and painted and we put wooden covers over windows to keep them from dripping water inside and had to replace the door with a stronger structure, but now it is in fine shape again.

We prepared one room to be rented with a new bathroom, which will be used for income purposes as it is on an outside wall next to 18th street. We also put in a dental clinic with two chairs donated to us by the Red Cross. We put in an air compressor and walls for the two chair dental clinic and a waiting room. This will be rented out and also provide low cost dental care for the poor and our children and employees. We are currently working with a local university, that has a dental school, and they plan to provide students in their

final year to get on the job training. The fees will be somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$6.25 for fillings, and about the same for pulling teeth. Cleaning of teeth will be around \$12.50. We are in need of an X ray machine and other equipment. Please contact me if you have information on a source of donated used dental equipment.

We also added a part time doctor in addition to our doctor Ingrid for our medical clinic. He charges about \$6.25 for a consultation. Our Dr. Ingrid works the hours he is not working to handle pregnancy cases and emergencies and she does this at no cost. We also have a volunteer psychologist who works with problem children and their parents. We were going to have a preschool program and decided it was best to do as we have been doing. We train the kids to pass their test to get credit for Pre School through another school and all our students have passed these tests in the past. The Minister of Education said if we operated a pre school then we could only be open four hours a day and since we are a day care center and open from 8 to 5 with lunch and two snacks per day, this wouldn't work out to the best interests of the students or parents.

Two architects have agreed to draw construction plans based on the vision plans that were prepared last year. We had drawn up a three-story building to cover the property that Casa del Niño now owns. It is estimated this building will hold 300 kids plus rental rooms to enable us to continue the policy of providing service to the very poor. Once these new plans are drawn and a feasibility study is made to allow us to know how low we can charge our fees for the poor, then foundations will be sought out to obtain the needed funds. We are also trying to set up a publicity department for Casa del Niño and also to help receive donated funds.

We remodeled the 12 trashcans at the Central Park for the recent Easter celebrations. We had the 12 trash cans all painted and they all looked like new even though they are two years old. A caretaker of the park along with concrete benches splashed them with lime and my friend Chino called the newspapers, and radio and television stations to show them what had been done and this problem was corrected. I gave several radio, television and newspaper interviews to tell about the improvements at Casa del Niño and told them that Casa del Niño was the oldest day care center in Quetzaltenango, about 80 years old, and was believed to be the only one that has an organization where the directors work for free, in order to serve the poor. I gave the news media tours of the facilities and they were surprised to learn that such a facility existed and so we decided we needed to get a volunteer director of publicity. We had several cabinets built and this week they are painting the roof to help prevent leaks and to have our tin roof last for many more years. If you are interested in knowing more about this project you can contact Monte or me.

Have a nice day.

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