

NEWSLETTER

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Shining Light Children's Home

LIFE AND LOVE AT SHINING LIGHT

by Leanna Ulrich

I sat across from Greivin in a small square room called the office. Greivin whizzed over his expectations. I nodded, trying to keep up with the conversation, but with my limited Spanish, my brain scrambled to understand everything he rattled off.

I was delighted to be starting work as a secretary for Shining Light and for Greivin. The position consisted of gathering newsletter articles, taking pictures, entering receipts in QuickBooks, keeping workers' and children's documents updated, and anything else that fell inside the office category.

I helped write, print, and send many documents to DIF and other people and did whatever Greivin needed when he needed it. (DIF is the government agency in Mexico responsible for the children. We work with them and must comply with their requirements.) One project I helped with was getting new routines such as the maintenance checklist in place, and making sure everything was up to par for getting our Operation License as a children's home in Baja California.

There were many frustrating moments of not knowing what to do, hurriedly finishing a list of requirements, crazily going through all the personnel and children documents one last time before DIF arrived for an inspection, but seeing the reward of the license in the office made it all worth it.

The office job took up perhaps half my energy. The other half I spent hanging out with children, taking care of my girl Sara, babysitting for a mom, and connecting with staff. I spent fifteen months at the home and loved almost every minute. Honestly, some days frustrated me and wore me down, and I would almost give up. Other days I loved it.

Somehow Shining Light came to be something I could love even though I had many struggles and moments outside my comfort zone. God became more real to me as I watched Him come through for me in moments I felt lost.

For about twelve months I cared for an eleven-year-old girl. She has been at Shining Light since she was three, and has had about eleven different caretakers. One of the ways she tried to create security was fighting authority and controlling small details. As a twenty-year-old, I felt helpless so many times. God showed me that impossible things can be done with His strength in the moments that I doubted I could take another step. He also showed me that I cannot always do what I think I can because sometimes He wants to take me on a different path.

I learned Spanish fluently and learned to enjoy Mexican food, which is not what I naturally go for. I loved the mountains. The desert, the sand, the open sky, the cactus, cool summer evenings, sunsets as the sun slipped behind the mountain, moonlight, huge rocks, dry air, and sunshine became my favorite things. I did not like cold winter months when the rain we prayed for kept us inside, the strong winds could carry you away, and bones struggled to stay warm in the concrete building. I enjoyed picnics on the big rocks behind the home, walks to the border through desert landscape, talks with girls, hanging out with staff, and holding babies.

God used the year in Mexico to open my eyes, to show me some of the needs in this world, to help me cultivate a deeper trust and faith in Him, and to give me a more thankful spirit for the tons of blessings I have. He also sent my soulmate, Urias Apuy, a staff worker from Costa Rica. I'm very thankful for the opportunity to get to know what living at Shining Light is like. Please remember everyone at the home in your prayers. The battle between good and evil is strong, and the reality can hurt.

OPPORTUNITIES

by Leland Ulrich

Over the last two years I have heard the statement, “It’s an opportunity,” many times. Two years ago we were notified by DIF that the laws had changed and that we needed to follow a new rule book. (DIF is Defensa Infantil, which is the equivalent of social services in the United States.)

When we received the complete document, we realized that operating a children’s home in Mexico would never be the same. However, in spite of this sobering reality, with God in control, we knew there would be a way through. This has become something of a Red Sea experience for SLCH.

As the SLCH administrator, Greivin Villalobos internalized the new rule book and recognized that the only way Shining Light could survive would be to stay a step ahead. Greivin’s mantra became, “It’s an opportunity; let’s be proactive.” This strategy led to the arduous process of implementing a robust management processes system. By God’s grace we were able to complete this project.

These processes include:

For the children

- Physical health management
- Psychological health management
- Behavior management process
- Social development management

For the staff

- All staff members are required to receive training and wear credential badge.
- Training for basic child care and child psychology
- Training for positive discipline
- Training for evacuation protocol and fire drills
- Training first aid training

Facilities

Permits and inspections for public building occupancy:

- Structural engineering permit
- Fire department permit
- Health department permit

Routine Maintenance Program

- Fire prevention and suppression program
- General safety standards compliance

Evacuation plan

All of these processes and systems are

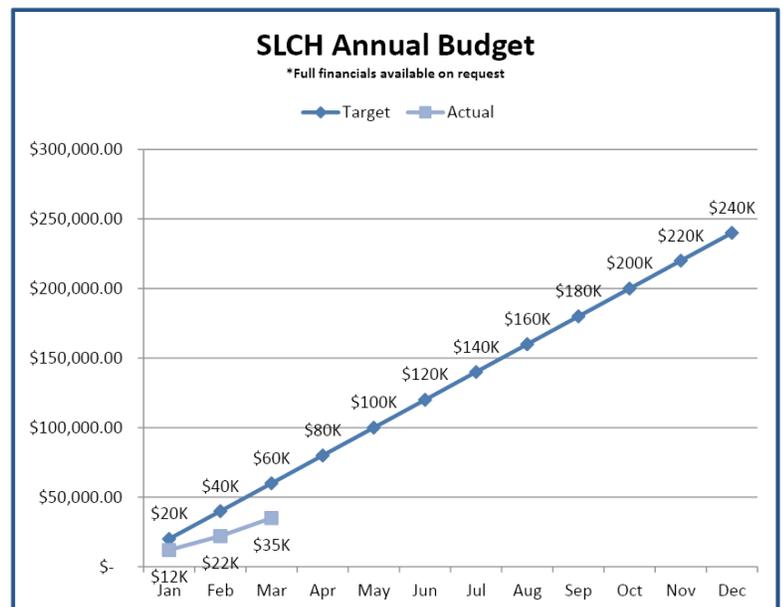


documented, and we have a system for keeping everything up to date and ready for inspections and audits by various jurisdictions.

Implementing this seemed next to impossible two years ago. But on March 28, God blessed SLCH with being among the first children’s homes in Mexico to receive the Certificate of Operation under the new law.

Viewing these requirements as an opportunity and being proactive allowed us to achieve the certification. More importantly, we were able to implement Christian-based training by government-recognized third parties rather than government agencies. We were able to get our house parents certified to train staff rather than the staff being trained by government agencies.

Our prayer is that our willingness to proactively comply with the new requirements will help us gain the government’s trust. This may give us a leg to stand on if and when we face requirements we cannot conscientiously participate in.



February is time for the annual Outreach for Jesus group. The children eagerly wait to see if their friends from the previous year will return. Even if they don't, the children are ready to make new friends. On Sunday, the visitors come for church and then play with the children. They played soccer, Frisbee, singing chairs, four-square, card games, and more. In the evenings, the youth and workers grab the opportunity to go for supper at the ranch with the group. It is a nice diversion from their work at the home.

Work crews came during the week to do odd jobs around the home. The boys spayed sealer on the outside walls and poured concrete for the new sewer while girls sewed and cleaned.

Along with friendship and daily labor, the Milmont congregation from Pennsylvania donated bundles to the children. The children were excited about new toys, socks, dresses, shirts, and more. Although not directly connected to Orphans for Jesus, we always combine the two events. Marvin and Betty Ann Landis from the Milmont congregation have been faithful cooks for many years, and they bring the gifts with them.

One Sunday afternoon youth from the group and from Shining Light went to Tijuana to share our bounties. We took rice and beans, clothing we can't use, and gifts for children. We drove up muddy mountain roads to a school where our teachers taught during vacation the past summer. People from surrounding homes came to receive this small gift of God's love. Children smiled shyly from behind their parents legs, and proudly clung to their precious gifts, though small they were.

We all look forward to Orphans for Jesus and shed tears of parting when the group leaves us with friendships and memories. Some of the children keep in contact with their friends in the group via phone or by letter. It is hard to explain what a great impact this group makes on the children. They create friendships that broaden their horizons beyond borders and languages.

HELP US BUILD A NEW PLAYSET!

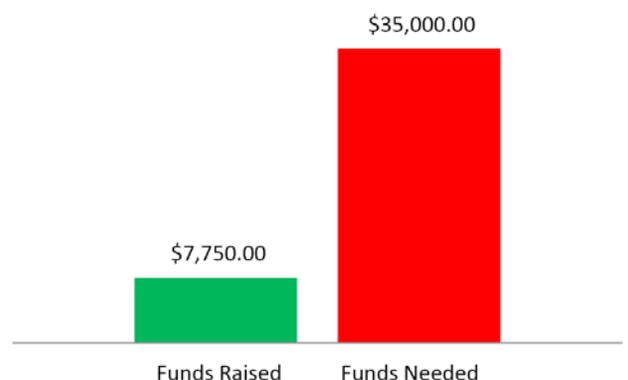
Our current playground is in very urgent need of replacement. It is completely worn out and is becoming a safety hazard. Join with us in giving our children a fun and safe place to play!

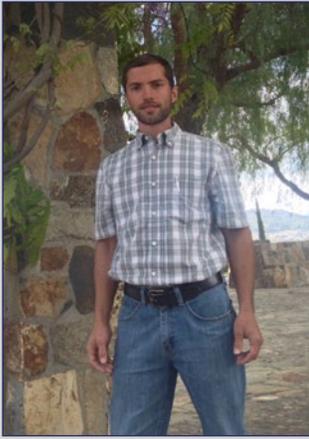


TO DONATE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
shininglightchildrenshomemexico.com

OR MAIL YOUR DONATION TO:
PO Box 164, Grandview TX 76050

Playset Project





FAREWELL NATHAN!

We are grateful that Nathan Martin from Ohio was able to come fill in while the vs boys returned to Costa Rica for paperwork. He was a diligent worker, and the boys all loved him.



Angela



Fernando



Camila



Olivia

Shining Light
Children's Home
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Grandview, Texas 76050
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A rainy year makes a swimming hole that draws the children on warm spring afternoons.



Outreach for Jesus' boys gives us entertainment



poor children happy to receive a gift of Christ's love.



the boys enjoy an afternoon adventure with caregivers Urias and Nathan.

Leland Ulrich - Board Chairman
Corey Yoder - Treasurer
Lorne Hershberger - Secretary
Herb Miller - Board Member/
PR Coordinator
Myron Bontrager - Board Member
Mike Yoder - Board Member

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O.F.J. and Shining Light went to Tijuana together one afternoon to share some of our extra bounties...



Children enjoy the blessing of water.

