

# NEWSLETTER

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## FROM A SHINING LIGHT TEACHER

by Karen Farfan



Hello! I'm Karen Farfan Verdugo, seventeen years old, with my son William, who is four. To begin, I'll share a little about my daily activities. I teach kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. I taught kindergarten last year, but this is my first year teaching first and second grade.

I enjoy working with the children and watching them advance in their studies. I do my best to teach them well. Some days are very hard and tiring, but I keep pushing on, drawing strength from God.

In the morning we start with a devotional and an activity. The government requires private schools to use materials from a program called Conafe to teach students. We also use Rod and Staff curriculum to broaden their learning experience. We have art class and physical education.

When one of the children doesn't want to obey or doesn't want to work, I try to find the root of the problem. I share personal stories with them to help them learn to trust me and to respond positively.

Jesus saved me when I was fourteen, and I was baptized at fifteen. These are the most important decisions I've ever made. My desire is to serve God the rest of my life and to be a Christian example to my family.

I'm the oldest in my room at Shining Light, and I love all the girls in my room like my own family. I'm very happy and thankful to be here with people who support me, encourage me, and correct me.

I'm almost eighteen now. My dreams are to keep working here, to look for my biological family, and to be a blessing to everyone. Pray for me that I will always do what God wants me to do. Also pray for my work of teaching the school children.

My life was very difficult before I came to Shining Light. I struggle a lot with being able to trust people and believing them. After I found my Saviour, I have the security that He will always be at my side. I am saved by His blood. Even though I struggle with trusting, God loves me and never leaves me. I enjoyed sharing with you and I hope this blesses you.

-Karen Farfan

# REFLECTING WITH JOY

by Leland Ulrich

Cold, blustery winds howling outside, cozy family time inside by the fireplace, a cup of eggnog—yes, it is that time of the year again. Christmas and New Year's is a time for family, reflections, and above all, deep gratefulness to our Creator for His bountiful provisions as we celebrate the birth of His Son.

But this year is different. Let me take you on a little journey into the past. Thirteen years ago our family went to my brother's wedding in southern California. While we were there, a group of brethren wanted to check out the need presented by Orphans for Jesus in Baja California, Mexico.

Monday morning we loaded several vans and headed south. My entire family went along. Our oldest was seven at the time. We had an adventurous trip to Mexico, seeing the needs and opportunities. Gathered under a little desert tree on the dirty sidewalks of the bustling city of Tijuana, a small group of brethren prayerfully considered the need. Little did I know what the future would bring.

Twelve years later, our oldest child—now nineteen—volunteered to serve for a year at Shining Light. Leanna had been dreaming of serving at the home since she was eight. With frequent trips to SLCH, her desire continued to grow. Exactly a year ago on December 17, 2015, I took Leanna to the home and helped her settle in for a year of service.

It was a hard parting when I pulled out of the driveway and headed home without her. It was a tearful drive back from the airport with many mixed feelings—fear for her safety, feelings of gratefulness that our daughter wanted to serve in a mission that had become close to our hearts, and feelings of Oh—wait—no! Stop!

And would you know, Urias Apuy, one of the staff boys from Costa Rica, has asked Leanna for her friendship. This week was the beginning of their courtship. There seems to be something about these places of service that opens the gate for these relationships to emerge. This is not a new thing at SLCH. In the last ten years, at least eight couples who learned to know each other at SLCH have gotten married. It's with good reason those feelings went through my Daddy heart on the way back from the airport.

Urias Apuy is from Santiago, Costa Rica, the community where I grew up. Leanna first learned to know Urias while playing soccer on our frequent trips to Santiago during her growing up years. Who knows when this actually started—you will have to ask her! My wife and I are very happy for them and ask for your prayers on their behalf as they seek God's will.

Someone is knocking at the door. It is Leanna. We are so happy she could come home for Christmas and New Year's. I've got to go! You can finish this article as you sip your coffee and imagine the happy reunion.



## MEET KELY

Hi! I am Kely Jasmine Herrera Estrada. I am ten years old. My grandma brought me to live here at Shining Light a year ago. Grace

Yoder takes care of me. I am in fourth grade at school. I like playing doll with my little sister Dana. My doll's name is Rosalyn. I am learning how to make cheese and also how to sew.

Sometimes my mom and grandma come to visit my sister and me. We have a little sister that isn't here with us. Some days I miss her because I helped take care of her when she was a baby. When I turned ten, Grace couldn't be here, and that made me sad. But some of my big girlfriends threw a party for me. We went on a picnic and that made me happier.



## CHICKEN BUTCHERING DAY

It was a cold, rainy Monday morning with a big task at hand. Because of a national holiday and no school, most of the children and staff along with some teachers and administration joined forces to butcher chickens! Some of them had never experienced something like this, but they learned! Many hands made the work fly even though our fingers felt frozen and feet were wet and cold. A tired but happy crowd finished the work and then enjoyed the rest of the day relaxing inside.

# SHINING LIGHT CHILDREN'S HOME

## MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING PROJECT

As part of the long-term vision for Shining Light Children's Home, we are moving forward with the next building project. The building is designed to help us meet new DIF regulations. This multi-purpose facility will address the following critical needs:

**1. ADEQUATE SCHOOL FACILITIES.** The original school classrooms have been outgrown, with some classes being held in a storage building and in a room in the guesthouse. The current school building will become a home for the older boys, where they will have their own house parents. In addition to creating a family environment, this will allow some separation from the older girls. Per DIF requirements, part of the original school building will be used for a doctor's office for the children's health checkups.

**2. TEACHER LIVING QUARTERS.** Under the new DIF ruling, only registered staff can live at the children's home. The new off-campus building will include teachers' quarters.

**3. GUEST QUARTERS.** Under the new DIF ruling, visitors cannot stay overnight on campus. The new building will have guest quarters. Visitors are an important part of SLCH—some of our staff originally came as visitors.

**4. LEARNING CENTER.** Older children graduating from school need a place for continued vocational education. In addition, the Mexico childcare system now requires all children's home staff members to undergo special training. The houseparents at SLCH and a few other children's homes in the area are now certified trainers. This allows us to do our own training, offer training

to other homes, and exercise greater control over the training environment and material. SLCH has a vision to offer this not only to other children's homes, but also as a mission field training camp for people working with children's ministries.

**5. CHAPEL.** Currently Sunday morning church services are held in the living/dining room area of the children's home. This creates a potential problem with visitors from the community attending church services. The SLCH board consented to include a new chapel in the building project to alleviate the local brotherhood's burden of providing a large building to accommodate the children's home crowd. For the foreseeable future, children and staff will make up the larger part of the congregation.

## PROJECT DETAILS

**Building size:** 60'x170'

**Building type:** Steel building with interior wood framing

**Project cost:** \$275,000 (Property for this project has been purchased.)

Contributions are invited. Make checks payable to Shining Light Children's Home and mail to:

**PO Box 164, Grandview, Texas 76050.**

Questions? Call Leland Ulrich **817-822-6760**



## CHURCH BUILDING PROGRESS

When the Shining Light board came to the home for their scheduled meeting, they discussed the new church building. Sunday afternoon found board members, Greivin, and Carl Klassen, the local project manager, examining the rugged desert plot that will one day hold the church building. From one corner to another, the men walked and talked, discussed and dreamed. After an hour, they had a few more things figured out. Several weeks later, the dozer started pushing dirt around. Finally we can see proof that our dream of a new church and school facility is taking shape! Thank you to everyone who is supporting this new venture. Please pray that all goes well!



## IMELDA

Imelda Candelaria (Candy) joined our family the 11th of November and her baby girl entered this world the 12th. On December 30th, they returned to Imelda's family, who treats her well.



## DARWIN

Darwin, sweet and calm, loves all the attention from his crowd of adorers here at the home! He arrived the beginning of November.



## ANGELICA

Sweet Angelica finally joined her siblings here! She has been in another children home for the last several years. Their mom visits on a regular basis.

Shining Light  
Children's Home  
PO Box 164  
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Shining Light Children's Home

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## FAREWELL NEAL!

Thank you Neal Bontrager for your help with the boys as short term staff!



## WELCOME LARITA!

Welcome Larita Stauffer! She helps in one of the main rooms as assistant caretaker. Full of ambition and ideas the girls love her and the projects with her. Especially English class.