

NEWSLETTER

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Shining Light Children's Home

GARDENING IN A DESERT

by Nelson Burkholder

When the Shining Light property was first purchased more than a dozen years ago, it was covered with scrubby bushes, cactus, and whatever else grows without much water. A portion was selected for a garden, the scrub was cleared off, and a bulldozer with long chisels dug up the roots. A fellow hired to guard the place during construction spent days gathering roots.

The soil is dark sand. After years of spreading manure from the Shining Light cows, some places are pretty good soil. The part that we converted to garden this year is still pretty much sand. In May of this year I planted a few crops and found out what I didn't know about the differences between prime soil in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and the sandy soil of the semi-desert!

To start with, I was unhappy to see that after the corn came up, squirrels (there are hundreds that scamper around keeping company with hundreds of jack rabbits and cottontails) scampered up the chicken wire fence surrounding the garden and dug up the plants to eat the seed. The result was about fifty feet of small dead cornstalks in all the rows. So I replanted.

To keep the squirrels company, the rabbits found holes in the fence that surrounds the orchard and garden. They chewed away at the tender plants. I did not succeed in growing many green beans or cantaloupe, because they seemed to be the preferred rabbit snack (not to mention meals).

The sweet corn was more of a success simply because of its sheer volume. I was able to share a portion with the wild animals and have some left over. After the sweet corn was ready to pick, the squirrels climbed the stalks and ate the nicest fat ears. A difference between a squirrel and a raccoon

is that the squirrel eats nearly all the ear instead of simply tasting one here and there.

And the worms on the corn! I was told by a previous successful gardener here that worms are not a problem. I don't know what the difference is, but I started spraying for worms because they became a plague! Another difference is that here you need to water in copious amounts and fertilize heavily where manure was not applied. So I learned lots of lessons if I plant another year.

This winter we plan on grow vegetables in three small greenhouses. We will stick to typical fall crops like cauliflower, carrots, radishes, onions, lettuce, and cabbage.

We did get a nice harvest of watermelon and sweet corn. The later crops where I applied the lessons I learned look really nice. God has blessed us with many good meals of sweet corn and some to store in the freezer. We thank Him for that.

An organization is paying a fellow named Julio to come a few hours a day several days a week to help in the garden. He knows which vegetables work (and when) in this area of the world. He also gives the school students gardening lessons for an hour-and-a-half each day. I hope that when the children grow up, they will remember the lessons they learned in the garden and try some gardening of their own.



'Many hands make light work' put into action doing corn.

GOD'S HAND IN DIFFICULT ISSUES FACING SLCH

by Leland Ulrich, Board Chairman

We have good news—at least for now—regarding recent stresses at SLCH.

THE PROBLEM

Local DIF (Social Service) psychologists were taking “Children’s Rights” laws out of context in their routine interviews with our children and staff. This bred a deep disrespect in the children for authority, and it reached the point of crossing the line of what SLCH was able to work with.

THE SOLUTION AND GOOD NEWS

This part of my report looks a little bit like alphabet soup, but please bear with me.

SLCH took our case to PODENA, which is a local children’s home association made up of Christian-based orphanages in Mexico. It has now become a respected association.

PODNA engaged DEMEC to deal with this type of situation. Apparently it is mostly a regional problem with local DIF offices who have taken the federal agency’s (SEPINA) intents out of context.

DEMEC is an association of attorneys organized and led by our two attorneys, Edith De SanPedro and Maria Elena. They are dedicated to protecting the rights of children’s home organizations.

PODNA and DEMEC organized an all-day conference with state and national authorities primarily from DIF, SEPINA, Redim and Consejo Consultivo.

The thrust of the meeting was to help top government officials understand the incompetence of local staff and government agencies.

The outcome of this meeting was outstanding in the following ways:

1. Top officials thanked PODENA and DEMEC for raising awareness of the problem.
2. It was noted that local staff have taken children’s rights far out of context.
3. SEPINA (the top government agency overseeing all social services) made it very clear that children’s rights are to be balanced with accountability and consequences for actions.

4. Most local DIF staff were present at this meeting.

Needless to say, they received a new perspective.

5. We think (hope) this meeting and the continued work of these NGOs (non-governmental organizations) will influence the long-term direction of DIF and our opportunities as non-government children’s homes.

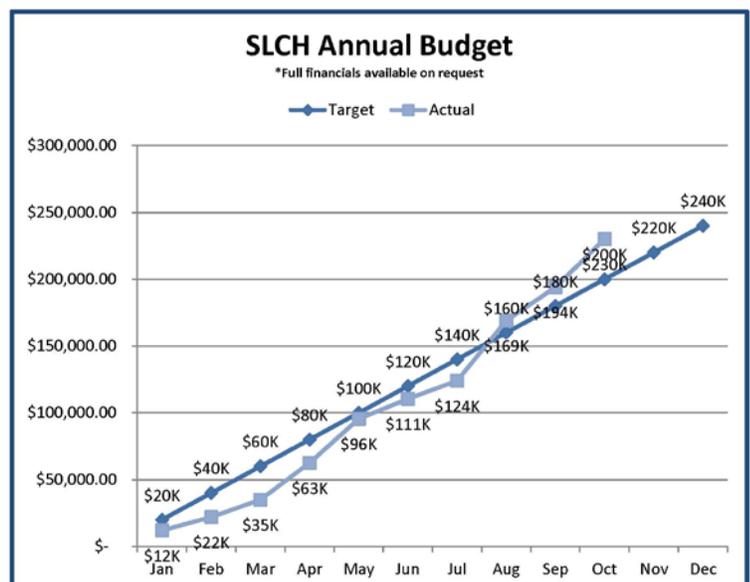
6. Over the short-term, the challenge changes little, and requires a steady hand using their language (legal).

To summarize, SLCH has been dealing with out-of-control local officials. These officials have given SLCH ultimatums that seemed impossible to overcome. With your prayers and God’s help, we see a possible way forward again. The ultimatums from the local authorities are off the table for the time being. We still have a long way to go, but with government agencies being made aware of the local problem, we are making progress. We are committed to pushing forward, and we ask for your continued prayer and support. Pray especially for Grevin as he takes the lead in communications with government officials.

What can I say? I’m amazed at God’s grace and providence.

Anyone who would like a deeper understanding of the unfolding of this issue can contact me at lelandulrich@gmail.com or call 817-822-6760.

Thank you for praying.





We were grateful for the Lopez family's two month stay. May the Lord bless Fernando, Roxana, and Caleb for their service here. Also a big thank you to Noemi for her year of service here.

SHORT-TERM STAFF REPORT

by *Fernando Lopez*

I do not know exactly how the trip was planned, but due to Noemi's health we left later than the day we had originally planned. Finally we arrived and it was the exact moment when the Home was going through difficulties.

God knew everything and He worked it out that we came when we did. He gave us the opportunity to help in those moments of extra stress. The boys were quite difficult to care for as they were behaving wrongly, making it hard for their caretakers. While I was there, I spoke to them personally about their condition with God.

Another miracle on this trip happened when Brother Greivin sent us to receive the police report. The officials did not want to give it to us, but God helped us and we were able to get it—real proof that our stay was meant to be.

We also helped with milking the cows, making cheese, and helping to fix up the drawers in many of the dressers. We also did some fun activities with the boys.

For us as the Lopez Araya family it was a pleasure to be with the boys at Shining Light. May God continue to bless the work in Mexico.

WORKING IN THE FIELD

by *Antonio Cervantes*

Jesus said, "The sower went forth to sow." We left Tecate with the vision of sowing the seed with the children at Shining Light and with whoever else God would lead us to. With clear guidance from God, we hoped to work with different activities such as recreation and devotionals. We also wanted to become educated on how to be more professional in our work in order to please the government.

The time has flown by rapidly. Now after two years watching our daughter grow up around the company of the other children, we are glad to see her interest in this ministry as well. The Bible says that Abraham was blessed in all his generation. We are like Abraham with our own daughter and the other children. Thank you all for your gifts, help, and prayers, and all the ways God has blessed us through you.

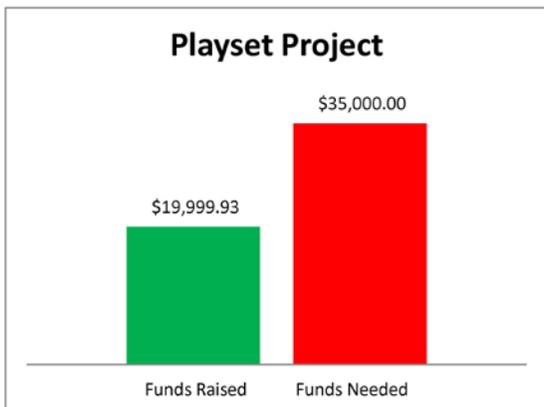
Yes, God asks us to work, and we are doing that work. We don't know how long God has for us in this project. Our work here is to provide a nice place, and make our gentleness known before all men (Philippians 4:5). We have designed systems of proper hygiene, eating habits, work lists, and most importantly, how to share the faith with everyone. We also work with the staff, overseeing their diligent labors, and ensuring none of them feel overworked. In Christ's name we share the ability to know, understand, and continue in the great work of the Lord.

A Sunday afternoon hike up the mountain in Tecate that ended shortly after starting. We were on private land and were told to leave.



A neighbor brought over Pinto, a horse the Children's home used to own, for the children to ride. Here Rachel helps Myriam enjoy a ride!

Playset Project



Susana and Evelin clean the cobs ready to cook.



Keyla Villalobos enjoys a fresh cob of sweet corn. Yummm!



Keyla with Her Papa Greivin enjoying the fiesta at Miracle Ranch. {another Children's Home}

Angel and Sandra playing in the corn patch.



Mangos, a blessing for months to come...



Miguel, 9 enjoys the party to its fullest!



A birthday party adventure at Miracle ranch. Cotton candy machine

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WELCOME WILKON!

Wilkon Rohrer from Minnesota came in October to help care for the older boys.



WELCOME MICAH!

Welcome Micah Lang from Wisconsin. He came in August to take care of the boys.



FAREWELL MELODY

Melody Mast, from Ohio was here for 6 weeks. We are grateful for here willingness to come fill the spot awhile that Grace left vacant.