

# News of the Niños

IN THIS ISSUE: IT WASN'T ABOUT ME | BITTER/SWEET DAWN OF A NEW DAY

## It Wasn't About Me.

My family's journey as sponsors is probably one of the most humbling, eye-opening, and impactful experiences of my life. In 2001, I didn't go to Honduras because I felt God calling me, nor had I been contemplating a mission trip to serve others for God—instead, **I was invited by a friend because I speak some Spanish.**

**I had no idea how pampered my life in Chicago was until I stayed at Hotel Quan**, in a room without air conditioning, cockroaches walking under the door, and lying awake on threadbare sheets, listening to what sounded like gunshots during the middle of the night. I was more focused on my comforts than being the hands and feet of Christ. He tugged at my heart to tell me this wasn't about me, but about his children who are abandoned, alone, and hurting.

On my first day at the Hogar, my then 14-year old daughter and I met Maria,\* a beautiful nine-year old girl. **It was Maria's first day at the orphanage too.** She had been dropped off at the Hogar by an aunt who felt it was safer for Maria to live at the Hogar than with the aunt and cousins. Living with her mother wasn't an option.

*\*name changed for privacy*

We spent most of our time playing with this sweet, quiet girl. When we left at the end of our stay, she was heartbroken. She didn't realize we were not part of the Hogar—**we were another family that abandoned her.**

**We became Maria's sponsors in 2001.** For me, I accepted the role of Godmother and felt it was my duty to teach her about God, that God loves her, and pray for her relationship with God. I promised God to love this precious child, no matter where she was or what she was doing.

Over the next several years, our visits with Maria were less than receptive. **She was shy around us, missed her family terribly,** and didn't want to live at the Hogar.

"I  
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Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them,  
for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Mark 10:14

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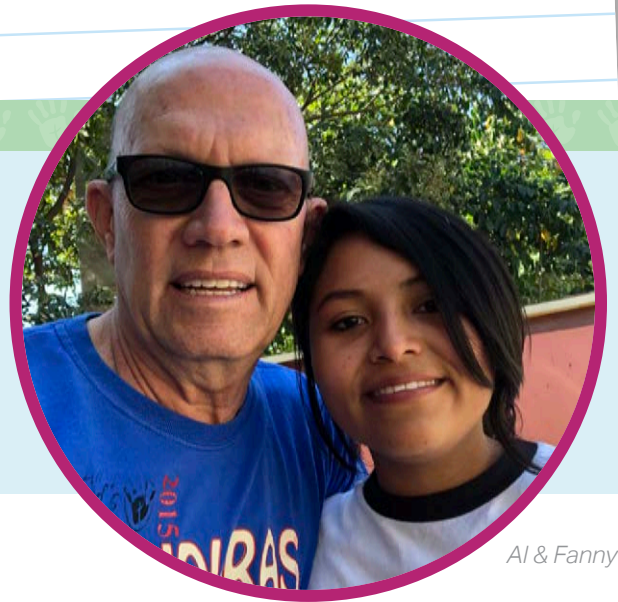
Dear Friends and Supporters of AGC,

As we work our way into 2019, we once again thank you for your generous support that touches All God's Children.

In this time of change, God continues to do great things in Honduras. Please pray for those who work at the Hogars, so that they can serve with Christlike love, devotion, and wisdom to guide our children and youth.

Your generosity and dedication does not go unnoticed. May God continue to give us all a passion to impact the lives of the children in Honduras.

- Al Heerma



Al & Fanny

## Adjusting to Life

Fanny recently left the Hogar. All God's Children Honduras is helping Fanny get into cooking school and adjust to life outside the Hogar.



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# The Bitter/Sweet Dawn of a New Day

By Randy Wittig, AGC Consultant in Honduras

**A bitter/sweet new day has dawned in Honduras and for the Hogars (Homes) supported by All God's Children.** The government of Honduras, through the Department of Children's Service (DINAF), has begun implementing best practices based on world standards. Many of the children at our Hogars are true orphans in that they literally do not have any living blood relatives. Some children have relatives in Honduras, but for a myriad of reasons, have been placed in a Home. The DINAF policy change directly affects the children with living relatives.

Children with living relatives may have been placed in an Homes due to negligence, abuse, or a parent being involved in crime. Once placed in a Home for their protection, DINAF seldom returned children to their family home even if their abuser received a long prison sentence or if the cause of them being removed had changed. **Some children were removed from loving family homes due to extreme poverty instead of the family receiving help to climb out of poverty.** When children were taken from one part of the country and placed hours away, they lost contact with their family and community of origin.

**Thankfully, some of these problematic policies are changing.** In the past 12 months, 46 children have left the AGC Hogars. Many have been returned to their relatives by DINAF after a "home study" at the child's home of origin. A few have been placed in Homes close to their families. And some, who are now over 18, have decided to live on their own.

**We've seen the excitement and sadness in the faces of many of the children when told that they are going back home.** Excitement because they have relatives they love and want to be with. Sadness as many have become close to their "brothers and sisters" in the Hogar and the "aunts and uncles" that have taken care of them.

One little girl that left to return to her family, often came to my office to visit for a few minutes. I had met her mom recently and she is a very kind person, but deaf. This little girl asked me to print out pictures of all her friendships the Hogar and a picture of Mercedes and myself. **She was very excited that she and her sister were able to go home, but wanted to remember the friends she had made.**

*"He ensures that widows and orphans receive justice."*

Deuteronomy 10:18



Arvil, Miriam and children from Hogar de Amor

## What does this change mean for All God's Children in Honduras?

Even with the government restructuring, we currently have about 300 children in our care and we continue to receive new children. We will continue to pour our time, energy and resources into the children in our care.

## What does this change mean for the children no longer in our care?

We rejoice with many of the children who have been returned to their relatives. We are excited about the opportunities we now have to explore ideas and strategies to come alongside them and their families, to help them become all that they should be.

***Please pray with us as we work to be His hands and feet.***

Another girl came to thank us, stating that she was so **grateful for having received friendship, good food, clothes and a good education** which she had never experienced previously. She was so happy to be able to return to relatives, whom she loves and they love her.

## It is very hard to see some of these boys and girls leave.

They have become a deep part of our lives and yours. We have prayed for them, hugged them, listened to them, cried together and taught them. Now they are leaving. The sweet part is that many of them have been reunited with family that deeply loves them and will be able to provide many things for them that a family the size of the Hogar can never give them. For some, a great injustice has been corrected. We are glad that we were able to provide safe and loving respite for those children until they could rejoin with loving family members.

**God instituted the family and His marvelous design is still the best for the nurturing of children.** Yes, due to sin in the world, sometimes the family goes through times that are difficult or completely wrong and children need to be in a new home, but when it is possible for them to return to their true family it is usually the best. ■

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# It Wasn't About Me. Continued from cover page

**She spent more time avoiding us than with us.** Loved and cherished by Mama Carmen, Al, and many others, Maria was unhappy and ran away – not once but three times. The law in Honduras is very strict on how orphanages can handle runaways. After many turbulent years, Maria was no longer allowed to live at the Hogar. It was difficult to remain in contact but I managed to get word to her that I would never forget her and that I was her Godmother for life.

When she was about 18, I received word that Maria had moved to Tegucigalpa and was selling food from a stand on the street. Then I heard she had a baby. **Once in a great while, Maria would get word that I had asked about her.** My prayers conveyed my disappointment in not knowing exactly where she was or how she was providing for herself and her baby, asking for His protection of her and to allow me to see her again someday.

During a long season of prayer for this precious child who was abandoned by her mother, and her aunt, God intervened. Twice, I received a Facebook message that said: "This is Maria." I didn't know who it was from. It took a few

months and others contacting me on her behalf to finally realize it was my long-lost Goddaughter reaching out to me. My prayers were answered – all would be well! Well, not really.

I found myself pulled into Maria's tumultuous life with her child and marido (word used for husband when there is no marriage).

**At times, she would tell me that I was the only one who loved her.** At other times, Maria missed her mother so badly that she was overcome with sadness. There were times I had to talk to her marido about his behavior and other times I counseled her about her option—all with the support of Al and Mama Carmen.

**We've maintained communication, opening our lives to each other. In 2016,**

Maria and I saw each other for the first time in 12 years! I met her marido and her two children. She is a fabulous, loving mother, even without knowing the love of her own mother. When I saw her in 2018, Maria and her marido were willing to share many details of their lives and listen to my hopes for their family. I have a better understanding of the difficulties they face and how hard they work to provide for their children. I truly enjoy spending time with Maria and her family. She told me this year that she finally believes I love her. ■



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