

## DESERT BLOOMS

March 2013

Usually when we write about our “angels” we are referring to the children of Santo Niño who now intercede for us from God’s arms in heaven. But late last summer a visitor arrived who is an angel and has become an indispensable member of our team.

Cristina and her husband Juan Carlos have been collaborators with Fr. Bill for years in the land struggle of the people living in Lomas de Poleo. When Cristina was diagnosed with breast cancer last summer, Fr. Bill suggested a visit to the center which has a healing atmosphere all its own. We were delighted to meet Cristina and to offer a brief therapy session before she went to Chihuahua City for her first surgery.

Cristina was moved by her encounter with the children and their mothers. She began to visit the center as she recovered from surgery and waited to start her chemotherapy. Little by little, with great sensitivity and respect, she began to offer suggestions to improve our services. She bought some educational toys and as she realized how few



appropriate resources are available to work with our children, she created incredible instructional games, worksheets, and story boards. One cannot imagine the amount of laminating materials, Vel-cro, and various plastic bottles, pull-tabs, egg cartons and other recycled items she uses. She brings paints and Play-doh and other things we would never dream of trying with our kids!

Teachers and therapists are familiar with individualized plans for children with special needs. Cristina is developing those for each

child, working with the mother as primary therapist. She is always seeking ways to improve the quality of life and expand opportunities to experience the world around them. Observing the need for attention among the siblings, she suggested that



our next step should be to work with family groups, integrating the siblings into the plan of therapy for each child.

We have two children, Miriam and Nena, who have a major autistic component to their condition and Cristina wondered how we can create a more therapeutic environment for them in the center. She offered a workshop on autism for the mothers but was barely able to scratch the surface of the topic. To be continued! We are hoping once a month on a Saturday she can offer these helpful sessions.

Meanwhile, every three weeks Cristina travels three hours to Chihuahua for her chemotherapy. She uses her “down time” to create more materials for the children and emails suggestions for working with each one. Cristina asked if we could celebrate Miriam’s birthday when she returns from her next treatment. It’s part of the process of educating about autism and creating a small therapeutic community atmosphere for her at Santo Niño. We will have much to celebrate on April 2, World Autism Day, now Miriam’s birthday, and Cristina’s return to the place she calls “our little piece of the kingdom of God”.

