

DESERT BLOOMS

April 2016

Springtime at Santo Niño brings the celebration of “Día de los Niños” (April 30) and Mothers Day (May 10). This year the season of new growth has brought some renovations inside and outside of the center. It seems difficult to believe that our building is about fifteen years old. Actually it’s hard to say exactly because it arose in sections as we gradually displaced Columban Fr. Bill Morton from his house, adding rooms using straw bale and earth-rammed tire construction techniques. The exterior of the building is a type of stucco and after years of desert heat and wind there were areas where the straw was showing through. Martin, our neighborhood handyman, has almost finished resurfacing the damaged areas and it looks like we’re ready for at least another fifteen years! He’s also building a cement block retaining wall in the playground area that will add security and help keep the area free of blowing debris.

Meanwhile, we had a Reiki training at the center this month for Maria, Cristina, Liliana, Conchita, Griselda, Kati, Alejandra and Michele (Monce’s sisters), Alejandra (Nena’s sister), and Thali (Neftali’s sister). This is the first training we have offered to siblings (*hermanas especiales*) and also the first time one of our special children, Conchita, participated. Reiki is one of the alternative therapies we have used at Santo Niño from the beginning. Almost all of our mothers are now able



to use this healing energy work with their children and now we have launched a new generation.

For some years we have been wondering and dreaming about what we could do at Santo Niño to provide a more

structured special education program for our children. We know from experience that the public schools (and even the rare private school) in Anapra have very limited resources for special children like Reyna and Yadira (Down’s Syndrome), Beto and Jesus (mild autism?), Isaura and Monce (cerebral palsy). The school that is available for severely handicapped children offers socialization and physical activities but has no capacity for working with learning disabilities. A child who is “slow” just gets slower and eventually is left behind.

As we are seeing the benefits of the program of neuro-movement lessons that Sister Carol is using with our children, we believe that we can work more effectively with them in the center. Cristina, Liliana and Denise are our “pilot teacher team” to try to set up an *escuelita* (little school) within the center. Sister Peggy cleaned and reorganized the old exam room so that it can be a small classroom. It is almost the only “private” place in the center (except for the bathroom!) so we can minimize distractions and noise that set-off our hyper-sensitive kids. The old waiting area will provide a space for learning with more physical activity.

We are taking baby steps with this *escuelita*, starting with what we already know and have on hand. We are making some contacts with special education teachers-in-training at the university as well as the local kindergarten teachers who have expressed interest since working with Reyna and Sister Carol. God only knows where it will lead but we feel that we need to do something more for the children entrusted to us. We sense that Providence taking us by the hand.

All is in readiness for our Día de los Niños celebration tomorrow. Two piñatas, hot dogs, charro beans, a huge cake, LOTS of candy and even a balloon-twisting CLOWN are in store for the child in all of us. Don’t you wish you could join us?

