

***Desert Blooms***  
***December 2006***

Dear Sisters,

On Saturday December 16 we held the first Santo Niño Fiesta Navideña (Christmas Party!) For almost two weeks every car or van of ours that was going across the border carried bags of toys, clothing, toiletries, and food. Radford Elementary School had collected hundreds of gifts that were so beautifully wrapped---but we had to un-wrap every one to distribute them evenly among the 23 families of our special children. We prayed at each border crossing that the green “Pase” light would usher our obviously gift-laden vehicles through customs without inspection. Never once did we get the red light!

Kirstin bought large laundry baskets for us to divide the presents and then repackage them in the gift bags with bright tissue paper. With your December donation Janet bought pork roasts, red chile, and Bueno-brand frozen posole (thank you, S. Adele Baca and Family!) to use for soup or tamales. Other benefactors, in lieu of buying gifts for each other, donated enough money for each family to receive \$200!

Peggy orchestrated the logistics of picking up the children and their families so that we could begin the celebration at 11 a.m. She and Siba went to Anapra at 7:30 to get three of the children we knew would need to be bathed and fed before the party. Carol and Kirstin each had a route to bring families from the other side of the city. Ann and Janet made the local trips in Anapra, in between tending to the pregnant women and sick children who arrived before 11. St. Mark parish in El Paso had promised to bring pizza, drinks, cake and piñatas around 11:30. We held our breath that there would be no “glitches”!

Our bright new therapy room was quite a sight with the children on mats, in wheelchairs and high chairs or sitting with family members or volunteers. We began with a blessing of each child, carrying the Santo Niño to each in turn and offering a prayer for healing. The group from St. Mark’s led us in song and it was marvelous to see the children’s reactions to the music. Then they brought in the pizzas: box after box of “Little Caesar’s” along with juices and nachos! Our children who need pureed food were treated to a special chicken noodle soup, applesauce and chocolate pudding. Parents and volunteers made sure that everyone had their fill.

The piñata was hoisted on a rope outside the clinic and a line of eager children formed to take a turn at bashing the brightly colored ornament. Even the special children took a turn at bat while Polaroid photos captured the action for the parents. In addition to the candies that tumbled from the broken piñata there were red felt stockings full of sweets for every child (and adult!). By 2 p.m. we started the return trips, each family carrying a basket of gifts and food. Tired children were still excited at the prospect of what was in those packages! And we were exhausted but satisfied with our first Christmas party for our special children and their families.