

*Desert Blooms*  
*September 2007*

Dear Sisters and Friends,

It was so good to have Sisters Carol and Flo with us for a few clinic days last month but now we're back to our small team, ever reliant on our volunteers new and old as well as the mothers who work with their children at each visit. This month we've had some growing pains. In addition to the children with special needs, many siblings and other friends have come along for the fun. We've asked some of our volunteers to keep them occupied with games and crafts but the noise and commotion have escalated to the point where, as Cristina said last Saturday, "It looks more like a picnic than a clinic!"

We've needed to remind ourselves of our focus: children with special needs and their caregivers. Older siblings and friends will need to remain at home. Because the needs are so overwhelming in every area of our children's lives, we have also needed to prioritize needs we can try to meet: therapies in the clinic, medications, assistance with specialty consultation, and occasionally hospital or diagnostic test expenses. Last Saturday after lunch we had a general meeting with the parents to discuss our history and to clarify what we are able to provide. Their response was very positive and revealed the depth of their commitment to their children's progress and their gratitude for the care and the hope that we offer at Santo Nino. We will have a little "orientation" at the first visit for each child and caregiver to explain these basic concepts.

Hopefully with a little less chaos in the clinic there will be opportunities to work more closely with the mothers to continue to build a sense of community. Kirstin and Waleska, volunteers who live with us at Casa de Caridad, are willing to coordinate that effort. When Sister Carol returns in October she will be spending more time at the clinic and hopes to offer classes in therapies the mothers can provide at home between visits.

As the van was loading after the lunchtime meeting there was a flurry of concern. "Nena", Lucy's daughter, was having a seizure of sorts. Sister Janet carried the six year old into the exam room where they waited for the crisis to pass. Her younger sister Alejandra looked on fearfully as her sister lay on the exam table. Thankfully it was just a few minutes until Nena sat up and looked around, oblivious to what had happened. Alejandra threw her arms around her sister's neck and cried, "NENA!!!" Always shy and mostly nonverbal, Nena shrugged her off and let her mother lead her to the van. Alejandra followed behind. The little siblings of our children with special needs have needs of their own. We try to provide a space for them, too.

Please continue to pray for all of us as we grow into the healing community that God dreams for us to be: Sisters and volunteers and mothers and other caregivers centered on the special children placed in our midst. They are Jesus to us.