

## DESERT BLOOMS

February-March 2015

Santo Niño is about community: a community of love and support with the special children at the heart of it all. Last month we had a meeting to discuss what we would do during the almost two weeks that the Sisters would be at a meeting at the Motherhouse in Cincinnati. Should we all just take a break and return on March 10? Would the mothers be able to manage everything on their own? What was the will of the group?

Sofia spoke first. "We say that we are the primary therapists and that this is our center, so we should be able to continue whether or not the Sisters are here. That's what I think, but let's hear from everyone!" Sandra jumped right into the conversation. "I just hate it when we don't have clinic. I don't know what I would have done without you during the past few months when I was having so much trouble with my oldest daughter." She began to cry as she said, "You all are my sisters!"

One after another the women expressed their appreciation for each other and for the space that Santo Niño provides them to work with their children. The decision was made to continue on a regular schedule during the Sisters' absence. Next they jumped into the planning phase. They talked about the noonday meal and the transportation. They decided to have not one but two "spa" days, one on a Thursday and another on a Saturday. "Spa-napra" is when the mothers take turns in the Jacuzzi and then give each other the massage and treatments usually reserved for the children. They do each other's hair and nails, play music and games, share favorite foods. Sometimes there's

an art project like the crowns each was presented when they finished the Saturday spa.

Community creates an environment of healing for the special children, their mothers and their siblings. It is not easy or automatic. Each of us brings our personal struggles and brokenness so we have to work at growing trust and self-knowledge, among other things. But there is a foundation of understanding and empathy that comes with the blessing and challenge of raising a special child. That experience is the glue that holds us together.

We also take time to celebrate- as is apparent to anyone who reads Desert Blooms regularly! In a world full of violence where there is so much despair, we need to remember the special events like birthdays and graduations and new babies. These are the most important benchmarks that keep hope alive in us.

Cristina, mother of "Chuy" (aka Jesús) and Andrea, is due to deliver a baby girl close to May 10, Mother's Day in Mexico. Last month she posted this photo on our Facebook page with a caption that is too wonderful not to pass along: "I feel more beautiful than ever. How lovely it is to give life! Thank God!" Amen!

