

DESERT BLOOMS

July 2014

School lets out at the end of June in Anapra which means that graduations and parties extend well into July. Such was the case for Sandra's daughters, Conchita and Lupe. Conchita has been coming to Santo Niño since she was about four years old. She has cerebral palsy and a spinal cord defect. Now she has graduated from the primary grades and will begin middle school in September. As Sandra told us today, when Conchita walked up to receive her diploma, the entire crowd was cheering. "It was like you see on television at the end of an opera. Everyone was clapping and calling out, Bravo!"

Two weeks earlier, Conchita's older sister, Lupe, graduated from middle school. At that commencement, Sandra was astounded to hear her daughter's name called for one award after the next. The headmaster told her later that he has never had a student receive so many "recognitions". Lupe is registered for high school, something that her mother never imagined for herself. Sandra said, "I asked Lupe, 'What do you want to study? What do you want to become?' She told me something with computer information that I don't understand at all- but as long as she is happy it's fine with me."



Sandra, Lupe and Conchita on graduation day

Many children never finish the primary grades in Mexico. In our neighborhood of Anapra the cost of enrollment and all the supplies, not to mention the many "extras" that are required, make public education almost a luxury. Often the parent or parents have not finished school and do not encourage their children to attend. The extreme poverty of the home, even with both parents working at one of the factories in Juarez, does not provide an environment conducive to study.

Across the street from the Santo Niño Project is an after-school program, supported by benefactors of the Columban Missionaries, administered by Cristina Estrada when she is not otherwise occupied with our special kids. Hundreds come to the center every day to have a place to do their homework. Our children and their sisters and brothers also benefit from the support of the afterschool program. This summer during vacation, Cristina is offering a morning story hour followed by lunch. Nearly 100 children from the neighborhood are attending.

The "love bus" is in Mexico! We were so excited to be able to import it without problems but of course there's always something...First, we had to make higher clearance in Cristina's gate where the bus will be kept. And we need to get a bus driver's license for Sofia before we can use it. And the bus driver license bureau is on summer vacation until August 2. Patience!!!