

While we continue to help the shelters for children and continue our free meals at the cafeterias and other projects, we are seeing more and more children with medical problems.



We remain confident that providing meals to hungry children at our schools is critical. No longer are little children fainting at these schools because they are hungry and none of the children are 'too hungry to concentrate'. It remains our hope that new sponsors will join us so that we may expand the program to feed more children. For \$25, a child receives a nutritious meal every school day for the entire year! Parents of the children at the school cook the meals, clean the cafeteria and inventory the food. They arrive at 5 a.m. to begin their day. Teachers supervise the children, identify building repair issues and work with the volunteers to inventory and inspect the food. The state of Coahuila subsidizes the cost of ingredients and provides them at a cost of 10 cents a meal. **We are all in this together** and the parents, teachers and children constantly express their gratitude to us,

Our summer repairs to shelters in Acuña are near completion. We helped with repairs, plumbing issues and fresh paint. The children are all healthy and doing fine.

Visits to families in their homes, visits at shelters and visits at schools resulted in many questions about our effort to create an Acuña group to help children with Down syndrome and other special needs. One mother spent three hours traveling by bus to attend last night's meeting.

### Special Families



This year, Special Families is a program of Paper Houses Across the Border. Like our free meals/cafeteria program, we are working with Mexican volunteers and community leaders to provide help to children with Down syndrome and similar long-term problems that require more than immediate medical help.

As last night's meeting over 50 families gathered to hear about the National Down Syndrome Congress and the conference that was held in San Antonio. Three representatives of this group were given scholarships to attend the conference. Last night, materials were distributed to the people and they heard brief presentations from their three representatives. The families were excited about the contacts made and about the



Parents continue to arrive with situations requiring immediate help and Paper Houses Across the Border welcomes the opportunity to meet and help these parents and their children. Many come because their children were diagnosed with Down syndrome, meningitis, multiple sclerosis (like the little angel in this photo) and we still see little Guadalupe – who was blind since birth.

One lady traveled 300-miles to ask for help. Her baby requires medication that costs

\$40 per week. The family income is \$57 per week. Without the medication, the baby will die. We immediately purchased a month's worth of medication and ordered an exam and second opinion to confirm the medical condition and options. The mother held her infant as tears rolled down her cheeks.

She struggled for words to express her thanks.



Sadly, Guadalupe, the little blind girl (that so many people on mission trips with us met), and her mother approached me last night. Two weeks ago we provided bus tickets to Monterrey and paid for a final exam to determine if there was any possibility for the child to at least regain some sight. As Guadalupe's mother approached, she held her hand up. Her fist was clenched around the hospital report. She began crying as I took the papers from her hand. She said, "My little Guadalupe will always be blind."

Guadalupe clutched a stuffed animal and swayed side to side. Her mother looked as if she was about to collapse. She said, "I always kept hoping something would change. Now I have no hope and do not know what is to become of my daughter." I looked at Roberto, who was translating the hospital report and listening to the mother. He wiped away his own tears and said, "This is so hard. So hard." I told Roberto, who is a very active volunteer and a key player in organizing the people with Down syndrome that this is a common situation. Sometimes all that we can do is hug the parents and child. Tomorrow we will figure out how to improve their lives.

It then struck me again that Guadalupe's mother was old. The first time we met, I thought she was the child's grandmother. There is no real family and few friends. What will become of this little blind girl when her mother passes away?

For right now, we will return to the house and try to figure out the best life we can make for this child and her mother. We are contacting Mexican charities and places that work with the blind. Although we cannot always find a medical solution, we can try to help a child to have the best life possible. A few moments later the mother regained her composure and expressed thanks for our help. I gave her a final hug and turned to see four more mothers waiting to speak with me. Each held a small child. Down syndrome, meningitis, multiple sclerosis and cancer are not just words when parents hand you their child and explain their diagnosis. Each of those horrible words has a face and it is the face of a child.

Most of the children are being seen at hospitals in Acuña and Monterrey today. I wish you could have been with me last night. Today, I feel worthwhile. Today, I glance at photos of my grandchildren and recall the faces of the children I saw last night. Now I must roll up my sleeves and start gathering more money to help more children. More than any other task, I hate asking for money. Today it will not be too difficult to try.

As I type these words and try to convey the situation of the fifty children at last night's meeting, I became conscious of a blessing that I take for granted: the ability to walk-away. Several times I have walked away from my computer to regain control of my emotions. The ability to 'walk away' and move past my emotions is a blessing.