

## Hands On Hope humanitarian service trip to Mexico 2018

A thundering thank you, for your contribution to the effort that hopes to bless lives and the small LDS branch in San Quintin, Mexico. They, and we are so grateful to you. You are part of what makes it all possible! Your donations meant that you were part of stepping in for Santa, and becoming the helping hands of God for so many families during December of 2018.

Here are some thoughts written by one of our service team members, Julia, about spending Christmas away.

*"We vetoed our traditional Christmas this year. Didn't decorate. Didn't send paper cards. Didn't buy a battalion gifts. Didn't dread November and hate*



*December. A few weeks ago I screenshotted these quotes from The Small Seed: "Look for Christ and you will find Him. And with Him, everything else." [C.S. Lewis]*

*'We love this season. We love Him. We promise if you're struggling to find that spirit of Christ, you simply need to find Him, and you'll find the true spirit of Christmas there, too.' [The Small Seed] And for so many reasons this Christmas was the best decision!"*

Before I get into all the wonderful parts of what made the trip so incredible, we want to dedicate this years trip to our beloved friend, and former service team leader, Karen Heiss. For those who are unfamiliar, Karen passed away peacefully on 9 November 2018 after a week-long battle with sepsis. She used to bustle around all year preparing for the Christmas trip by gathering spanish children's books, hygiene items and anticipation. While serving in Mexico, she was a force to be reckoned with, as she brought smiles and love to her friends there. Even while she endured physical pain, she would light up the room with her willingness and love for others. Truly an amazing

example. This year as we were doing all the things she loved, we thought of her often. We reminisced about her as we ate in Karen's favorite taco shop, Taqueria Bryanna.



We couldn't believe it when we passed this neighborhood market named, 'Karen'.



One branch member said all the kids will miss her, she used to try to be sneaky and give them candy during sacrament meeting. Ha. Sounds like Karen.

This year, like most years, the little miracles started to happen early. One of the first blessings happened when we were talking to one of the families who came with us as part of the service team. Through his work, he had over 170 kids backpacks, and he was willing to donate them. Wow. This made a huge difference as those who provided gifts for Mexican families could put everything for one child, in a backpack for them. The wrapping became a gift as well. It facilitated better organization and packing here and in Mexico. It cut our gift wrapping time in half. Thank you Ryan!



Nichole, a dear friend of ours was in touch with Tiny Tim's Foundation for Kids. This organization makes wooden toy cars for children all over the world, and is built around the dream of bringing a smile to as many children's faces as possible. They said they would be happy to donate some toys for our trip. When they called the next week to tell



us to come and pick them up, they said to bring a truck because they had 1,000 toy cars for us. What?! That's amazing! We were thrilled to know we were going to be able to see that many smiles. Here is a picture of one of the best smiles.

One missionary got a miracle this Christmas. One of the families in Mexico consists is Sister Luisa Vera Pedro. Luisa is a widow that has cared for her family alone for years and has raised some amazing faithful children. Her only son just got his mission call to serve in Brazil. Avelino and his mom had just spent all of their money to get him his passport, pay visa fees and get the expensive shots that he needed. They had expressed concern to the branch president that they didn't have money to get him clothes, or the required items to take with him. Others in the branch were scrambling to try to find used clothes they could share with him. Meanwhile, the family in Utah that was busy shopping for gifts for him, got him white shirts, pants, etc. Another family jumped in and added more clothing, and collected money enough for him to get shoes. Missionary Mall was even kind enough to provide a raincoat for him. It was all just in time as he left for the MTC the first week of Jan, fully equipped for service. Yes, that is the family pet pig "Zeus" checking out the gifts.



Here's a fun one. Our contact in San Quintin messaged to say that for the first time they had older members who all they wanted was adult diapers. Seems like a funny request for Christmas gifts, but she explained that since they cost so much, most will hang them to dry and reuse them if they aren't soiled. THE NEXT DAY, we got a call from a neighbor

who works at a care center, asking if we needed adult diapers for Mexico. She said she had 9 boxes and would bring them over. My goodness, needs were being filled and it seemed we weren't even trying. Then another group of donors from a neighborhood group donated



funds which were used to purchase other sizes of adult diapers that were different from the boxes of donations. We left a supply to last months and months for those in need. Some of these were for a mother of 11 children, 4 of them were disabled. It sounds strange, but the gift of adult diapers brought her to tears.



As the service team met the morning of Dec 21st, ready to cross the border, everyone asked, “what did we forget?”, and “who’s more excited than everyone else?” We were armed with passports, pesos, and passion, and we were on our way. Motorhomes, cars and vans were loaded to the hilt with the goods that the donors provided. A thank you to each of you donors for being part of this effort. Thank you as well, to the service team members who traveled to Mexico: The Perkins family, the Clark family, the Hendron family, the Wells family, the Roberts family, Steve and Steen Nielsen, and Megan Jackson.



The border crossing went smoothly....oh except that one of the vans was x-rayed twice till they found the offending item we were trying to smuggle into Mexico. 5 Hot Wheels cars set off the alarms on the x-ray, because they were all bunched together and looked like bullets. They let us keep the cars and sent us on our way. Here’s a picture of our caravan of 3 motorhomes, 4 cars, and 2 vans.

We arrived in San Quintin, at just about dark, and had some time to get settled in the hotel, and campground before the ward Christmas party. We had been asked ahead of time if we would participate in the Christmas program talent show along with the branch members. We also had a food assignment to bring, dessert :) Our cookies went well with their tamales. It felt like we were part of the branch, friends getting together with friends and celebrating the joy and fun and love of the Savior at Christmas.

The children's nativity did not disappoint, the talent show was delightful, the meal was delicious, the visiting (sometimes with translators) was warm and inviting, we boogied with them at the dance party after the food, and then broke for pinatas and youth games in the parking lot.



Megan Jackson played her guitar and sang beautifully



The relief society danced a number with santa (the R.S. President)



Clark family wow'ed  
us all with some  
ballroom dance  
moves



YMCA song  
transcends  
language barriers  
and was a blast at  
the DANCE  
PARTY!!





I love the look on Heriberto's face as he pulls the pinata away from Cami!



Kids get past language barriers in amazing ways!



We discovered this year that the branch was created in San Quintin 10 years ago with very few members. Hermana Magui, a stalwart member, remembers meeting in someone's house. She said there was an older lady who called the mission president to try to get missionaries there. That was the start of the growth, and soon they went from being a group to being a branch. Within a couple of years their building was built. That means we started going there only 3-4 years after they were an organized branch. This work is still so new in this area and these folks are the pioneers in their own families. The next nearest LDS group/branch is 2 hours south, or 3 hours north in Ensenada.

## **Sub For Santa**

The Sub for Santa or the 'gifting project' has a number of purposes. One, of course, to bring a smile to the face of a child who wouldn't otherwise get a Christmas gift. Another is to strengthen the branch members, and remind them they are not alone in the gospel, even though they are few in their little town. We also asked the branch members and the missionaries in September, to pick less active or non-member friends and families, and start working with them so we could help them to share a message about the gospel along with some gifts when we came. 78 families including branch members and families being fellowshipped received gifts and a visit this year.

This was made possible by 4 scouts who, for their eagle projects, found families in Utah, to provide some simple gifts for the families there. These scouts (and their parents) coordinated everything from finding donor families, giving them instructions about gifts, packing, labeling, and then gathered all the gifts, etc.

Saturday we started at the church to do sorting and wrapping and to make sure no one was forgotten that needed to be on our list. A couple of families had moved in, and a couple of families had started investigating the church, and the original list of 70 families was increased by 8 new families. We simply went "shopping" through the extras that people had donated and covered the additional 8 families in fine style. It felt like a loaves and fishes moment, and we still had some left over items.





As we were working, Janelle mentioned she had felt strongly to bring 3 sewing machines with her to donate. She was sure there was someone who needed one. We asked the branch president and he was so excited to hear that we had sewing machines. The mother of one of the new families that had just moved in, was a seamstress, but didn't have a machine and were struggling to provide for their family. This sister had commented to the branch president that she knew how to make money by sewing, but raising the money to buy a machine was simply out of reach. Janelle shed a tear and knew that this woman is the one who needed it, even though just a week before this woman wasn't in San Quintin. The other 2 machines were left with the branch to check out to members as needed.

We broke into five groups and delivered these gifts Saturday and Sunday afternoon. The branch president and another member went with the Clarks to do some of their deliveries and visits. Amy wrote about the experience their family will never forget.

*“When we delivered our gifts of basic needs to the three older gentleman; the one son taking care of the 102-year-old father, and his brother. The son told of how his brother recently, I believe , was injured and something had happened with his legs but then he was able to be healed from a priesthood blessing. He himself walks kind of bow legged due to some leg injuries. The gentleman shared with us what he does with handcrafting boats and told us of how he makes them as well as cars to sell. He showed us one of the boats he had made that was awesome , and it took him a week to make . Their home was in very humble condition . Yet as we left he pulled out a box and inside of it were nine or 10 cars that he had hand made. He motioned to my kids for them to pick one. As they decided on one car and we started to leave , to our astonishment, he said “no”, he wanted each one of them take a car! So he gave away four of the cars that I’m sure he took quite a bit of time to make that would’ve made him some much needed money. I know all my kids will forever remember the generous bow legged car maker in Mexico.”*



The Serapio family are not members. We met them last year as a branch member, Karina, chose them as a family with whom she would like to share the gospel. We fell in



love with them too, they have such a content calmness about them. They are grandparents to 14 grandchildren. Their daughter and her husband were overwhelmed and dropped the kids with the grandparents about 2-3 years ago, and have not been seen since. Employers don't hire elderly, so he takes his bike and cart to the vegetable farms to

gather the leftovers, then goes door to door to try to sell it. This year only some of the kids were home when we went, but the grandma was warm and welcoming, happy to hug, and flashed the smile she always shows when we are there. She was overwhelmed by the gifts that were brought to them. The grandpa shared a personal spiritual experience and quoted scripture, thanked God and us for caring for them.





Lindsey shared, *"I had a really cool experience with this lady... so we showed up to her house with gifts and started off by singing a song, and just as we started she started to cry. The spirit flew in, and after we sang we sat down and her son gave us all drinks of pop. She told us how she has just had a lot of stress because a few weeks earlier her son got in a car accident and got a head injury and has had memory issues. She is just really concerned and felt a lot of peace that we would come and be with her and sing to her and bring gifts for her family. We shared that the peace she was feeling was from Jesus and that He loves her, and her family."*



Janelle wrote about her memorable experience and said, "My favorite was an investigator family. Beatrice was the mom. I think Lorenzo is the name of the dad. They had a young boy and a baby girl. They didn't know we were coming...the mom was so surprised to see us all at



her door. She said, "we couldn't have even hoped for something like this!" We crowded into a small 8x10 shed that they were making into their kitchen and it was my turn to give a message. In that moment, I looked at Beatrice and it was like our

hearts could talk. The shack we stood in and their poverty disappeared and it was just us two women staring at each other, both mothers trying to love and care for our children and family. I truly felt reaffirmed that we are all equal, loved, children of God."



Julia told me about this fun visit they had with the missionaries. *"We went with some branch members to visit a part member family. The 12 year old is the only member and the missionaries are currently working with his brother and sister. The 3 siblings had come to the branch Christmas party the night before at the church, where they saw Megan Jackson sing and play the guitar. Now that we were there, the older brother wanted to get out his guitar and sing for us and his whole family, so he grabbed his 12 string. He sang a love song. It was really fun to watch as he really got into it and really performed. We discovered we didn't have the right bag of gifts for this family, so we ran to the church to find it, and went back. The family had bought some orange drink to share and wanted to host our group when we returned. We enjoyed more of their company in their front room that had their bed, table, chairs, and couch. The missionaries were excited about the visit."*



One home we visited on Saturday with gifts was the home of Alicia and her 4 children. We new she was a member, but has been inactive for awhile. She spoke english, and we explained why we were there, gave her the bag of gifts for her family, had a short visit and then left. It was kind of awkward, but it was nice too. (Story continues later, keep reading)



Rachel remembers visiting with the young men's president and his wife, *"When we visited Martín and his wife I was so moved by his strength and conviction to his faith. Being an orphan since he was 7 years old, he has such a drive to stay faithful and strong so that one day he could be with his parents again. While their home was such a humble setting they were so*



*willing and open to letting us in and sharing their time, feelings and space with us. After we left their house and having sang hymns together Kate my 12 year old daughter got in the car and giggled and clapped her hands because she was experiencing something so out of the norm for us, and it felt so good to serve."*

Claudia Olivera has had her share of challenges, and keeps on ticking. She is a member, and has never shared with us her conversion story till now. Years ago, she was taking the missionary lessons, and wasn't sure if God really knew her and cared about her life. Her oldest daughter, Leti, was in an accident where her leg was horribly injured and was sent to the hospital in Ensenada. Claudia prayed for her daughter and promised that if she was healed, Claudia would be baptised. Leti did not lose her leg, as was thought, and was completely healed in close to 2 weeks. She probably had good medical care, but Claudia felt this was a special gift for her because she had



prayed. God did know her, and her family, and did care, so Claudia was baptised. In the years since then, her struggles have not stopped and she has become less active, in part because she has no car or money to ride the bus to the church. Her husband was abusive to their children and

Claudia had the courage to turn him in and he is currently in prison. She does her best to care for her children, and provide for them. Leti who is now 15 years old, has 2 of her own children, and lives in a place next door to Claudia. Brenda, the next daughter is 13



years old, has 1 child. Brenda and Jonathan are in this picture, he looks good as Santa. We aren't sure if these children are a result of abuse, but we do know these are strong women who are trying their best with what they have. We pray they all know they are loved.

Saturday evening came and Ramon got a message from Tony, the branch president, asking if our group would do the whole sacrament meeting Christmas program. Talks, any musical numbers, the works. Sure thing! We have gotten about 10 min notice in the past, so 12 hours notice was awesome. Sunday came and we had 5 people give a short talk and we had 4 musical numbers. For one of the musical numbers our whole group got up and sang Angels We Have Heard on High. There was something about what we had experienced with these people the last couple of days, and the fact we were there worshipping together, that brought the spirit so strong during that song. Ramon noticed the whole branch presidency wiping their eyes, and I too got emotional especially when I looked at friends in the branch who were crying. It was powerful and palpable. The gospel is true in all parts of the world and all languages.



After church Tony wanted to get a picture of us with the whole branch. Group photo!



After the group photo I started walking to my right to leave the stand and saw Alicia! (The woman from our gift visits) I hugged her and told her how glad I was to see her. She said she was so grateful for the gifts we had brought, and that we would take the time to stop and visit her that she made us some bread. She had it in the car and wanted to go get it for us. I walked with her to the foyer, sent one of my kids to get Rachel, and waited there for her to go to her car.

Rachel talked about this too and what happened after she came back with the bread, *"When we went and visited Alicia we didn't say much at her house she mostly just stared at us kind of confused, but I noticed something in her eyes and the only way I could describe it would have been that her soul seemed hungry. The next day she showed up late to church (where she seldom visits) she was late because she was baking a sheet cake size tray of banana bread. These people are so incredibly generous! She visited with my sister Jenni and I for a long while and we were able to share in the joy of Jesus Christ and connect with each other on a deeper level and I feel that Jenni and I were able to share our feelings and love for her and her kids, and share a message of hope for her during this difficult trial she is going through. In turn, she cried and opened up about some spiritual experiences she's had with prayer, and it was so hard to end the conversation because of the love that was present!"*

A branch member walked by and knew Alicia, so we all visited for a few more minutes, then said our goodbyes.



Just when we wonder who will be touched by taking Christmas gifts, we find Alicia.



Monday...Christmas Eve....**Food Drive day!** Shopping at the local market for the food and goods we needed was the first item on the agenda. The work of gathering everything we needed was fun and wacky and busy. This is where the most of the money donations from you donors were used. Below is a some of what was purchased:

Rice	198	Pounds
Beans	198	Pounds
Flour	132	Pounds
Sugar	132	Pounds
Corn Flour	198	Pounds
Powdered Milk	66	Pounds
Salt	66	Pounds
Cooking Oil	90	Liter bottles
Oranges	150	Pounds
Potato	132	Pounds
Animal Cookies	30	Bag large
Canned Corn	120	Cans
Broom	30	brooms
Bucket	30	buckets
Laundry soap	60	Kilo bags
Dish Soap	60	Liter Bottles
Sponges	30	packages
Hand Soap	150	bares
Sugar Cane	30	Stalks











Once we had checked out, and paid for everything, we loaded everything in the vans, and we were off to the campground to sort all the food into 30 piles, one for each family who would receive it.



Here is a sample of what each of the 30 families received for the food drive.

(Corby not included)

The sugar cane is a holiday treat. It's used in the making their traditional christmas drink called "Ponche". It's somewhat like wassil, that has a mixture of fruit cocktail, and there are even hibiscus flower buds in the drink for flavor.





Pack it, divide into groups and deliver it.



Delivering it, is more than just dropping it off. We talked before we all left about what to expect. After we said a group prayer, we were going to drive to a neighborhood named Paraiso, or Paradise. Ironical because it's far from Paradise. This is probably the most needy part of town. Each group would take a different part of town, and drive slowly up and down the streets, looking for homes that they thought could use some food. Not always, but we usually look for evidence of children... small clothes hanging to dry, or kids playing outside. Each person in the car tries to follow the spirit and gets to choose a home. These people don't know we are coming, and it's a fun surprise. One person, a Spanish speaker, approaches the fence, and asks to talk to a parent. Once we get an adult, we ask them if they could use some food, because we have a Christmas gift for them. We ask if we could bring it in for them. They usually say yes, and our group carries the food in for the family.



Once we have made the food delivery to their home or yard, we take that opportunity to ask them about their family, their lives, or anything they want to share. Before we leave, we give them a small picture of Jesus and a quick message about how Christ gives and loves.

This family was so humble and grateful to get the food. As we brought in the box and bag full of food (about 60-70 lbs) to their home, they invited us to sit for a minute and talk to them. The mother had just finished making tamales for the family Christmas dinner. Their kitchen area was under a tarp in the corner of the yard behind the clothesline. They explained that the father had gone that morning to sell their only working bike, (their only form of transportation) for food money. These tamales were the last of their food and their money. They were overwhelmed with all the food we brought to their home, they insisted that we each take a tamale as a Christmas gift. Wow. While we didn't want to consume their food, we also didn't want to refuse this kind gesture. They thanked us over and over again, trying to express how grateful they were for this unexpected blessing.



Here are a few pictures of typical kitchens in the area. The food is usually stored on the counter or a small shelf under the counter, so you can see there are never large quantities of food on hand. (Forgive the poor photo quality, the pictures were taken in passing to not draw attention, they would be fine for us to take a picture of their kitchen, it would just be a kind of a weird thing to ask.)



As one of our groups chose their last home, and began to explain what they were doing, the family invited them in and everyone sat around their table and talked for a bit. The



family was preparing soup to have for Christmas dinner. This soup is tasty and warm, has plenty of flavor that comes from pig ankles/bones. This family invited our group to sit and share a bowl of their Posole, and made sure everyone had a seat. They brought a bowl of it to each person, and invited them to start eating. Instead of eating with them, they started to

gather all the neighbors to come and watch their new gringo friends eat. True story. Steve said he had never experienced anything like this before. When I think about it, if a group of strangers came to our door, even to bring something needed and wanted, we probably would not invite them in, and we probably wouldn't give them our Christmas dinner. It was a humbling experience to witness their generosity and kindness. There



was another neighboring family who needed food even more than this family, so as Steve went to find another bundle of food from others in our group who were also driving around closeby, Rachel took the opportunity to gather the children and teach them a song. I am a Child of God, in spanish. These few moments were adorable and the memory of it will be recalled with a smile forever.



This fence was taller than normal and the gate was chained, so we couldn't see into the yard of one particular home. There was a dog chained to each corner of the house and they were doing a good job of looking vicious. We stopped and no one was home, but we kept passing it as we drove up and down the dirt roads. When we had one bundle left, we went back to see if someone was home. We could hear loud music playing but the gate was still chained. Ramon called out and we heard the music stop. He got the attention of the woman who was there and she opened the gate.



She was an older woman, her facial features were classy and elegant, she was sporting work gloves and a baseball hat. She said her husband was away at work, and she had just arrived home herself. She invited us in her humble but clean home. We asked her about the photos on her walls, those were her grandchildren, she was noticeably proud of them.



She was also very proud of her birds, she had 40 parakeets in a cage near a ladder in her front yard. She was more than happy to show them to us. She plays music for them, because it makes them happy. She turned her loud music back on, and instantly the birds started singing along, I think she was right, the music made them very happy.

It was time for another group to pick the last family, it was Josh's turn to pick and it was getting dark. He said, *"it took awhile for me to decide where to stop and which home needed the food. I picked a house but no one was home. Then I just felt like we needed to stop next door."*

A man lived there by himself. He was all alone on Christmas Eve. By himself, he had built his one room house, so tiny that if his bed wasn't in the room he probably could have reached all 4 walls if he sat on a wheeled office chair. No water, heat or power, but it was well kept and organized. There was no evidence that he had any family. Meagan wanted to share the message, then he opened his scriptures and shared a scripture with us, and he also wanted Meagan to read it in Spanish. He confessed he had a drinking problem, but wants to try again, and go to church. Lindsey talked about how she felt like it was super important to visit this guy, since he was alone. Way to go Josh for waiting to find the right one who needed the food, but needed a visit even more. He was the first one who wanted to take a picture of us, his new friends who visited him in his home. Julia thought that was really sweet. He had 10 pictures on his phone, all of his house while he was building it, we were his 11th picture.



The food drive ended just after dark as we all gathered back together for dinner. We talked a little about what we had each experienced, and most of us were sure this was one of our favorite Christmas Eve's ever.

Tuesday was Christmas Day, and it was a day to relax, enjoy each others company and maybe sight see a bit. The weather was colder, it rained on and off throughout the day, but that didn't stop us from going to the beach. Christmas BBQ and white elephant exchange happened even though the power went out, and everyone said their smiley muscles hurt. Success.

Wednesday we packed up, and drove north to Ensenada. Everyone spent at least a day there posing at tourists, and all the families worked their way back to the US border on their own time. Safe and sound back in the states. We brought home with us lessons, experiences, and memories. Yes, we brought home more than we took to Mexico.

The summary of the donations in both gifts and funds, provided Christmas to 78 families, which included a total of 343 adults and kids. The food drive included a 2 months supply of food to an additional 30 families with approximately 130 people. All possible because of generous donors like you. Thank you.

*"We went to San Quintin, Mexico for Christmas. It was incredible. There I found little pieces of my heart that I never knew existed before. I'll never be the same. Along with an inch of red dust on everything we owned, the best gift I received was a single orange and a styrofoam cup of soda, given with the sincerest thanks and gratitude that transcended our language barrier." -Janelle Perkins*

*"I gave so little but received so much more in return – isn't that the secret to Christmas and happiness in general? I finally see that I LOVE to give service when it isn't expected or scheduled – that bit of agency that belongs to me – that's what I long for. Something about being compelled 😊;) it totally applies. And I don't hate being compelled (well, sometimes). I recognize that most of us need lots of practice to figure out the truth about ourselves.*

*We drove 2000 miles and more than 36 hours to share with others. I know, pragmatically, I could have driven 10 minutes to (on-the-outside) accomplish something similar. But I think, the journey was part of it – those hours didn't make sense, then seemed totally worth it, then seemed crazy again when we thought about how our backsides felt. It wasn't perfect. And we had to pretend we felt natural at it when we didn't. But it didn't matter. I'm not even sure if the most important thing I found is the most important. But we did eat the best tamales and tacos, made a bunch of new friends, shared Christ's message of love and peace, gave hugs to the most humble people, sang sincere renditions of "Noche de Paz," and tried to give of God's gifts to us. It was humbling. Eye-opening. Heart-stretching.*

*How grateful I am to rinse my toothbrush under clean tap water! How amazed at the size of my mudroom which sees so little mud. I have an indoor kitchen, a warm house, a hundred light bulbs and a toilet to clean. It is hard to fathom that my world in America is so different – so unequal.*

*One of my favorite parts about this trip was to see my son. It hasn't been an easy year but those 8 days made up for it. He never complained. He jumped in and helped and was friendly and kind. He didn't know a lick of Spanish and yet he didn't shy away. He was brave and surprised me in a million little ways. I am forever grateful and amazed. I think I did find the true spirit of Christmas.”* **-Julia Hendron**

*“My Mexico trip is over and I'm back in the States,... I met the family who leads this service trip 2 years ago when my former bishop, Reid Heiss, and his wife invited me to go to Mexico at Christmas to do a service project down there. I jumped at the opportunity and from the very moment I did, this family embraced me fully in the adventure. When my circumstances changed this Christmas unexpectedly, I immediately messaged them and asked if they had room for one more. They replied yes and I'm so grateful I went again, and continued my friendship with them....I don't know that I'll ever be able to fully express what these Christmases in Mexico have meant to me but I hope to at least be able to pay it forward.”* **-Meagan Jackson**

*“Everyone smiles in the same language.”* **-Cami Roberts**

*“I started this journey with a picture of a sunrise and ended the journey with a sunset. I was so drawn to the beauty, peace, warmth and power that comes from the sun, that I can't help but feel the same closeness and love from the true light of the world the SON of God ... Jesus Christ! What a great Christmas this has been!! Mexico was perfect in every single way!”* **-Rachel Wells**



Again, thank you for your donations and sharing in the service effort. Even though you might not have been there in person, these are your stories, because they are the results of your donations, both financially, and in adopting one of these families for Christmas. Thank you!

You know how they have funny clips or bloopers after the credits at a movie? Here are some of our silly times -



Not so sure about octopus at the fish taco shop.

But we never got tired of these tacos!



Arm wrestle while waiting for burritos



Christmas BBQ by candlelight (the power went out in our part of town)



Freezing at the beach



Photobombing Santa

