



Little Pebbles Orphanage Ministry

“We cannot save the world ...but we can save one life.”

-Verena R. Brooks
Little Pebbles Director

Issue # 1

First Two Clothing Boxes of 2014 Reach Guatemalan Orphanages

Throughout the winter months, Little Pebbles collected six hundred and twenty-one pieces of children’s clothing and shoes. Donations were received all the way from Manchester and Vernon, CT, and from as far away as Virginia, for which we are grateful. Thanks to the support of caring families and our island friends, who also contributed with their time and donations, Little Pebbles was able to send two boxes of clothing weighing close to two hundred pounds each by the end of the month of July. Little Pebbles Director, Verena Brooks, along with her husband Bob, traveled to Guatemala in mid-August to receive the boxes and deliver them personally to orphanages in need.



MARIA AZUCENA ORPHANAGE

One week in Guatemala was not enough time for the Brooks to visit

all the orphanages on their contact list. Visiting two orphanages more than three hours away from the city and from each other, as well as traveling into the highlands, proved a challenge and was quite an experience. Still, spending only a few hours with children in need and learning about their everyday lives and struggles left an even more profound desire in the Brooks’ hearts to do more and be more for these children.

Six hundred and thirty-seven orphans

The orphanage of Maria Azucena is located in Santa Polonia, Department of Chimaltenango. This orphanage is run by nuns and is aided by indigenous workers. Most of the children are also of indigenous descent. Violent political activity left many orphans in the care of orphanages like the Maria Azucena. These children are the sons and daughters of guerrilla parents or parents who died fighting in the Armadas.



The negative effects of the Cartels and the destructive activity of drug gangs are still felt in a population that, to this day, continues to struggle with the devastating effects of the guerrilla war of 1982. During this war more than 500,000 people were uprooted from their homeland and villages and towns were burnt to the ground.



“Sir, I am in kindergarten. If you take me to your house with you, I am going to study very hard,” said the boy in the red sweater.

What do you say to a request like this? This particular child is the son of homeless, alcoholic parents. The social worker removed him from his parents and brought him to the orphanage.

“What touched me the most, in this place was seeing the sad faces of the adolescents,” said Verena. *“They would not return my gaze. They have come to believe that there is little hope for a better future once they leave the orphanage.”* For some, especially the girls, this thought holds very true. Because of cultural misconceptions, the likelihood of being adopted into a Hispanic family is very dim. Even though adoption is becoming more accepted nowadays, there is more work to be done in educating the country about the orphan’s need for a home and a secure life.

Establishing a relationship with Maria Azucena’s Director was just a beginning. We learned that they are in need of food (beans, rice, oil). They also hope for more educational opportunities for their children. Leaving Maria Azucena was bittersweet for the Brooks family as the children waved goodbye wearing their bright new clothing and clutching their newly received toys.



When Verena was asked about Little Pebbles future involvement in this orphanage, she responded,

“We are going to continue to provide clothing for the children, because they need them. I also see us moving in a new direction as well, by providing scholarships for these children to go to a higher level of education, and by bringing people down there to not only introduce new programs, but to provide the children with vocational training as well. We want to bring hope and solutions for a better future.”

A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS



CASA BERNABE

For Casa Bernabe’s Director Flory Herrera, building big projects is a challenge she loves. Providing homes for orphan children where they can experience life in a family setting is one of their main goals.

Casa Bernabe has 150 children at any given time, most of whom come from high-risk environments. The orphanage takes care of these children in a new and innovative way, and it works! Within this new model, every boy and girl belongs to a family and lives in a

house built within the orphanage. These houses have a capacity for 15 children. The children are accommodated according to their age and sex. Each house is under the care of a couple (man and wife) acting as parents for these children and being an important role model in their lives.



The orphanage has a clinic, a school, a computer lab, a carpentry workshop (where they build their own beds, cribs, and tables), a green house and garden where they grow their own vegetables, a bakery, a beauty salon, and a sports area. *“My first impression was of a place well-structured and organized where children are happy and have a sense of belonging. I saw lots of happy faces that radiated some kind of joy that I have not seen in other orphanages I have visited,”* said Verena.





A lot of thought and love has been put into making sure that each child receives not only the basic necessities of life, but also ample psychological support to help them cope with the reality of being an orphan.

What we learned at this particular place made us feel hopeful for a better future for some of these children. As Little Pebbles moves forward into the new year, we are planning a trip to visit Casa Bernabe's children and get involved in one of their many projects. If you have interest in joining us on this trip, please contact Little Pebbles Ministry.

UPCOMING PROJECTS FOR LITTLE PEBBLES

- We are in the process of building a drop-off donation box for friends and families here on the island to use.
- We are planning a trip in 2015 to Casa Bernabe to live with orphan children for one week and to learn more about their lives and dreams.
- We are exploring new ways in which we can help orphan children with educational materials and programs to empower them for the future.

As always, we encourage our community to be part of Little Pebbles by sharing your ideas with us and by helping us to find ways in which to help orphans in Guatemala.

DONATIONS

We happily receive clothing for children and adolescents (K-12). We receive lots of newborn and toddler clothing, which is great! Because we at Little Pebbles strive to meet the needs of ALL children, we will make an effort, with some of the monetary gifts we receive, to buy clothing for those children falling into the age brackets for which we have no donated clothes. In that way, we ensure that the donation boxes contain the necessary sizes.

Donations can be given to Yaritza Gello or Verena Brooks until we finish building the drop-off box.

If you are interested in making a monetary donation, you can write a check to Church on The Rock, attn Little Pebbles, or visit our website.

A FINAL WORD

Finally, we would like to thank our Church on The Rock family for the continuing support of our ministry. We also give a hearty thanks to all our friends and

families both on and off the island. Without your support, this ministry would not be possible.

We hope you will be greatly encouraged as you view the enclosed DVD which shows the 2014 trip to Guatemala and the work we are all doing together to help make orphaned children's lives a little brighter. Thank you!

LITTLE PEBBLES

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