

Coca Romero, Patient Coordinator & Mother



My first son, Reynaldo Romero, was born in 1966 with cerebral palsy. I looked for health care for him in Nogales, Sonora, where I was living. I did not find the help I was looking for. I was looking for a miracle like all the mothers who come to the now St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

After seven years of struggling, going back and forth to Tucson, Arizona, where I found help from doctors and therapists at Tucson Children's Clinic, I was approached by Gloria Elsa Bogulas, a speech therapist, who suggested starting a program where she would give therapy to the children and also teach the parents to do the same in their own homes. Mrs. Elsa's cousin, Mrs. Amanda Ast, offered her house in Nogales, Sonora, to start this program beginning July 7, 1973. Seven cerebral palsy children attended her house which we called La Escuelita (Little School).

After working with these children for two months, Amanda suggested that we invite a doctor friend of hers who she thought might want to help the children. On October 3, 1973, Dr. Mark Frankel, orthopedic surgeon, came to La Escuelita to see what he could do for these children; this marked the official beginning of our children's clinic.

As the months passed, Dr. Frankel soon realized that he had more patients than the house had capacity to shelter. We requested Madre Conchita's permission to use her orphanage one day a month for our clinic; she generously agreed. We now had more space and more children, so we decided to invite more doctors and therapists. At this time the name, La Escuelita, changed to La Clínica de los Niños. After 40 years, Dr. Frankel still comes to St. Andrew's Children's Clinic on occasion to see our orthopedic patients.

In 1976 we had so many children coming to The Clinic that the orphanage could no longer hold us. We looked for more space in Nogales, Sonora, and could not find what we could afford. We decided to look in Nogales, Arizona where members of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church graciously offered us their church for the one-day monthly clinic.

Our children suffer from a wide variety of serious medical problems and disabling conditions; such as, no arms/no legs as birth defects, spinal bifida, brittle bones disease, neurological disorders, cleft palate/cleft lip, hearing loss, vision loss, club feet, paraplegics, severe epilepsy, and burns. The Clinic provides these children surgeries; laboratory tests; x-rays, CT scans, MRIs, and other diagnostic procedures deemed necessary by our health care professionals; medications; nutrition; orthopedic devices; prostheses; wheel chairs; hearing aids; braille writers; and anything else that a child needs to function more normally—all are free of charge to the parents.

One of the most important collaborations is with the U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (Customs and Border Protection—CBP). They understand that Mexico does not have the resources to help these children with special needs and that St. Andrew's Children's Clinic has the availability of doctors, hospitals, and volunteers to help these children. Through the relationship we established, children (without visas) and an accompanying parent can get a special permit to enter the U.S. for health care provided by St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

Throughout the history of The Clinic, the one continuing factor has been Love. The Love of the parents who bring their children to The Clinic for a miracle is overwhelming. They tenderly care for their disabled children, carry them even when their size is burdensome, and faithfully teach their children at home, whether practicing speech patterns or exercising muscles. The Love of the volunteers is evident as they willingly return month after month to help their children. We have professionals and other volunteers who have been with us 30-38 years.

Thank you to our Donors; the patients and their parents are very appreciative. Thank you Father Ed, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, CBP, Shriners Hospitals, Children's Surgery International, CIMA Hospital and Voluntariado, doctors, nurses, volunteers, past and present Board of Directors and officers—without your help, these 40 years would not have been possible for St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

