

FAITH IN THE REALITY OF ENVIRONMENT

by Marina Forero

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Eight years ago, Frontera de Cristo began the Children's Enrichment Ministry as a faith response to the drug culture that was targeting younger and younger children not only to consume drugs but to get involved in the trafficking of drugs. While all children are welcome here, we are especially focused on children who are at risk of dropping out of elementary school.

For eight years, girls and boys have been coming, growing, and developing together with us. The light they carry in each game, smile, restlessness, creativity, and ingenuity is bright. Even in times of adversity they are resilient and get up again to gain strength and continue in their mission to be happy.

The Children's Enrichment Ministry has seen hope emerge in the lives of children and their families by providing safe spaces of wide welcome, with the certainty that everyone is important. We provide classrooms full of experiences based on learning, respect, dignity, and love. Children have expressed that here they experience the warmth of a quiet and harmonious home where they like to be.



When a child is enrolled, then their cousins and even friends from their school join, because they share what we do and their mothers like to know that they like to come and learn.

The Cerecer brothers say: *"We now get good grades in school and feel smart in our school classes."*

Elizabeth's mother said *"My daughter is shy; she hardly speaks, but she has awakened an interest in sports, she says that it is because the children here play a lot of soccer. She also plays with them and that is the part she likes most about coming here."*

Ángel is short and very charismatic; he says: *"I am so full of food that now I need to walk a lot, so the teachers do not ask me to sit in the class. I have a lot of accumulated energy and since the food here is very tasty, that is why I come every day."*

Diego dances all over the room and keeps hugging all the children and tells them that he does it because he considers them all as his friends, and incredibly they all follow him. He is a good leader.

We work together with churches, schools, and other organizations in Agua Prieta who want see children embraced and protected, because life has not been easy for them. We work with 10 elementary schools to support all children in their leveling and in their integral development. But we want to see even more of what God gives in abundance for society. We currently have three sites located in different neighborhoods of the city—our partners, Centro Comunitario Nueva Esperanza, Iglesia Presbiteriana Lirio de los Valles, and DouglPrieta Trabaja, provide space for our ministry. The city's Children's Home also has asked us to work with the children under their care. In the



process of recovery and healing together, we share the faith that saves us. We are excited to see the ministry continue to grow because we yearn to spread the Gospel of Peace.

This spring we began a partnership with Cuenca Los Ojos, an Environmental Project that educates based on ecology—teaching us the richness that the earth provides, learning in exploration, approaching the diversity in flora and fauna and outdoor recreation, sharing together the same experiences, and witnessing the harmony between nature and human beings. We are looking forward to learning about the entire process of the agave and the bats that are its main pollinators.

We have had this experience at Rancho San Bernardino on the outskirts of the city. The Cuenca Los Ojos Program welcomes us at each visit of at least 25 children and 10 adults. These trips complement the permaculture classes the children engage in each week.



Ivan, a 9-year-old boy and participant in the Education Program says, *“I like this place and I want to come back again”* and he mentions this because of the enjoyable time we spent together, especially since he had never had an outing with his friends from the ministry. And just as this child mentions, it is the desire of others and in which we want to include in more outings and involve parents for a family coexistence.

Frida Sophia puts the fertilized and seeded soil on her face because she likes the sensation and the cold of its texture.



This year, we have expanded our partnership with the Binational Arts Institute, who was one of the sponsors of our fortieth anniversary and worked with our children to form a children’s choir. The children’s choir has also had a great impact on our community, raising its voice to sing of hope, of unity among brothers and sisters in the diversity of cultures and languages, that there are no borders for a grateful heart and that at the same time raises praise to the Creator.

The importance it has for children is that it gives them the freedom to express themselves, they find joy in being seen with admiration, especially in the eyes of their parents. With a song they can reach the heart of those who need hope.

David is always waiting for his next presentation and affirms that he knows the lyrics of each song very well because he has dedicated himself at home to studying it.

A mother cried from the emotion and what she was receiving when she heard her son sing because she mentions that he was going through many difficulties and family conflicts, this impacted her because it gave her unexpected hope.



So with all the beauty happening all around us, we long to keep expanding so that more boys and girls will see and believe the present God who is a safe haven and receive these blessings as well. In the fall we are planning on opening a fourth in the northwest part of Agua Prieta in partnership with the “El Buen Pastor” Church. Pray with us that there will be continuity of this ministry that reaches not only children, but families.

Valentina says: *“I like it here because they welcome me and make me feel loved despite my epilepsy. I didn’t like wearing the protective helmet because I was embarrassed.”* She plays soccer and basketball and wants to be a teacher one day, and she tells David, her partner, *“go on, concentrate and do your homework.”*

Grecia proudly showed us her first A in spelling. Her grades were very low, she quickly forgets what she learns, but she strives. This was a great achievement to learn how to look like a champion.

In everything we do, the strengthening of relationships and understanding across borders is evident, welcoming intercultural diversity, sharing our lives, responding in faith in the midst of crisis and difficulty because our faith is lived in the reality of our environment, in real people with real conflicts and struggles who, feeling embraced and important, make the community want to be part of that genuine love who cares and appreciates each other. ☐

