



Newsletter for the Mission of Friendship

Diocese of Erie, USA

December 2023

We Are Happy to Share With You Our Amiguitos Daycare News!

There have been many changes to the Amiguitos program over the past several months. The biggest and most exciting change is that we have welcomed a new person to our staff. We are pleased to introduce Arleth Saldivar to the Amiguitos team. She is 21 years old and a recent graduate of the Republica de Mexico University Center with a bachelor's degree in Education. She is currently serving as the head teacher in maternal group 2. In just a short amount of time she has shown us her extensive skills in improving the education and guidance programs for our students. We welcome you Arleth and are glad to have you as part of our team!

In other news, the Amiguitos nursery school is working to impart to the children not only academic knowledge, but also important cultural traditions of Yucatán. Recently they learned about the Day of the Faithful Dead, or Hanal Pixan ("food for the souls") by preparing a small table with typical foods and sweets. By doing this, the children were helped to understand the Church's celebration of All Souls Day – where we remember and pray for our beloved dead.

by Azucena



A New Look: The Joy of Bringing an Idea to Reality

During the fall we were able to renovate the surface of the Nueva Vida picnic area. The was the realization of a huge effort on the part of members of the Mission. A Bazaar was planned, and many people contributed clothes and other ítems to be sold as part of the event. Many members of community came to the Bazaar to support the fundraising effort. It was a success!

Prior to the renovation the Picnic Area was a safety hazard due to cracked and damaged concrete. Now it is once again a beautiful and safe área for the girls to use for outdoor activities.

Thanks to all who supported this effort!

by Fatima Kantun

What a Beautiful Tradition!

It has been a tradition for the Mission of Friendship staff and program participants to once a year give a special tribute to our Lady of Guadalupe by making a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Guadalupe's Sanctuary in Merida. Everyone in the Mission looks forward to participating in this special event each year.

The pilgrimage starts with a procession, led by the MOF's pickup truck. Traveling in the truck were two of the children from the daycare "los Amiguitos" who were acting the part of Our Lady of Guadalupe and San Juan Diego all the way to the Guadalupe Shrine in San Cristobal Church.

The devotion to our Lady of Guadalupe is so powerful and meaningful, and so many people from all of the Yucatan Peninsula wish to come, that the sanctuary begins scheduling group visits in October – all in preparation for the December 12 solemn celebration. This year the Mission of Friendship was scheduled for November 9. I had the honor of personally joining in the pilgrimage this year since it happened during my recent visit to the Mission.

by Indira





Let's Get Inspired By Pinto Chi Family Testimony

My name is Clara Chi Ucán. I am forty-seven years old, and I am currently dedicated to homemaking. My husband's name is Olegario Pinto Chablé. He is forty-seven years old and he works as a retail salesperson for a candy company. We have five beautiful daughters. The oldest, Mildred Aracelly Pinto Chi, is twenty-seven years old. Nadia Yisel is twenty-one years old; Neydi Teresita, 19 years old; Clara Suleymi, 18 years old; and Diana Margarita, 14 years old.

God gave us the opportunity to get to know the Mission of Friendship's Amigos Program through Cari Serafin with the sponsorship of my little sister Paloma in 1992. This was a support for my disease mother Socorro.

Living in a very difficult situation due to the normal expenses of housing, food, school, and clothing for our five daughters, we applied in 2011 to join the Amigos Program, and thank God, we had a favorable response. We were sponsored by David and Marilyn (RIP) Pipkin, who have been a great help in the education and well-being of our daughters.

Our Daughters' Experiences With Sponsorship

MILDRED ARACELLY: I am the oldest of my sisters. I had the opportunity to begin to receive the sponsorship of the Pipkin couple when I was in the third semester of high school. I was able to cover the expenses of going to school like school materials, among other things. Later, I began studying a Bachelor's Degree in Preschool Education, and with sponsorship I could cover more costly expenses. I am very grateful to my sponsors for all the support they provided to me in completing my studies. I currently work at the María Helena Chanes Kindergarten. I am a first-grade teacher and I practice my profession with a lot of love.

NADIA YISEL: I am the second daughter. I started receiving support from the Pipkin sponsors when I was in 4th grade, receiving school supplies and a Christmas food package in December. For obtaining a good grade average, at the end of the school year, we received some gifts. The sponsorship helped pay for tuition, books and bus fare. I am currently studying the fifth semester of my nursing degree at the CRET (Rodriguez Tamayo Educational Center) school. I have two years left to complete it. I am very grateful for the support that the sponsors are giving us.

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NEIDI TERESITA: At eight years old I started to receive support. I was in third grade. The sponsors supported me by providing school supplies. I remember that in December they always had something for us, and on an occasion the sponsors sent us money and we bought clothes. Having sponsorship helps me continue my studies. I am currently studying the first semester of an associate's degree in human Capital Administration. Upon completion, I intend to study a Bachelor's degree to obtain all the tools and knowledge to apply in my venture that I started in the month of September. I will briefly describe it here:

A few months ago, I had the idea of starting my own business, a cafeteria in my parents' house. This idea was born because I worked in a pastry shop and learned to be a barista. I liked to prepare sweet drinks. Encouraged by this, I told my parents about my own project and they gave me their support and help to make my dream come true. Today it is a reality! The cafeteria is called "A su punto" ("To the Point").

CLARA SULEYMI: My (first) experience with sponsorship was the school supplies we received when my sister Neydi and I were in third grade. I remember that when I studied high school, for having obtained a good average, I received a reward: going shopping where I chose clothes and other gifts as a gift from the sponsors. Now I am studying for an Associate's Degree in Fashion Design at the UTM (Metropolitan Technical University). I should complete it in August 2024. In September of that year, I will begin to study Fashion Design Engineering. My goal in the future after completing my studies is to work in a clothing production factory to exercise my skills. I feel grateful to the sponsors for helping us with our studies.

DIANA MARGARITA: I am the youngest in the family. During the six years that I studied elementary school, I received school supplies from my sponsors. Now I am studying in ninth grade and I am preparing to enter high school to continue my studies.

Also, as a hobby I am taking dance classes, and I had my first event dancing in front of an audience. It was very exciting.

These have been my daughters' experiences with sponsorship. We are all very grateful because, thanks to the sponsors' help, they have been able to continue their studies.

Getting them through has not been easy; we have gone through many adverse circumstances and obstacles that have arisen along the way, but with effort and sacrifices, especially with the help of God, we have moved forward and all of this has brought us closer together as a family.

We want to thank the sponsors for helping us, for the support they give us to be able to raise our daughters. They are always present in our prayers, but above all in our hearts. We also thank the Amigos Program of the Mission of Friendship, and everyone who made it possible for us to be part of this beautiful sponsorship program.

Thank you very much!

The Pinto Chi family



After 25 Years This Friendship is Stronger Than Ever!

St. Julia's Parish in Erie has been a Sister Parish to the Santa Ines (St. Agnes) Parish, Dzitas, Yucatán for over 25 years. The relationship between these two communities started a quarter century ago when a group from St. Julia, Erie, went to Yucatán and immediately fell in love with the hospitality and generosity of their brothers and sisters of Santa Ines Parish. When the group came back home, they decided that they would like to support their new friends, so they embraced Santa Ines as their Sister Parish. Ever since the commitment from St. Julia's Parish in terms of support and friendship to Santa Ines has been the same as it was more than two decades ago!

During my most recent visit to Yucatán back in November, I went to visit Santa Ines Parish and I was able to experience the generosity and hospitality of the people in Dzitas. I was invited by the new pastor of Santa Ines —Fr. Miguel Angel Pech -- to a tour through the church, his rectory, and the beautiful patio of Santa Ines. The visit was followed with a wonderful lunch in one of his parishioner's homes, where they offered us a special dish that they prepared as part of the celebration of the Day of Death or "Dia de Muertos." I learned that this commemoration is more than just a day, as in fact the celebration lasts for a couple of weeks (before and after the Day of the Dead itself). The special dish they shared with us is called the "PIB." It is cooked underground only this one time each year. It is like a big tamale, but what makes it special are the unique ingredients and the fact that it is cooked underground. This is a pre-Hispanic tradition which concludes celebrations of the "Hanal Pixan" and their deceased loved ones.

Thank you, Fr. Miguel, for introducing to me this interesting and delicious tradition!

by Indira S.



A Note From the Director's Desk

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Amigos Program, Nueva Vida Program and Sister Parish Program participants for the marvelous support you give to our sister and brothers in Yucatán.

I would like to take the opportunity to encourage you to never forget that your financial support to these families and parishes means more than a simple help. It is an enormous blessing to them.

Just a reminder that the Acceptiva "Amigos" and General Mission of Friendship page has been activated on the Mission Office website. The "Acceptiva" site is to make electronic donations easier, and to allow one-time donations. It is also a quick and easy way to invite family members and friends to make a donation to the Amigos program or the Mission of Friendship in general.

We want to invite you to visit your Yucatecan family. Doing so is an unforgettable and life-changing experience. There in Yucatán the Mission of Friendship staff members are able to provide transportation, tour guidance, translation and lodging for the modest cost of your donation to the Mission of Friendship. Please prayerfully consider this possibility. As always please feel free to contact me if you have any question.

May God bless you and your family this Holy season.

~ *Indira* ~

Some Important Reminders

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of important points regarding sponsorship as we move into 2024.

Since 2021, sponsors' donations have been combined in a common Amigos account from which all of the families receive their help. This allows for a more equitable distribution of assistance to the families.

Moving forward, the mission office in Erie will continue to receive the donations sent by **Amigos sponsors, Nueva Vida sponsors and Sister Parishes** by way of checks and online credit card contributions. These funds will be wired periodically to the mission account in Mérida.

Amigos sponsors can send special donations, in addition to their regular monthly contributions, that are earmarked specifically for their particular sponsored family as Christmas gifts, Easter gifts, or birthday gifts. These special gifts are not added to the common Amigos fund. They are kept separate to be given only to the sponsor's particular Amigos family. If you would like to give a special gift just for your sponsored family, please make a note in the memo line of your check or enclose a note of explanation with your donation. Your intentions for the special gifts will be communicated to the mission staff in Mérida.

The Mission Office of the Diocese of Erie is still receiving letters, cards, and photos from sponsors to be sent to families in Mérida as usual. However, sending correspondence via e-mail is also available.

If you have questions regarding your donations, tax deductions or new sponsorship, or would like to communicate changes in your contact information or sponsorship status, please contact mission office director **Indira Suarez** by e-mail: isuarez@eriercd.org or by phone: (814) 824-1231.

For tax purposes: If you wish to receive tax credit for the donations for year 2024, please date and submit your donations after January 1st of 2024.

In January you should expect a letter with the summary of your donations to the Mission of Friendship sponsorship program made during the year 2023.

Please know that we are grateful to all of you who sponsor a family in Mérida through the Amigos Program, supporting them with your prayers, concern, and financial support.

We look forward to hearing from you!





Mission of Friendship

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