

*March 2004*

*Dear Valle Hermoso Web page readers,*

After quite a time of silence, we are back with much good news.

The children's home "Valle Hermoso" has begun a new year by welcoming the children back from their January vacation with their families with open arms. They came back on the second of February. The first girl came at 8 AM. Her sister brought her to the children's home. One by one they came back (except for three children who came later). It was so good to see them back again, hear their laughter and see the children return in good condition. They kept telling us how much they missed the children's home and everything they have here. I can understand that. All the children come from very poor families where they share one bed with five other people, eating chuño, which is prepared by mashing potatoes with your feet. They rarely eat meat, and when they do, it is usually a very small amount (smaller than a McDonald's hamburger patty). Clothes are usually washed in the nearest river, not a washing machine. We who are used to being comfortable and having everything modern around us often forget that maybe those people are richer than us. These people are missing so many of our material comforts, but...they have what the rich world doesn't have: Jesus in their hearts.

And now about the children. There was one boy who didn't come back. Suddenly one day his father showed up and screamed, "Where is my son?"

We said, "He was with you and you should bring him back to the children's home now."

"No, he is gone," answered the father. I took the phone, called his daughter and asked what happened. She didn't know anything. She said she would look for him. Days and days went by and there was no sign of the boy. I called his family.

"No, we don't know anything, we have been looking for him everywhere," they said. So I decided to look for him myself. I knew I was going to find him. It rained and rained and was chilly outside but I knew – I will find him. He had run away from his home because his father punished him for no reason. He was afraid that his father, in a fit of anger, would kill him, so he ran away. He spent 48 hours on the street. He slept under paper boxes and ate what he found on the street. When I found him he started to cry. He thought he did something bad and wrong. He was scared. I took this little creation who was trembling, dirty and full of lice back to the children's home. It was a joy to have him back! What he has experienced is shocking and has left a deep imprint on him.

In February, we added a new child to the children's home. His name is Antonio. He is a pleasant and intelligent boy. He comes from an area near the children's home.

Before the children came back we cleaned and painted all the rooms. Below you can see how nice it is now.



Antonio



Here is one of the rooms we painted. Isn't it nice?!



One of the newly painted boys' rooms.



The children watching a children's program on TV.

In February, we hired three new employees: a tutor who is helping out with homework and assisting with school meetings; a coordinator who has the big responsibility of taking care of the children's various needs and making contact with individuals and businesses here in Bolivia who can help the children's home by donating or providing low-cost supplies; and a couple who work as house parents, living with the children every day. We have the same Psychologist.

The 23rd and 24th of February is the Carnaval holiday here in Bolivia. It is celebrated with dances, parades and water balloons. The people throw water balloons at each other or anybody who happens to be on the street. It is like a water war on the streets and in the homes. Below, you can see how the children played with water balloons at the children's home.



It's fun to play with water!

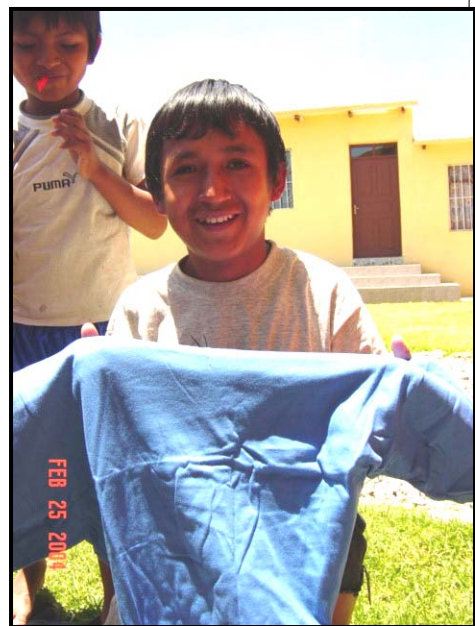


Somebody is totally wet!!!

For a big surprise some of the children got Christmas gifts from their supporters in Sweden this year!! It was cool! At the same time the C.I.C. (Cochabamba International Church) helped us a lot by donating two Christmas gifts for each child! It was a big blessing for us.



Luis opens his gift with much curiosity.



Yeah, I got a t-shirt, candies, pencils and a notebook!!!

On behalf of the children's home, I would like to thank each one of you who is helping to realize this dream for these children! Without you it wouldn't be possible. Thank you.

*Aija Ruka Tørre*