

Box 888, Keene, TX 76059
Holiday Season 2008

Dear PAHS Family –

What a joy to be able to communicate to you the goodness God has shown us during this challenging year! God has carried us in His arms during these uncertain times, and He continues to provide wonderful opportunities to exercise and strengthen our faith!

As a stream of hungry children from the surrounding mountains increases, Jesus' words ring in our ears: "They don't need to go away; give them something to eat." Matt 14:16

The rising number of hungry adults and children who come seeking help, coincides with the statistician's data: – Honduras is the only nation in the Western Hemisphere where the number of *chronically* hungry people is *increasing*. There are villages here in western Honduras where 80% of children under the age of five have life-threatening nutritional deficiencies. wfp.org Worldwide, malnutrition claims more lives than malaria, tuberculosis and HIV combined. Sadly, even in these modern times, a child dies from hunger-related illness every 6 seconds.

Ten years have passed since Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras. In the intervening decade the country has suffered drought or flooding almost every year. International agencies still work to contain rivers, as farmers struggle to produce food crops out of the earth whose topsoil was washed away compounding the economic problems of this beautiful impoverished country. Poor families often go to bed unsure of where tomorrow's food will come from as they struggle on a daily basis to provide food for their children.

Our nutritional rehabilitation facility is at capacity with 32 recovering little ones. It remains a hopeful, cheery place -- one that provides desperate parents with hope for their sick and hungry little ones. Tiny Maria Suyapa, admitted in January at 15 months of age, dropped down to 8 lbs after de-worming. As you see, she is now roly-poly, and her legs, still weak, can barely hold up her body, so she prefers to scoot around on her bottom. If the medical team from Adventist Midwest Health Systems in Illinois had not sponsored the community outreach trip to her village, Maria Suyapa would almost certainly have become one of the sad statistics. Instead, she charms us, blowing kisses -- one of the little ones that infuse our *Casita Feliz* with joy!



Maria Suyapa, January 28



Maria Suyapa, November 25

You can see more pictures of the children & the progress we have made on the buildings on our website at www.panamhealth.org.

As we look back on 2008, there are many blessings for which we are grateful. During the first half of the year God sent a host of friends, new and old, to provide love, friendship, and shelter for our children, and healthcare for the surrounding communities. Dedicated physician - nurse couples from Maine to Montana have invested time and love providing healthcare to our sickest children. Organized groups came from Chicago area hospitals in January, church and school groups from California, Missouri, Nebraska, and the Pacific Northwest in February and March; from Texas, hospitals came to continue the push on the Children's Home through March and into April, after which a church group came in June to put finishing touches on and *move our girls* into their wing, *at last!* After 5 years of watching the building slowly rise from the foundation, we are extremely grateful to God and to all the volunteers and contributors who are making this dream a reality! (The Boy's Wing of Children's Home is still under construction, as well as the Home Parent's and *Mami Verlene's* apartments in the center section.)

In June a small passenger bus sent from Michigan via Chicago and Texas arrived in Honduras by road. It was a blessing to have a smaller bus during the time of high fuel prices. Although we said good-bye to Susan and Adam Fenner in July as they concluded 2 years of volunteer service, the love they invested continues bearing fruit in many lives on campus. In August a Pathfinder group from West Virginia worked to upgrade the guest quarters which had housed the girls for nearly two years as they waited for their new home. Then student volunteers Sarah and Brodie came and began patiently working to help the children develop habits of cleanliness and order. We are so glad they will be with us through February. All these volunteers are a wonderful energizing supplement to cheer and aid our staff with the love and supplies they bring, delivered with muscle, compassion and a get-it-done attitude. We are profoundly thankful for each and every one!

Following the annual September 15th Independence Day march, our 6 - 9 year-olds of the Adventurer's Club took part in a regional camp-out. When they returned home they led out in nightly prayer meetings for a week. Walking across campus after the last of these meetings, Rosy, one of our 6 graduating seniors, took *Mami Verlene's* arm to walk her home. "*Mami,*" said Rosy, "these little ones have inspired us. The rest of us would like to ask you for a favor. Could we please continue these prayer meetings until each of us older ones has also had a chance to lead out?" *Mami* says, "There never was a favor I was happier to grant!" The nightly prayer meetings continued through October.

November brought the End-of-School -- time to celebrate academic accomplishments. Again, one of our students had the highest grade points of the academy graduating class — tho' he tied with a classmate with 99.08% for the year! I wish you could have seen the triumph evident as many of the children of our family were honored. Fourteen-year-old Jesus (referred to in *Mami Verlene's* letter) received an award for "distinguished behavior!" Animated applause rang out as Jesus went forward to receive his recognition. Just 3 years ago, Jesus -- a recovering victim of severe abuse, was dropped from class because of disruptive behavior and his inability to sit still. It was a moment that would make anyone who has known him very proud! More than a dozen children, some whose parents never had a chance to go to school themselves, were cited for academic excellence in the grade school and 2 of our academy seniors received metals — a demonstration that a history of third degree malnutrition doesn't mean loss of academic ability.

So as we count our many blessings at this year's end, we see God's providence in the form of visiting friends, a new building, a new bus, many formerly-malnourished now-healthy children, new graduates, *Mami Verlene's* return to our Honduras campus, a solution for our campus electricity challenges, and you, our vitally important partners in this enterprise. Thank you for your prayers and financial support that make our work possible. Please know that your generosity has resulted in thanksgiving to God. Our children pray for you all the time, I wish you could hear them! Thank you for sharing of your abundance for their care and education. May the blessings you've shared with the perishing return to you and yours!

With much thanksgiving from Honduras,

Aileen & all the children & staff