

Saint Michael's History with Children of the Americas

by Frances Haynes

About fifteen years ago a man named Paul Weiss contacted Peter about this program he ran for poor children around the world. He called that organization Children of the Americas and his staff and volunteers served children in North, South and Central America. One of the projects he coordinated was called "A Metric Ton of Food" which consisted of collecting certain specified amounts of food to feed 300 children for a month in Tijuana. This project caught my attention and seemed like something St. Michael's could do to help feed hungry children. So, we tried it... and for the last fourteen years, we have been providing food for the poorest children in Tijuana. We have collected a Metric Ton of Food at this church (which means over 2300+ pounds of food) 13 times. When you add that up, that's roughly 30,000 pounds of food we've taken to these kids. My from heart to yours, I thank you for all your contributions and your willingness to extend, not only your wallets to this project, but your time and interest, as many of you have gone with us to deliver the food to the kids. If you've had the opportunity to do that, you know what a difference it makes to them and to you - you're not the same when you come home - you think you go to give them food but you end up giving your heart.

We've had some special angels along the way - I'll mention just a few. The first year we rented a U-haul truck and only Peter and our friend Ian Harrison drove it over the border with lots of prayers that nothing would go wrong. The second year we took the food, only Jim Headley and Rebecca Welch went with me and we slid along the muddy roads hoping our U-haul wouldn't get stuck. One year Jim pulled off his beautiful Pittsburgh Steelers sweater and gave it to a boy who (I am sure) had never received such a present in his life. At first the confusion on his face showed he didn't understand that the sweater was his to keep, but after a few seconds he realized and the light in his eyes was something Jim, Rebecca, Peter and I will never forget. He was transformed in that moment and so were we. One year Murry McClaren practically threw herself in harm's

way as one of our cars sat precipitously on the edge of a steep hill and was three inches from sliding down that hill. If Murry hadn't done what she did, we'd have had a much different outcome that day! Several years ago when we realized that Olivia's (the head of the program in Mexico) car could only go about 15 miles an hour we decided it was time to do something about her broken-down and beaten-up car. Thanks to Lynne Ruedy and her generous son and daughter-in-law, a Ford Explorer was donated to Olivia within months, which she still drives today. One year Tammy Hane and her son Ryan went with us and gave the kids a play structure and art easel as their gift to them. One year we collected extra money and helped build a dining room at Pedro Gante School that today feeds well over 100 children breakfast every school day morning. Another year we sent money to build a storage room at Chewy's, so the food would be safe from theft and the elements. We have been blessed that so many of you have wanted to come along and deliver the food - well over 140 people from our church have made this journey through the years. Teri Corbet has worked hard to include our children - over 45 have made the trip.

There have been so many who have helped make our participation with Children of the America's so meaningful. I thank every one of you and hope you know that what you do makes a difference.

This year (2009) we will again collect a Metric Ton of Food over the summer from July 5th until August 16th, with the hope to deliver it sometime in the third week of August. We hope we can count on your participation to make this happen. Better yet, consider coming with us to meet these beautiful children who have captured our hearts!