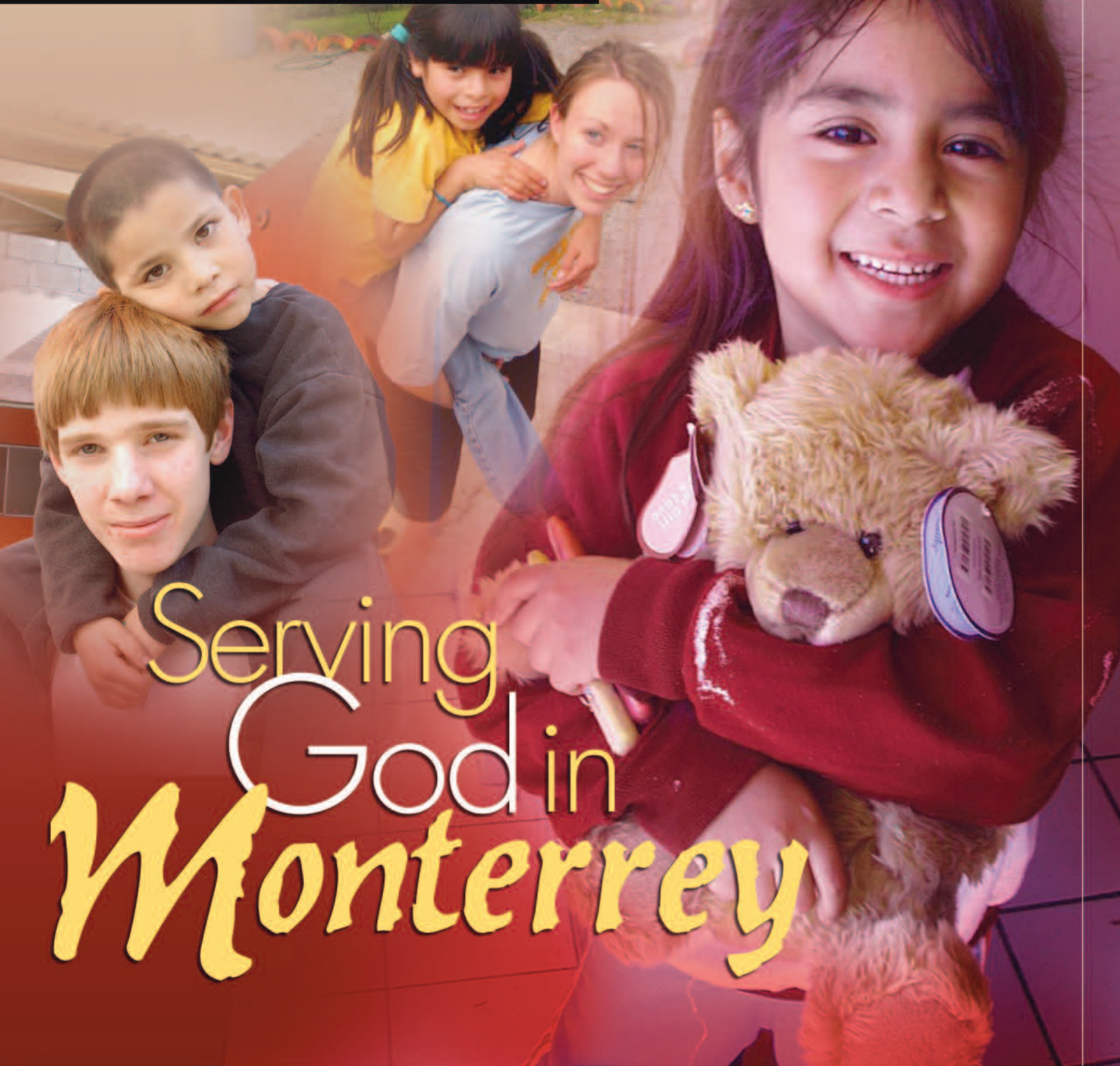


BACK 2 BACK

M A G A Z I N E

VOL. 2 MAY 2005



Serving God in *Monterrey*

Care for Today, Hope for Tomorrow

The Heart of Back2Back

Dain Jepson, Director



“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52

Dear Friends of the Ministry,

There is a joy within this passage that warms my heart and brings a smile to my face. God was overjoyed with His Son.

When I think of the teens in our Joshua and Esther House Programs and how they are growing “in wisdom and stature”, I feel that same warmth. Through God’s guidance these students are not only strengthening their walks through discipleship with the staff, but they are also living with caring families. These families are passing along a clear message to the teens that says, “You belong here, Christ loves you deeply and is pursuing a relationship with you.”

Oh, how these students have grown in confidence and understanding, both in their school studies and in their

relationships. Consider Angel, he wanted to try a different school but knew he must repay Back2Back for the lost tuition to his first school. He did try another school, he did repay Back2Back, and he received all A's and B's on his very next report card! Or Olga, who has worked diligently at improving her grades each semester and has succeeded. What joy and confidence this brings to these young teens! Just as Christ grew as a young man as God’s appointed, these teens are now walking in the footsteps of Christ and growing into sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

Thank you for coming alongside our staff and this ministry in prayer and support of the teens in the Joshua and Esther House program and in all of the children’s homes that we serve. Our hope is for you to see the reflected glory of the people serving in God’s kingdom through the testimonies in this magazine.



Back2Back welcomes two new families to our staff. Bill & Heather Merrill from Indiana and John & Corrie Guckenberger from North Carolina.

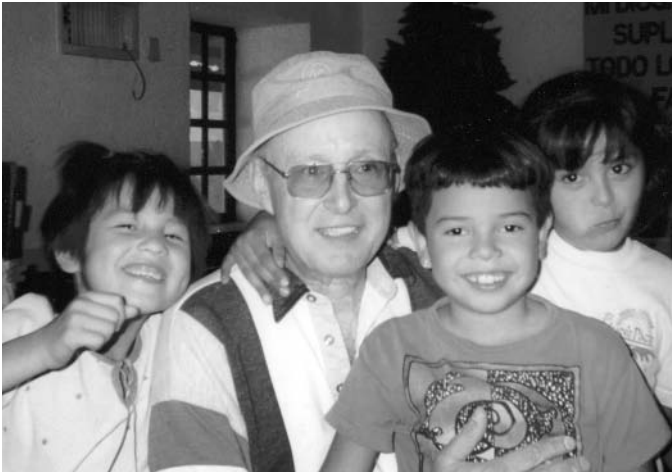
We are happy to announce that Ryan and Jody Massey have officially welcomed Julian into their family. Julian’s adoption was finalized this past February.



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CARE FOR TODAY . . . HOPE FOR TOMORROW.



In Loving Memory of Bill Barrow

*"Whoever
welcomes one
of these little
children in
my name
welcomes me."*

Mark 9:37

Bill Barrow was a very special friend of Back2Back Ministries. He took his first mission trip with us in the fall of 2002, where he won the hearts of our entire staff and of every orphaned child whose life he touched. He was abuello (grandpa) to so many of the little girls, especially those from Casa Hogar Douglas. Often when men work in missions much of their time is spent on projects, as they are more comfortable working than attempting to speak to the children. Bill, however, was different. He worked hard every day, but his favorite part of each day was playing with the children. They loved to climb on him and pull on him and giggle with him, and his face lit up when he was with them. He spoke almost no Spanish, but that never mattered to him or to the children. The bond of love was there, and he communicated with those kids by his actions far better than many do with words.

Bill was so touched by the love of these kids that he was moved to return to Mexico five months later. At that time his generous heart became more apparent, and he kindly shared what he had, not only with our children's homes, but also with our staff. It seemed from Bill's perspective he could never do enough. On the day that we learned of his passing, a check arrived to the Back2Back office. It was a check from Bill, with contributions made to every staff member that he knew.

All of us at Back2Back Ministries loved Bill, and we rejoice in knowing that he is with our Lord. We will miss him, and we know that our children will miss him, but he left a precious trail of kindness we will never forget.

We love you Bill.

Todd and Beth Guckenberger

Dain Jepson

Ryan and Jody Massey

Joanne Arnott

Gabriel Velasco

Lynne Kersey

Melissa Briner



Thank You to Family Christian Stores

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the caring people at Family Christian Stores who, through their "James Fund" foundation, have come alongside B2B. In December, they made sure every child we serve in Mexico received a warm and cuddly teddy bear to begin a New Year of hope. Their staff even personalized each bear for each child. Last month FCS sent us over 700 adorable Gund bunnies for us to give to the children in the orphanages and to the street kids we serve. What joy these toys have brought to the children! Two Family Christian Stores' mission teams have worked on the new boy's dormitory at Casa Hogar Douglas and FCS plans to send two more teams yet this year. The hope is to help finish the dorm so the boys can move in before school starts in the fall. Too, Family has made a commitment to help Manantial de Amor with their monthly operating costs. We thank them for their generous gifts and ongoing support.

Women's Group

During the first week of December the ministry hosted a women's group from Cincinnati. They brought bags full of donations and were able to put together and wrap gifts for every child at every children's home with which Back2Back works. They decorated the children's homes, took each home a Christmas Tree, had "Camille's Craft Corner" for each child to make his own ornament for the tree, served meals and shared the love of Christ. They were able to honor many Christmas wishes.



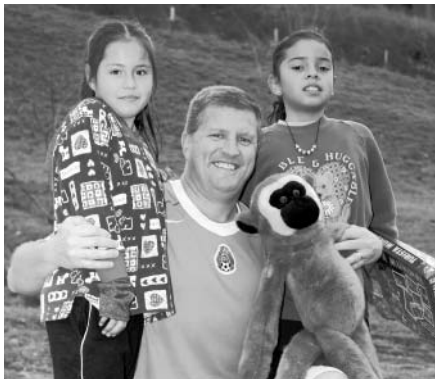
Women's Group (above right): Mary Beshear, Kristen Bell, Dori Cambuzzi, Diane Ghizas, Kathy Griffin, Nancy Grote, Christine Hansford, Judy Kelp, Lynne Kersey, Jamie Lanier, Martha Lindner, Camille Lloyd, Sandy Lutz, Felicia Magnat, Cindy MacConnell, Marylou McIlwraith, Barbara Powell, Sheryl Ryan, Ann Satterfield, Karen Woelk



When we are motivated by love, our labor becomes rest.



Availability is giving our hearts, not just hands, to a task.

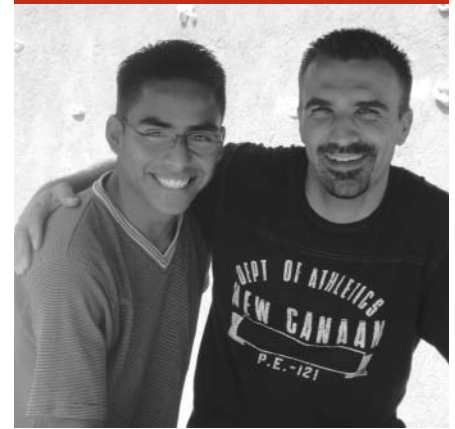


And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
Isaiah 58:10



FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS

by Matt Cooper



I feel a bit like a slow learner when I think about a lesson that God has been teaching me now for nearly a decade. Ten years ago, around the time that Julie and I got engaged, I can recall her reading a book about Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India. She would share snippets of the story with me and her heart began to be captivated by Amy's ministry to hundreds and thousands of children. It was Amy's desire to be a parent, and although she never married, God made her a "mother" to many fatherless, lonely and hurting children. I must confess that at that point in my life nothing could have sounded more foreign to me. I did not even have my own children, and therefore had little or no desire to care for other people's children. I did not desire to take strangers into my home, and I certainly would not have given consideration to adopting. Obviously the Lord had different plans, and had a thing or two to teach me along the way. Over the past five years we have given birth to three children, adopted two, fostered eight, and have worked with and ministered to dozens upon dozens. It is hard to believe there was a time when I knew very little about being a dad, but more importantly there was a time I was ignorant to the call that we as Christians have to care for and love other children. In James 1:27 the scripture says we must care for orphans in their troubles. Although I now understand much more clearly, the Lord is still teaching me daily about what it means to be a father to the fatherless. It does not matter that a child was not born to you, or does not live with you, or was not adopted by you – we are called to care for them, serve them, and love them.

Every day I am surrounded by children of all ages who desire to have a "parent" in their life.

They want someone to listen to them, someone to hug them, someone to care when the scrape their knee. They desire someone they can look up to, someone to love them, to encourage them, and to be proud of them. Over the past several years the Lord has developed in me a sensitivity to this need and a desire to play a part in meeting it in the lives of others. When we first moved to Monterrey in March of 2003 my Spanish was a bit rough around the edges, and I could hardly imagine the day when I might be someone of significance in a child's life. About three weeks after our move my wife encouraged me to arrange a "boys night out" with a handful of teenagers from one of the children's homes where we work. I'll never forget how nervous I was as I picked up four strangers, who didn't speak English, and we headed off for an evening together. Five minutes later my truck broke down.



Nearly two and half hours later we finally made it to the movie, which the boys picked out, and within ten minutes I had to suggest in my broken Spanish that we leave what seemed to be an inappropriate horror film. Luckily the night was saved by dinner at Pizza Hut and a late night swim. The boys had a blast – we made some great memories – and it was a night I know I'll never forget. Even with my limited Spanish skills that night I began to build some relationships, and I remember feeling a special burden and connection to the oldest boy, César, who at the time was fifteen. In my journal that night I wrote, "Lord, I pray you bless César, give him wisdom, bless his future and his walk with you. If you would want to use me and Julie in his life then I pray you give us opportunities to build a relationship with him." Over the following weeks and months the Lord did just that. The burden grew in our hearts and I made intentional opportunities to build more of a relationship with him. In the beginning we would just hang out – maybe watch television, listen to music, arm wrestle, play catch, or sometimes even sit in silence. Over time he began to see that I was someone who consistently came to spend time with him, that I cared enough to listen to what he had to say, and wanted to invest in his life. For nearly two years now we have been meeting together at least once a week. Every Friday we hang out and talk about "life" – we talk about how school is going, how things are with his house parents in our residential boys' home, and how things are between him and the Lord. César has shared with me many details of his life, and of his memories of coming and going from various children's homes since the time he was pre-school age. In all he has likely spent more than half of his life outside of his parents' care. One day he shared with me that his father was never really there for him and that he sees me as his true dad. Our relationship is a very special one. It is one that has been built over time, and one that we both are very thankful for. **I know that every relationship I develop may not reach the depth of this one – but my prayer is that I will be constantly aware of how God desires to use me in the lives of those around me.** Among the many things God has called me to do he has called me to love and serve children. Depending on the situation that may be for minutes, hours, days or a lifetime, but whatever the case I simply want to be obedient to how He wants to use me in others' lives. I am completely humbled when I think about the responsibility that comes with God's calling on my life, and when I think about the

relationships He has given me already. **I must constantly remember that God uses relationships to minister to people.** César was not born to me, he does not live in my home, and he is not a legal member of my family – but nonetheless, God has given us this relationship in which he sees me as his father, and I love him as a son. I certainly have a lifetime of learning ahead of me when it comes to being a dad, but I praise God for the heart He is giving me for children and for the constant example He is to me of how to be a father in many different forms.



Teen Program News

Jose Angel, studying in his first year of high school, tried really hard and passed all of his classes this semester. Angel, a high school student returning to our program, earned all A's and B's this semester. His lowest grade was an 85! Junior was welcomed into college with 6 hours of homework every night. He has been diligent though, and is finishing up his first semester. Rodolfo is doing really well this semester and says school is "easy!" He will be taking final exams this week. Cesar is also trying really hard, and has done much better in his English classes. Marilyn and Marlen both got an A average for the semester. Marilyn was given an 80% scholarship because of her overall grade point average. Olga continues to study in high school, and every semester her grades have improved.

A Gift of Hope

Back2Back Ministries is pleased to announce the purchase of 6,400 meters (nearly 2 acres) of property adjacent to our Monterrey, Mexico facility. This property is part of our God-sized dream brought into reality through the generosity of Carl and Martha Lindner. Carl and Martha have been friends of the Mexico ministry since shortly after it began in 1997. The Lindner family has been a part of several mission trips to Monterrey in care and support of our children's homes. This gift supports the property purchase and construction of four teen residence homes as part of our Joshua/ Esther House program. Each residence home will house up to eight teen girls or boys living with trained house parents. These teens, all of whom have come through the local children's homes, will be supported through the residence program in their high school and college studies. Currently there are 15 teens in the program and 43 new students entering the program in the next three years. This program is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and neglect in the lives of these teens through solid family residence style living, spiritual growth and educational opportunities otherwise economically unavailable to the areas' children's homes. All of us at B2B Ministries would like to say thank you on behalf of the many children, which for generations to come will have an opportunity to step beyond the circumstances into which they were born.



Carl & Martha Lindner III family



Martha serves on the Back2Back Board of Trustees

Ways supporters are helping Build the Future

- Ice cream social
- Panera gift certificates
- Penny wars
- Made & sold stationary
- Grand Finale dinner
- Vision dinner parties

Building the Future

In the previous Back2Back magazine we shared the expansive vision of our Building the Future campaign for the teens and children with whom we work in Monterrey, Mexico. The focus of this God sized dream is greater care and support of these young people at the children's homes through; an increase in American workers; more housing for the growing teen residence program; the creation of additional on site housing for our growing mission staff; and increased services and training to the children's homes staff and directors.

At this time we would like to share with you the ways in which we have seen God's hand working to fulfill this dream.

Where we are today;

- *We are in process of paying for the purchase of the Joshua House located next door to our main campus.*
- *The second floor addition to the Joshua House is more than mid way through the construction process.*
- *The two apartments being built at the Lugar de Misericordia (LDM) main campus are nearly completed.*
- *Full monthly ongoing program funding of the Esther House teen girls program has been gifted to the ministry.*
- *The purchase of nearly two acres of property adjacent to the B2B main campus is complete, with ground breaking slated for August for more teen residence homes.*

How you can help:

- *Provide funds to the building program so that more lives may be reached and strengthened for Christ.*
- *Connect us with your church or local business*
- *Join us on a mission trip to Mexico*

Above all else, we ask you to pray that through God's provision we will be able to meet the needs of all those children that He puts before us. Our goal: 490K beyond current commitments.



Todd and Beth Guckenberger,
Director of Latin American
Missions



There is nothing remarkable about her when you first meet her, although I think that the most remarkable women I know don't leave that first impression. Her name is Clementina, and "Meme" as she is known around here has been the object of many life lessons for me. I wanted to share some of the work she has been doing here in Monterrey and how we are standing "Back2Back" with her. I pray her life and ministry will be an encouragement to you...

Lesson #1: Seeking and serving God is based on your attitude, not your circumstances.

Meme has lived most of her life in a house made of cardboard on a piece of riverbank. I can't imagine that she wakes up most mornings and doesn't still feel tired from the day before. She has endured enough personal pain and physical abuse that she should have earned it seems the right to think about only herself. It's humbling to me to realize that there are days when I don't "feel" like serving, and I try to arrange my day to cater to my needs. I have watched her for the last 4 years consistently put the needs of others before her own, and the key is her attitude. She truly understands the grace she has received from the Lord and it's motivated her to be grateful for every peso, and plate of food.

Lessons #2-3 No matter what you have, you can always give more. God will meet all of our needs, if we trust in Him.

I used to give Meme money for her job with us here and try and tell her how to spend it. "Make sure you do something nice for yourself", I would

say, "I hope this buys you a new pair of shoes", I would encourage. I now realize she must have thought I was ridiculous. She is always sharing her resources with the mom in the Rio who needs milk for her baby, or the woman whose husband left her with many children and is in need of food. Although we might consider her salary small, it is administered carefully and seems to multiply to meet the ever-present needs. I have shifted my concept of giving from a 10% tithe to a "How Lord would you use me to meet this need you are pressing on my heart?" There are lots of needs I am conscious of, that I pray for, but don't give to. There are still other needs that seem to burden me and in those I think of Meme and how she gives in faith, confident that the Lord will care for her like the sparrow. With this approach, it isn't a logical, balanced decision where you make sure your own needs are cared for first and then you give out of your leftover, instead you meet the need the Lord is calling you to, and watch Him provide for you.

Lesson #4 Meeting physical needs opens the door for ministry.

I teach to the groups that come here, that when you minister to the poor, or to abandoned children, you need to give your gospel presentation some "grit". That grit comes from caring for the whole person, as you are representing the hands and feet of a God that is certainly concerned about their hungry bellies, hurting feet, bug infested beds, and runny noses. When you reach out without expecting anything in return, but just simply to be a signpost that says "God knows you are alive, that you have this need and He sent me here to encourage you today", the heart that is hardened becomes momentarily softer and you get the opportunity to plant or water some seeds that God is actively cultivating. If we marched into this area called the Rio and ignored the needs that surrounded us, we might only attract a few curious observers to our meetings. However, through the example and inside knowledge of someone like Meme, we are able to understand the daily struggles that they face, and build relationships with them.

Lesson #5 Ministry is not a “day job”.

Although I am trying to gain balance in my ministry world these days, I find the danger in that is that I can be tempted to categorize my life into “ministry moments” and everything else. Sharing my life with Meme has taught me that all moments can be ministry, that eating, cooking, washing, watching children, are all things that can be done beside someone, for someone or with someone. Do you know someone like this? I am trying to make ministry and breathing and walking in the Spirit all the same action. I want to understand what it means to be led into all the “good works he has prepared in advance for me to do”, and to know when to rest and when to not say no to a relationship or ministry moment just because it seems inconvenient or unplanned.

When she showed up at my door four years ago, looking for work in exchange for some food, I had no idea that we would be ministering alongside her, bring the gospel and food and housing to people whose lives at that time I couldn't have imagined. But, God knew. He has all of our days ordained, before any of them come to be... He looked at Meme as a small abandoned little girl who was mistreated by her new 'mother', who received only a 6th grade education, and who was abused as new wife and He saw today. He saw her walking around the Rio, with her Bible in one hand and little pesos in the other, sharing God's love and concern for those around her. We have to date brought hundreds of people to serve Back2Back with her and I am a more grateful servant because of the time I have spent there. I invite you to come and see the Rio and make your own list of truths.

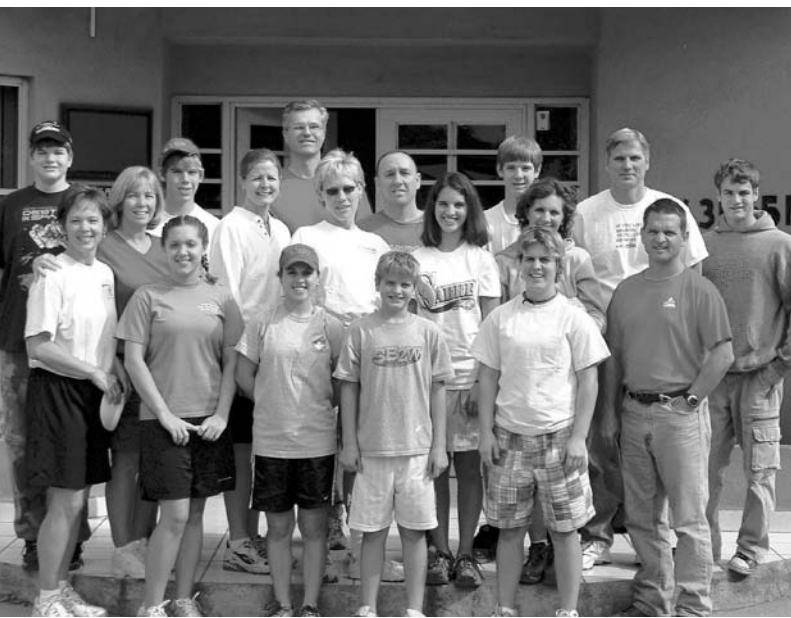


In this coming year, we have thousands of cement blocks to lay, thousands of tacos to serve, birthday parties every month for every home to throw, we have 400 hundred children who need to be loved on and prayed over... We are just getting started and have so much work ahead of us. Will you pray about how you can come and be involved? We would love to serve alongside you!



Thanksgiving Transformation

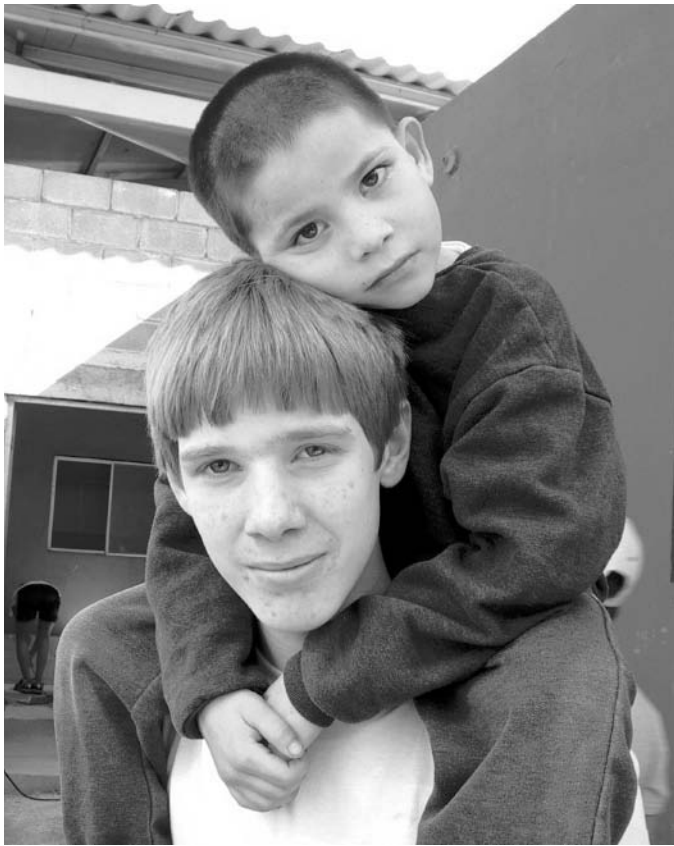
by Donna Rhuelmann



Thanksgiving 2004 became an event that forever transformed the expectations of what that holiday stands for in the lives of all in my family, and the lives of other families that joined us in Monterrey. Our group consisted of five families with ages ranging from 12 to well, let's just say my age! We went to Monterrey with the idea that we were going to serve at childrens' homes and work on projects for Back2Back. We were going to give and the children were the recipients. Were we ever wrong about that! Expectations were the first things that got transformed in Mexico!

When I decided to put together a group of families to travel to Monterrey over the Thanksgiving holiday, I must admit I went through a period of great anxiety. Everyone was excited to go serve the children in the various homes in Monterrey. We all knew that this would be a trip that would be a great growing experience for all ages involved. As the group organizer I felt so hopeful that everyone's expectations would be met. But, never having been on a trip of this type before, I was very anxious! My anxiety was the second thing transformed on the trip.

I could tell we were in for a transformational experience from the first day! We arrived at Del Norte and everyone felt a little nervous. We all wanted to do the right thing and make the children feel comfortable with us. As the glances became smiles, the nervousness became laughter, the language barrier became nonexistent, and relationships began to flourish! At the end of the day as our bus pulled away, my sons were amazed by my tears, and how emotionally committed I'd become in just one day. I was amazed by the amount of energy they had. My teenage sons, James and Joe, (who normally don't have enough energy to unload the dishwasher) had mixed cement, pushed wheelbarrows and various other strenuous tasks throughout the afternoon. They were just starting to take a break when the children came home from school. I knew how tired they were, but James and Joe never let those children know. I never saw them without a child on their shoulders or their back or at the end of their arms being swung in circles. It was fun to see my husband with little ones on his lap again! We all found out that no matter how little energy you think you have left, once it is time to be with the children your energy level is transformed back to FULL! You just can't get enough of those children. This went on for three days at Del Norte and two at Douglas!



Cosa Hogar Del Norte is home to 49 children from 3 months to 10 years of age. Martha Rojas, the homes director, serves tirelessly on behalf of the children.

We learned very quickly that our expectations fell short. Our expectation to serve was transformed to the realization that we were receiving so much more than we gave! God had more in store for this group than we could ever have fathomed. We grew in our relationships with God and we grew in our relationships with each other. We fell in love with the children we were serving, who so generously served us with their generosity, laughter and love. We went hoping that we'd always have enough energy and found that the children create energy. We went wondering what we could do and found out that God provides us with the "Glory Strength" to do whatever He needs us to do! I prayed before the trip that everything would turn out and I prayed after the trip that I would never doubt that God is in control, all we have to do is trust in Him!

I am so glad we made this mission trip as a family. The bonding and the joy we experienced during our time together in Monterrey outweigh that of any vacation. It was such a blessing to see each other in a different light. It was neat to see how God has given each of us unique talents and how He used them all to do so much throughout the week. It was such a gift to be able to all serve together!

Every day there, each person in the group became more attached to the children and more attached to the Back2Back Staff and their mission. Praise God for Beth and Todd, and the staff in Monterrey, for what they are doing! Praise God for Martha and Gabo at Del Norte, and Lupita at Douglas, for the endless love and care they give to the children! Praise God for all He did through us and in us as we all served with Back2Back this Thanksgiving. Everyone is hopeful of returning.

We returned home with the belief that we were served and blessed by the faith of those we encountered. The children, and the staff we grew to know in Monterrey, are not part of our memories; they are a part of us. Even our Thanksgiving dinner seems to have gone through a transformation. Now we do not look forward to a Thanksgiving dinner of turkey and stuffing, but of tacos and black beans! We are all thankful for a Thanksgiving that gave us more gifts than any Christmas ever has or ever could!

Donna Ruehlmann,
coordinator for the group that included:

Husband, Jim Ruehlmann and sons, James and Joe

Bruce Gray and Debby Gray, and their children Annie, Katey, Laura and Weston

Dain Jepson and Terry Jepson, and their children Daniel and Tyler

Jann Webster and her daughter Mindy

Brent Clark and Lisa Mannix

March Madness, 2005



This March was another busy time for our Monterrey staff. We hosted groups from Cincinnati Hills Christian Academy Middle School, Granger Community Church in Indiana, Life Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, Miami University, and Hillsdale College. Brent Wood from Granger brought several college students from Notre Dame and Cedarville, a first time trip for all of the students. Life Church brought a group of 83 and shared their week with 12 Miami students. To begin their week both groups joined all of the casa hogar children for a huge worship service LDM. Beth shared that it was one of the most moving worship times she has experienced in Mexico.





College Missions

In the spring of 2003 Back2Back hosted a group of students from Appalachian State University in North Carolina. This small group of students opened our eyes to a whole new area of focus for our ministry – college students. In these students we saw something special that caught our attention; the fearlessness and tiredness of youth and the spiritual maturity of adults. After spending a week with these great young people we began to more actively consider college kids. Since that time we have hosted students from Taylor University, University of Notre, Hillsdale College, and Miami University. Next January we have trips planned for Grove City College and Xavier University; six colleges within two years!

This past March a group of students from Miami University joined us in Monterrey. They spent most of their time serving at our Mama Paulita children's home in El Limon. One of our interns shared with us that he had never seen such a dedicated bunch of workers. We thank God that He has opened our eyes to this untapped group of servants.





Mexico Staff:

(l to r): Gabriel Velasco, John & Corrie Guckenberger, Matt & Julie Cooper, Beth & Todd Guckenberger, Ryan & Jody Massey, Bill & Heather Merrill, Oscar & Eilan Hernandez, Juan & Rosa Porto and Celso Sosa



Home Office Staff:

Lynne Kersey, Katherine Tucker, Dain Jepson, Melissa Briner and Joanne Arnot

Back2Back Ministries
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513.754.0300
www.back2backministries.org

Mission: To “provide care for today and hope for tomorrow” to orphans, unwed mothers and poverty stricken people in Latin America. This is accomplished through service teams, evangelism and education.

Vision: That we would reach every child God brings into our path by meeting their personal needs, developing a long-term relationship with them, and by supporting their spiritual growth that they may establish a personal relationship with the Lord.