



# QUE PASA

W H A T ' S H A P P E N I N G

A Publication of International Children's Care  
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## SONIKA'S MISSION PROJECT



Sonika and Ruth, a girl from El Oasis.

The academy student volunteers have been such a blessing to El Oasis in ways we at ICC never imagined. Even though this is a tragic story, it illustrates the power of how a person can make a difference in another's life. The following is a letter written by Johnson and Shyamala Ram, the parents of Sonika.

In July 2001, Sonika had traveled on a mission trip with the youth of the Sligo Adventist Church, located in Takoma Park, Maryland, to an orphanage in Baja, Mexico, called "El Oasis", run by 'International Children's Care' (ICC). While on this mission trip, Sonika spent a lot of valuable time with the children there, and showered them with her love. This trip and experience changed Sonika's outlook to life. Her encounter with the

children galvanized her spiritual life and her relationship with Christ. She returned home a changed person. She constantly spoke about the way God had entered her life and used the little children she had met to give her a new perspective. It was only after her passing that we fully came to know how much she had testified about God to her friends and colleagues at school.

On March 13, 2002, our precious 16-year-old daughter Sonika passed away at Children's National Medical Center in Washington D.C. Sonika succumbed to leukemia which took her life only two days after we knew she had the disease. With her death, an irreplaceable joy and happiness of our lives has gone forever. But Sonika left a legacy

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The Educational Center for the kids at El Oasis

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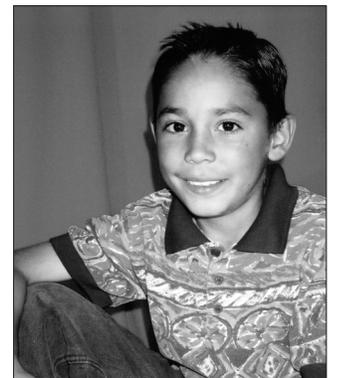
**My name is Eduardo**

I need a sponsor. I am 10 years old and live in Mexico. Please return this coupon to sponsor me each month. Thanks!

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## Sonika's Mission Continued

behind -- a legacy of love, her unbridled optimism and above all her total commitment to the Lord.

After her trip to El Oasis, Sonika had a dream, she wanted to see finished the school building at El Oasis, this was her last wish. For this reason, the Sligo Adventist Church has started a fund called 'Sonika's Mission Project' in order to raise money for this worthy cause. And the orphanage has decided to memorialize her by naming part of this new building in her honor. Every year around her birthday in October we have a fundraising banquet to raise money for this project. We have had various other fundraising events also like, food/garage sale, walk-a-thon, basketball tournaments, etc. There has been tremendous change in the lives of the youth around here. It is so amazing and rewarding to see all this happen and unfold each time. Also during our annual fundraising event beginning this October, we will give out 'Community Service Awards' to eligible children from the community in Sonika's honor & memory.

The Educational Center will contribute to the changing life process, for all the kids at El Oasis and we have pledged to continue Sonika's dream of helping the children at El Oasis. Please pray for us and this wonderful project.

May God richly bless you.

Johnson & Shyamala Ram

## Horse and Cart update



From left to right in the front row: Elizabeth Johnson, Alyssa Chung, and Bethany Jenkins. The back row: Eric Hickman, Deanna Moore and Jeremy Ramsey.

As you may recall, the Qué Pasa had a request for a horse and cart. This cart was badly needed in Romania. The students at Inez Wrenn School

took on the horse and cart as a school project.

The students did just about everything to raise the money. The younger students colored pictures, greeting cards and bookmarks. They even made fans and christmas ornaments. Some of the older students also raked leaves to raise their part of the money needed.

The Students raised a grand total of \$875.00. We here at ICC would like to thank the students for giving of their time and money.

## The Corvette

About a year ago, Dr. Ford surprised Pacific Cataract and Laser Institute staff by purchasing a beautiful 50th anniversary Corvette. Each one of the staff got to take it home to enjoy for 100 miles. Dr. Ford's only warning sticker was not to take the gift as an encouragement of materialistic values. "Don't set your affections on things that rust!"

Each of the 275 employees took it out for a day and 100 miles. What fun! Some drove it slow and some drove it fast.

Although we are not just sure how fast, there was probably a direct correlation between the maximum speedometer reading and size of grin when the driver returned the keys.

After the car made the rounds, Dr. Ford was going to auction it on Ebay and donate the proceeds to International Children's Care—one of his

favorite charities. But with auctions, there's always a risk of low bids. So he gave the car to a lucky staff member!

Oh, by the way—they then donated \$35,000 to International Children's Care.



*A Legacy of Love*

*Providing for the future through planned giving*

Contact Doug Congleton at ICC for more information on how you can become part of the "Legacy of Love"

(800) 422-7729

Doug@ForHisKids.org

# A Personal Message

April 2004

Dear ICC Family,

It was just across the border into Tijuana, Mexico, but we were soon aware of a drastic change in the way people lived. Like other countries where we had ICC projects for homeless children, there were modern streets and, yes, some areas of town where beautiful homes graced the avenues. But, in another area we drove through neighborhoods where large families with little children existed in makeshift hovels. The real shocker was a hill where the town garbage was dumped. We drove up the rocky, rough road and saw mountains of rubbish. Getting closer we saw people with sacks going through the piles of garbage. Anything that could possibly be used was rescued, maybe pieces of castoff wood, tar paper, or plastic that could be used to build into a shelter. There were old shoes or castoff garments all mixed up with the refuse. Then we saw children, rummaging through rotting fruit or other food stuff, and we realized that these children were looking for something to eat. While we had heard of the extreme poverty to be found in this large, border city, we were not prepared for the smells and the squalor where these children existed.

For some time we had heard of the needs in this country so close to our land of plenty. "Is ICC going to do anything for the children in Mexico?" we had been asked.

In thinking of new projects in other countries, the first question we always ask is, "What are the needs of children there? Are there homeless children?"

On this trip into Mexico, Ken and I were on a fact-finding search. First of all, are we needed? Next on the agenda would be to find the government office that was in charge of Children's Services. They could tell us about the needs of children and what the laws were governing their care. We finally located that office and talked to the director. She assured us, "We never have enough places for the abandoned children we find." She encouraged us to let them know if we decided to open a facility, and they would help us with the permits.

We took the report back to the office to discuss the possibility with our board members. Ken and I had thought many times of the advantage it would be to have a Children's Village close enough to use volunteers from the US. Also, I suggested, "You know, many people wish they could visit one of our ICC operations and see what a Children's Village is like. Baja Mexico would be within hours by car."

Soon another fact-finding trip was planned. Ken and I drove to Mexico to pursue the possibility of finding land that would be suitable. It needed to be in a rural area, but not too far from a town where supplies could be found. The important factor, which proved to be the most difficult, was to have a good water supply. We drove down the western coast and found some available land, but without a

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*Homes For The Homeless*

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*"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matthew 25:40*

good water supply. Finally, we discovered that the endless fertile farms on the coast were drawing water to the point where the water was briny or salty, because of being so close to the sea and so low.

On one of these trips we discovered another orphanage started by an American woman, who had enlisted help from Protestant churches on the west coast of the US. We were interested in the way they were using volunteers who could come for periods of a few months and then be replaced by others. It didn't furnish the continuity that our ICC homes did, but they were doing a good work. They even had an area called their "Park" with spaces and hookups for about 25 RV's.

Driving away from there Ken remarked, "That is a good idea. If we can find enough land, we could have an RV park too for volunteers or even for approved visitors." But, we still didn't find land that met our needs with a good water supply. "We'll need to go to the center of the Baja where there is more altitude, I think, to find good water," Ken said.

Finally, we heard of a farm for sale on the road from Ensenada to San Felipe. We were thrilled to find a place already in cultivation with a good well that provided water to irrigate the more than 100 acres. It is in the Valley of the Trinidad, with mountains providing a backdrop on all sides. We could picture a Children's Village here!

Plans needed to be drawn up for the Village, where to locate the homes with adequate space for children to play, a school, a main building that could be used for a church and staff homes. But the first building would be the shop where supplies could be safely kept.

Teams of volunteers were brought to start building. Space doesn't permit the whole story, but the houses began to go up. A club house was erected at the beginning next to the RV park. This had a kitchen for volunteers to use as well as rest rooms.

Bill Colson, who built and operated retirement homes, was instrumental in sending crews to help build and then sent down furniture for the first homes.

It was just before Christmas when we received word that the DIF (the government department in charge of children) had an emergency with 24 children for whom they needed to find a place. Without sufficient time to prepare, our director there, with help from the office, opened our doors. A large bus arrived, full of children. It was a moment to remember. These were children who had no home but were finding one just in time for Christmas. They scattered like chickens all over the place. It was all the adults could do to corral and control them. Soon afterward a group of volunteers came from Columbia Academy. They had come prepared to give the kids a Christmas party. The Children's Village, El Oasis, was launched.

Since then, many groups of students and other volunteers have come, and now our homes are housing 49. Among the student volunteers was one special girl, Sonica Ram, from the Sligo SDA Church in Washington, DC. You can read her story in this month's *Que Pasa*. Sonica will forever be remembered for her love and devotion to the children. Her story illustrates the impact on young people who come and experience what it means to serve Jesus in the person of His little homeless children.

With our love and prayers,

*Aleyon and Ken*

PS: Please pray with us for all of these children's villages where the need for sponsors and monthly financial help is so great. We need to be able to continue to provide for these children that God has placed in our care.