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If you want to help for a day, give them rice;  
If you want to help for a while give them a tree;  
If you want to help for an eternity, give them an education

November 2008

### *Meet Our Students*



#### ***Hassly Nizeth Hernandez Altamirano***

I am four years old and the youngest in my class. I love working with numbers and toys in kindergarten. My parents work in the dump and bring me toys and clothes that they find there.



#### ***Luz Elena Reyes Delgado***

I am five and in kindergarten. I love playing with my sister, Wendy. We play Hide-In-Seek. And when we get tired from that, we color.



#### ***Carlos Armando Zaragoza Estrada***

I am five-years-old. I go to kindergarten and I love playing with my classmates. My mama and papa work in the new garbage dump. I have two sisters. Ana went to this school and now is in the elementary school. My other sister is a baby.



#### ***Leonardo Yair Hernandez Altamirano***

I am five. I live to play at school. I have two younger sisters: one is a baby and Hassly is four. She also goes to this school. My mama and papa both work in the new dump.



#### ***Gloria Belinda Lopez Garcia***

I am four and I go to kindergarten. My teacher is Profe Felipe. I study a lot. I love my gym class because we play sports. I cry very little. My mama works in the dump. She is a single mother.



#### ***Karla De Los Angeles Santos Delgado***

I am five. I have a brother, Jesus, and a sister, Alondra. They are both older than me. I like to play with my dolls and with my friend, Evelyn. My favorite foods are rice and spaghetti.

## Taking Responsibility: Matagalpa, Nicaragua

A man from the Matagalpa, Nicaragua garbage dump points to brackish brown river that runs nearby.

“Water. We need drinking water,” he says when we ask how we can help. “We get all our water from that contaminated river.”

That is what Sister Teresa and I heard when we traveled to Nicaragua in June 2008. From that river, residents bathe, wash clothing, and drink. “That is why their skin has a yellow tint,” Sister Teresa told me quietly.

You may already know of Responsibility’s work in educating the children of the Tijuana dump. Now we are asking for your support as we launch a second project in the poverty-ridden dump of Matagalpa.

As an international nonprofit organization, we provide education in settlements where no one else is willing or able. In Nicaragua, our priorities must shift. First will come the bare necessities: potable water, food, clothing, and health resources, things we take for granted in our own daily lives. Then we will build a school and, more importantly, provide that school with teachers.

During our stay, I met Leonardo, a young Nicaraguan minister trying to educate the children at the dump. He asked how I got started.

“With nothing but a tarp,” I told him. “I went to the Tijuana dump every day and laid down the tarp. Children came running for classes in English, kindergarten, culture, math, and art.”

“Me too,” he answered.

“My tarp was blue. Yours?”

“The same, a big blue tarp.”

“Leonardo, we have something in common,” I told him. “If I were Santa Claus, what one gift would you ask for?”

“A three-classroom kindergarten. Right now all I have for those children is this.” He showed me a dirt-floored hallway of his primitive elementary school.”

My mind raced. I thought, *meeting this young minister was meant to happen*. And I pictured Cristina, our devoted Responsibility volunteer who died suddenly last year.

“What if Responsibility supporters built a school, provided the teachers, and funded the educational supplies?” I asked. “And what if we called the school the Cristina Marselli LaRosa Kindergarten in memory of twenty-four years of volunteering with us? And you? You will be the director of this Responsibility school.”

“Perfecto!” Leonardo whispered.

I carry with me the image of a small boy scrabbling in a dirty plastic trash bag, grabbing handfuls of days-old rice and stuffing them into his mouth. A desperate boy who, with your help, can learn and grow, and reach toward a better life.



In this Nicaraguan dump, I watched people eat whatever they could find in the garbage and drink contaminated water. Worldwide, fifteen million people survive picking trash in garbage dumps. Their average life expectancy of these scavengers is thirty-four.

Even young children can understand the plight of youngsters growing up in abject poverty. I recommend *Armando and the Blue Tarp School* by Edith Hope Fine and Judith Pinkerton Josephson as a way to open discussion about helping

others. Part of the proceeds benefit Responsibility. [www.bluetarpschool.com](http://www.bluetarpschool.com)

So, let us begin.

Here is what I am asking of you. If the people of Matagalpa touch your heart as they have touched mine, help us explore ways to fund this important project. Request help from your families, friends, neighbors, churches, employers. Our work in Tijuana is still important, but the need in Matagalpa, Nicaragua is great.



The question I’m often asked is, “Why help there? It is so far away.” (I got that same question when I was a teacher in New York 28 years ago.)

Here’s my honest answer: “I would like you to visit this dump with me. And when the scavengers who earn one dollar a day, who take all their children—from babies to teenagers—to work with them, ask for your help, see what your answer will be.”

Sincerely,

*David Lynch*