

For His Children

A Christian ministry to children in Ecuador

June - July 2006



“Serendipity: the accidental or unexpected discovery of something good”- the perfect description of a recent Saturday in July. We can't remember how it happened, but before we knew it, Roberto (3, at right) was having breakfast at the Vaughn's! When it was over, he had consumed four eggs, a banana, toast, corn flakes and milk, and a glass of OJ, a slice of papaya, some almonds, and two mugs of hot chocolate. When he finished, he gave us a big smile, licked his lips and matter-of-factly declared, “I'm full!”



On that same Saturday, at 10:30 AM, María Julieth (3 ½, above left) accompanied Melinda to the beauty salon. She had her nails painted a pretty pink and sat very still while Rodrigo gave her a new cut that shows off her natural curls. On the way home, we stopped at a local bakery when we saw their “freshly baked bread” sign, sampling some immediately, of course. The rest of the children at the Faith House surrounded us when we arrived home. Suddenly, five kids and Tía Nancy were in the bed of the pickup truck and we were off for a late afternoon drive around the neighborhood. (Do you remember your first ride in the back of a pickup truck on a summer afternoon?) We stopped for lollipops at a local store, returning to FHC at a snail's pace, with one more ride around the block to satisfy clamors for “*Más! Más!*” As they climbed out of the truck, they made us promise to do it again soon.

Reports written that day? *ZERO*. E-mails answered? *ZERO*. The pure, lighthearted joy from spending a day with FHC's precious children? *Priceless*.

Adoptions: Felipe has a forever family! In late June, Debbie and Merle Amstutz, (at right) became Felipe's new family. The Amstutz family met Felipe (4) while on a mission trip to FHC with their church in early 2005. When thoughts of Felipe kept tugging at their heartstrings, they wrote and asked about adoption. Felipe was two months old when he was welcomed at FHC in August 2002 after having surgery to correct spina bifida. Paralysis of his lower body has presented no obstacle to him. Felipe is one of the sweetest children at FHC: friendly, sociable, agreeable, generous, patient and trusting. He is always willing to give his best and try his hardest. We send our sincerest congratulations to the new Amstutz family at home in Ohio!



New arrivals: Juan José (at left) was born in July 2005 and admitted to FHC in April 2006. A local hospital referred the case to FHC when a young lady brought the nine-month old baby to the hospital. She said a woman on the street offered her the baby, saying she wasn't the mother (?) and she couldn't take care of him. The young lady thought she would keep the baby, but then decided to take him to the hospital. Juan José is a very handsome boy – a little shy - but if you spend time with him, he'll reward you with a toothy smile!



Anahí Roxana (in blue sweater above right) was welcomed at FHC in May. Family difficulties caused Anahi's mother to make the decision that her baby be adopted. She was referred to FHC by a local hospital. Anahi was born in early May, weighing 8 lbs. She is a beautiful, cuddly baby, and freely gives the brightest smiles. She now weighs 13 1/2 lbs.

Andrea (previous page, in pastel green) was born in early April 2006, and admitted to FHC two weeks later. She was found outside a home in a rural neighborhood east of Quito. The police were called, the baby taken to the children's hospital in Quito, and FHC was contacted to receive her. Andrea is doing well. She weighed 7 1/2 lbs. at birth and now weighs 13 1/2 lbs.

Please pray for these three new children. To put it simply, it's very traumatic to be sent to a children's home after being relinquished by your family. All three children, their birth families, and their future adoptive families need prayer for healing, forgiveness and strength.

Passings: In early June, Carlitos (1 1/2) passed away. Genesis, (3) also with severe special needs, suffered cardiac arrest and died within minutes of Carlitos. Together with our pediatrician, we had planned that should the health of either of these children deteriorate, we would continue to care for them at home. Death is a very real possibility for our children with special needs (Carlitos and Genesis were both diagnosed with severe microcephalus and hydrocephalus), but when two children died within minutes, it was traumatic for us all. Later we reflected on how much love and attention our caregivers lavished on these two; if love could sustain life, Carlitos and Genesis would still be with us. We thank God for the time they allowed us to care for them, and for all they taught us about patience, taking life one day at a time, and ministering to the needs of others.



Traveling through time: In May 2005, we received an e-mail from Erik José Pedersen (at left with Melinda) inviting us to his confirmation in the Lutheran church in May 2006. A little background info: about 14 years ago, we held Erik in our arms as a newborn in Quito's Metropolitan Hospital's Neonatal Nursery. In those days, Erik was "José Ignacio" and was the second child welcomed at FHC. Receiving all our love and attention as the one and only baby at FHC, he captured our hearts and emotions. Fast forward to 2006: Erik was persistent with his invitations to his confirmation, prompting us to take a moment to reflect on how much our family loves him. The decision wasn't hard to make – the answer had to be "yes"! Thanks to Clark's frequent flyer miles and the VISA card, I, (Melinda), and my adventuresome sister, Leslie Maxwell-Sckalor, traveled to Scandinavia in May.

There are many children from FHC who have been adopted all over Europe, so we tried to make the most of our two week trip, concentrating on Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Our first stop was beautiful Sand, Norway, surrounded by fjords, to visit Emily (at right), and parents Ester and Svein. Then it was on to Erik José's confirmation in Folldal, Norway, where it stays light in the summer until 1 AM! It was a lovely celebration in a centuries-old church, with Erik's fantastic parents, Karin and Per-Arne, his two younger brothers, Jimmy and Robert, and lots of friends and relatives. Erik is a computer whiz, plays the clarinet, and loves shopping in Oslo (four hours south of Folldal).

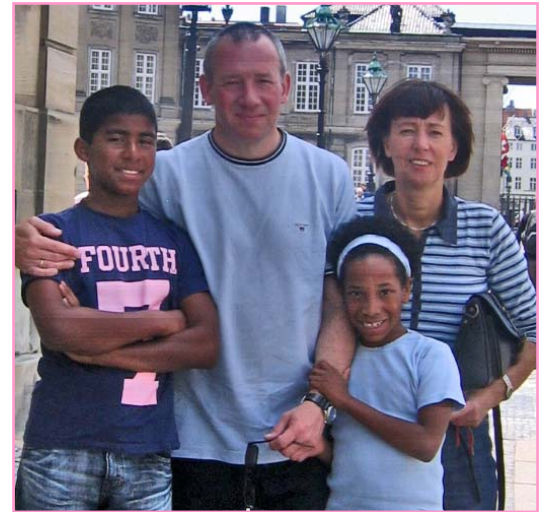


Then Leslie and I took the ferry to Denmark where we were warmly welcomed by (in photo at left) twins Gry and Mai, parents Claus and Rie, and twins Ana and Sara, and their parents Jane and Ole. Also joining the party were Carlos and his parents Susan and Thomas. (Also in the photo are Jane and Ole's son, Jonas, also adopted from Ecuador, and Susan and Thomas's youngest son.) This handsome group of pre-teens (some who met each other for the first time during our visit), are talented in music, art and academics.

That evening we took a train south to Copenhagen for a special visit with Marcus José and family: Lene, Soren, sister Rebecca (at right). Marcus is showing some impressive skills in soccer, is quite popular, and is a loving big brother to vivacious Rebecca.

For our final stop we boarded a northbound train to Stockholm, where Mitch and Elisabeth Ward, proud parents of Nicole and Paul, met us and drove us north through the picturesque Swedish countryside to their home. The following day, a group of eight FHC adoptive families (in photo below) gathered for a picnic, under the Ecuadorian and Swedish flags flying on the Ward's flagpole.

The trip was perfect! We were very warmly and generously welcomed and it was amazing to again embrace these beautiful children and teens who were once infants at FHC. There is no doubt about it, they are the center of their parents' lives! It impressed us how much the families cherish and respect their child's Ecuadorian heritage. We were inspired to see how motivated these families are as they lovingly nurture their precious children.



As we flew back to the U.S, I wanted to encourage our caregivers to continue to do their best in caring for the children at FHC - *and to do it even better. All of the families talked about the loving, attentive care their children received at FHC. Could it be possible for our caregivers to give more? More emotional connection, more eye contact, more words of praise and affirmation, more hugs, more of themselves, more of the God-given love and affection that nurtures another human being? Your prayers in this regard are essential. Our words and encouragement as directors to our staff are finite and might be forgotten in a*

minute. We will perhaps have to remind them many times. Only God can profoundly impress our caregivers and staff with the eternal and spiritual importance of the care that they give every child at FHC.

For two and a half months in May, June and July, FHC closed its doors to requests to receive children. We had no space for any more cribs. We were also seriously over budget by \$2,000 per month, and our patience had worn thin with the pace at which the children's legal cases move through the courts (two years or more). Many of you received a letter explaining these situations in more detail. We have made the painful but necessary decision to limit the number of children cared for at FHC-Quito to approximately 40, (previously 45-50). This will reduce our monthly deficit by 50%. We know many of you have prayed for FHC, have increased your financial support, and many of you have accepted our challenge to sponsor a child.

We know that prayer is working because we are beginning to see some positive changes. Numerous government entities and authorities have responded to a letter we sent them explaining why we closed our doors. We have met with members of the Ecuadorian National Council of Children and Adolescents to strategize how to avoid delays in the courts. It will be a slow process, but we are encouraged by what has happened so far. Thank you to FHC Board member Carol Wambeke and husband Augusto de la Torre who provided inspiration, guidance and insight for Clark and Melinda in this process while on a family vacation in Quito in July. Augusto accompanied Melinda to meetings with government officials to identify problems and propose solutions. This matter needs your continued prayers - thank you. In mid-August, FHC opened the doors *just a little*. We now are caring for 41 children, with five on a waiting list.

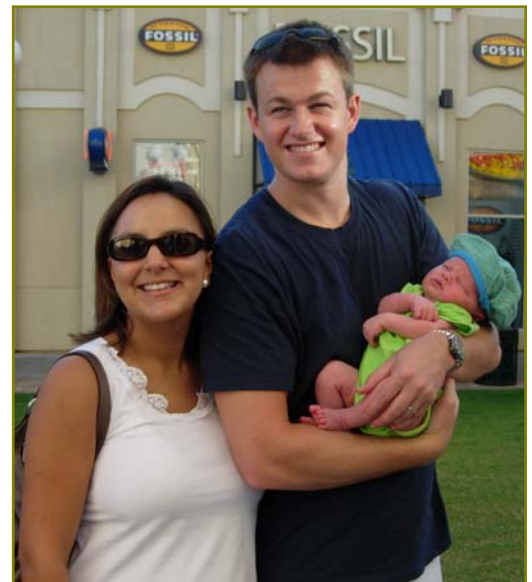
Latacunga News: Now that land in Latacunga has been purchased, we've started improvements on the property. We've bulldozed a road, excavated a cistern and a crew of ten local bricklayers is building a concrete block wall (at right). With 20 children at FHC-Latacunga, a permanent and larger home is needed! Provided sufficient funds are received in the coming months we plan to start the construction of the home in early 2007. An estimate is \$125,000 for the first phase which will be approximately 4,000 sq ft., with space to care for 25 children.

Matching gifts: We received incredibly generous offers from three families who support FHC. Together, they will match any donation made, up to \$30,000! This is their response to our recent letter to our supporters requesting financial help. If this encourages you to give, *please attach a note to your check indicating that this is part of the "Matching Gift Donation". This will enable us to apply your donation toward the matching gift fund.* Thank you!



Some special family news: In June, our daughter, Lesley Ann (at left), graduated with honors (B.A. Fine Arts (Dance), Spanish, and Ibero-American Studies) from the University of California at Santa Barbara. The motivation and discipline required to complete a university education is considerable, and even more remarkable when it is with recognition for exemplary grades. This summer Lesley is working in Santa Barbara and then will travel until spring 2007, one of her stops being Quito for Christmas.

On August 1st, our son Phillip, and his lovely wife, Daniela (at right), were blessed with the birth of their first son and our first grandson, in Shreveport, Louisiana. *Matias William Lionel Vaughn* weighed 8 lbs., 7 oz., and is gorgeous. If you are a grandparent or great grandparent, you know how amazing it is to see *your* child holding *his* child in his arms. Phillip



and family will be moving to the USAF base in Minot, North Dakota in November, to fly as a co-pilot in the B-52h bomber. **To Lesley, Phillip and Daniela:** your parents proudly and lovingly congratulate you!

Please pray with us for: **1)** continued positive changes in government officials to resolve FHC's children's legal cases efficiently; **2)** continued increased monthly donations; and **3)** help! FHC needs help in maintenance (plumbing, electrical, construction, automotive, mechanical, computers), administrative tasks, helping with visiting mission teams, supervising our Volunteer-Intern program, and more. The ideal candidate(s) would be a single person (male or female) or couple (retirees welcome!), willing to give sacrificially of their time (at least a one year commitment), talents and energy. Some pre-requisites: intermediate Spanish language skills, willingness to live and work in a cross-cultural environment, to do whatever is needed, when it's needed, and be financially self-supported. Please pray that God will send us the perfect helper(s).

Thank you for your encouragement and for being part of this ministry.

Clark and Melinda Vaughn, Directors

Verónica Rodríguez, Administrator

For His Children

Casilla 17-08-8545, Quito Ecuador
Telephone/Fax: 011 593 2 247 0832, 280 8424
Email: info@forhischildren-ecuador.org

Tax-deductible donations may be sent to:

For His Children Brent and Joyce Bourdeau, FHC Ministry Assistants
9455 Elk Ridge South, Divide, CO 80814 USA
Telephone: 719 686 0132 Website: www.forhischildren-ecuador.org

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