

What the Farm means to me

By Dalila del Carmen Ponce Cruz, a child of the Farm

In 2005 when my mother realized that my siblings and I were to be taken to live somewhere else, she was unhappy about the decision, and made a decision in a moment of desperation and stress, when anything seemed like the right decision. The day that we were to be taken to the Farm of the Child, she refused and took us to another neighborhood where a lot of members of our family live so that we could live with them instead of being taken to Trujillo. In the end everything changed, because we returned to our house and the next day were picked up by two social workers from the Finca.

That day was one of the most emotional days of my life, since I was very excited to arrive at the Finca and every few minutes asked if we were about to arrive. I was 12, my sisters and brother 9, 5, 2, and 7 months. Since we arrived at the Farm of the Child, the direction of our lives has turned around 180 degrees, from the total liberty that we had living with my mother to the careful guidance of those at the Finca.

During these six years that I have lived in this project of love, I have been filled with faith, family, love, hope, and many other things that make me get up in the morning and know my purpose in life. The Finca has become my second mother, since I receive everything from her, and sometimes she has given me even more than my biological parents were ever able to. Due to the Finca, I have developed certain values that strengthen me and guide my development. The six years between 2005 and 2011 have been six years full of achievements for me and my family.

Sometimes I ask myself: "Dalila, what has the Finca done for you in all of these years? What have you learned from this place?" Those four pillars that daily I was reminded to live both inside and outside of the Finca – Simplicity, Community, Service, and Spirituality – sometimes I



considered them a bother but now that I take time to reflect, they are pillars that have taught me to know and understand those around me, to learn about God and to serve others.

What have I learned from the Finca about simplicity? Having lived in the city of La Ceiba the past two years, I have felt that I was definitely different than the rest of society here because I didn't have a BlackBerry or because I didn't have an iPad like everyone else (at least, that's how I felt at the beginning of 2009), although even without these things I have been able to survive thanks to what the Finca has taught me – that I should have what is necessary, but not waste my money on things that I don't need.

The pillar of community has taught me to look at those around me with love and be able to share myself with them, regardless of who it was. It has helped me form relationships with people that have helped me to grow.

What has the Finca taught me about service? Sometimes I asked myself: "Who am I? Why should I do something for others? What am I good at?" And then, like a light that appeared in the midst of darkness, my answer was clear. Simply because God has given me certain gifts and talents, I have to put them to use for the benefit of others.

Spirituality: not last because it is the least, but because this is the pillar from which I have learned the most. This pillar is the one that gives reason to my life, that helps me to look at my life in a different perspective and with different expectations, and to see that my life is full of many blessings that come from someone much bigger than us, from God. Before arriving at the Finca I didn't know anything about God, this Being that everyone talked about, that everyone made me give thanks to and pray to. I didn't know that He had made me, and that He gave my life purpose, and most amazing of all is that I didn't even know that He loves me – every day. All that I know now about God and my faith I learned from that beautiful place called the Farm of the Child.

"If I had to thank separately each person that makes this project possible, I could never finish, but I have to say to everyone, thank you so much for supporting us, and thank you for your prayers, contributions, and support, which make possible the dreams of many children."

This November I graduate from High School, but I couldn't have arrived this far if it weren't for the values and the support that I have received from this project of love and faith. The Farm has opened many doors for me. I feel like a little bird that is learning how to fly from its nest because it already has the strength and ability to do so; I know I am prepared for this next step, having received formation along the way. Though I know it won't be easy, I trust in God that it is possible now for me to spread my wings and fly.

"Thank you again, and may God bless the family of the Farm of the Child. You all live in my heart always, and even in the trials of life I will not forget what you have done for me."

Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but Him who sent me. —Mark 9:37

Gratitude is a Gift

By Ysmary Trejo, Program Director

"In gratitude for the great love that Jesus Christ gives us..." These are the first words of our mission statement at Farm of the Child, expressing and feeling gratitude. Gratitude is a virtue and a gift from God.

Every morning, together with our children, house parents, tías, religious Sisters, and missionaries, we lift up our prayers, giving thanks to God for another day, and for the challenge to live with intense joy in Christ's love.

This prayers turns into action when we are grateful for each and every person that surrounds us. Saying "thank you" is an action that is always present in our hearts and minds.

I want to thank our missionary class of 2009- 2011 who complete their service to our community this December; thank you for your commitment, your generosity, your love and your service to this mission. Your labor of love during these past two years has been invaluable, leaving a wake of memories that touches many lives and the certainly that, as brother and sisters in Christ, you are with us across time and distance. I also thank our newest missionaries who arrived "home" to our community on October 1st of this year. Thank you for hearing God's call and for responding "YES!"

Thinking of all the times in a day that we say "thank you," reflecting on the importance of being grateful, I want to equally thank each and every one of you that has given your love, your prayers, your commitment, your dedication and your gifts over the past 15 years in which the Mission of Farm of the Child has become a reality.

To our benefactors who have selflessly dedicated your efforts to helping us to build a future for countless Honduran

children, thank you for your continued support. Thank you for helping us to continue building the Kingdom of God through this mission. We remember each of you in our daily prayers.



Ysmary Trejo

A special thank you to our founder, the late Vincent Pescatore, and his beloved wife Zulena, for hearing God's call to serve the people of Honduras in faith and love; for making Farm of the Child a home for our children and adolescents. These children, who were once at risk, are now, today, transforming their lives for the Glory of God.

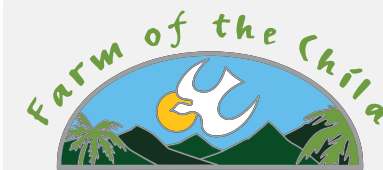
Giving life to the words of Matthew 10:8: "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give," I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving, in gratitude for your support and prayers.

May your hearts be continually filled with gratitude, as God's mercy and goodwill is with us, until we eternally rest in His Glory.

Gratefully, your sister in Christ,
Ysmary Trejo

"...God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

– 2 Corinthians 9: 7-8



1616 Nottingham Knoll Drive
Jacksonville, FL 32225



The production and printing of this newsletter is completely donated.
Farm of the Child is an IRS 501(c)3 organization.

Happy Holidays from the Farm of the Child

FRIENDS OF THE FARM

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

HOLIDAYS 2011



A THOUSAND TIMES OVER

By Erin Ramsey, Adolescent Girls' House volunteer

On a warm, sticky morning in mid-January of this past year, I groggily awoke in the bed I shared with my fellow volunteer Kristina, shifting carefully on the mattress carefully woven together out of clothesline so as not to wake my sleeping counterpart. We were on vacation with the Cruz family in a the small rural village that is home to their "papi" Don Santos and many of their family members – a town without electricity and running water, where the rising and setting of the sun dictate the schedule of the day. Get up at dawn, haul water, sit, talk, eat, walk slowly, sit, wash, visit neighbors, drink Coca-cola... and do it all again...

As I watched my then-seventeen-year-old "daughter" Dalila snap into action that morning, hauling water from the well for us to cook, wash and bathe with, scrubbing her younger siblings' dirty clothes on a rock and laying them out to dry in the hot sun, and bathing and dressing the little ones, I felt like I truly understood for the first time the gift that the Farm has given to our children, and how different Dalila's life would have been had she never been given these opportunities. As I sat in plastic chairs, chatting with her and her cousins – girls of her own age or younger, almost all of whom already have children of their own, who look worn with the weight of burdens they are too young to bear – I saw my bright-eyed "daughter" with new eyes. This is, after all,

the same girl who cleaned up after her mother gave birth to her youngest sister, who effectively raised her siblings until they arrived under the Farm's care, who arrived grades behind in school but quickly made up for lost time and is now graduating from the most prestigious Catholic high school in La Ceiba. This is also the one who likes to wear her purple platform shoes and straighten her hair and prefers not to eat egg yolks – who is the president of our parish's youth group, loved among her classmates, and the recipient of boundless attention from the Farm's littlest ones each time we are able to make the trip back to Trujillo, who hopes to study business administration next year at the local University.

The Farm asked me to be Dalila's "encargada" – her caretaker – this year, but the truth is that she has seen much more in her eighteen years of life than I have in mine, and that she is often the one who is my teacher in goodness, faithfulness, and generosity. Dalila impresses me almost daily with the depth of her faith and the generosity of her heart, and she is a true example of the incredible difference the Farm can make in the life of a child.

I believe so very much that if even one life is truly better because of this project, all of the work and money and time and tears are well worth the effort. And when I watched this incredible young woman walk across the stage and receive her diploma this past month, when I saw her celebrate with the volunteers and friends and family members gathered in her honor, and when I think about the



Dalila, back left, with her siblings.

bright future that lies before her, I know that it is all worth it, a thousand times over, that this work is important and meaningful, and that there is so much hope woven through it all. Our deepest thanks to all of those who make possible the opportunities that have changed Dalila's life and the lives of so many others. May God bless you mil veces, a thousand times over, for the kindness you have shown to the children of the Farm.

Congratulations, Dalila! May God bless you infinitely as you continue to grow in faith, love, and gratitude.

\$390,000 must be raised by June to keep all program services running at current levels

Please help us reach the goal and continue serving the children and families of the Farm of the Child

\$90,000 raised to date

SPIRITUALITY

SERVICE

COMMUNITY

SIMPLICITY

WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THE NEW YEAR?

"To be a good friend, to be kind and good."

– Hildebrando, Age 8



"I hope to have a year of good grades. I have heard that the high school I am going to is tough, so I hope to work hard so that my grades will be good."

– Nolvía, Age 16

"I hope to be on the honor roll again next year."

– Miriam, Age 13

"I hope to improve in my studies, make new friends, and have inner peace. For the Farm, I hope that we keep growing in the pillars, and loving others more."

– Nelly, Age 16

"I hope for friends, sisters, no wait I already have sisters...."

– Roni, Age 11



"That I have a fun 15th birthday!"

– Riccy, Age 14

"That I pass to second grade."

– José Manuel, Age 10

"I have two hopes. One is noticing in small ways when I return to the states how life at the Farm has changed and transformed me. The second is going to enough Goodwills and garage sales to find a raincoat for every child at the Farm."

– Sheena, Leaving Missionary

"To transform my heart to be more like God's."

– Sara, Missionary

"My hope for 2012 is to have a rockin' awesome school year!"

– Amanda, Missionary

"Peace is my hope. Peace in the hearts of everybody here."

– Erin Marina, Missionary



"Be more active."

– Belgia, Age 12

"Do my homework everyday."

– Belkis, Age 10

"What I need is that every day I gain a little more wisdom, and a little more understanding and knowledge. That each day God shows me a little more the steps He wants me to take."

– Sonia, Houseparent

"Do more independent work in school."

– Nelsy, Age 10

"Do my chores!"

– Jose Pastor, Age 9

"For friends and supporters."

– Angel Daniel, Age 9



BLESSINGS OF THOSE WHO SERVE

By Mary Kate Battle

Magdalena is an eleven year old girl who resides in St. Anthony of Padua House here on the Farm. She is well known for her great energy and amazing smile. Due to some cognitive and intellectual disabilities she has struggled in school since her arrival to the Farm four years ago. Over the years, many teachers have worked with her to help meet her individual needs.

Over the past year, as the special education teacher in the school, I have been blessed to be able to continue this work. Recently she has focused on reading a book all by herself. I consistently tried to give her very basic books to read; and in true Magdalena fashion, she consistently chose a different book to read from my classroom, always proving more difficult. She is a smart girl, and knew that when she was ready, the book would be there, but until then all would just have to wait.

On Tuesday, September 6, 2011 that book finally arrived. After finishing up her homework during her tutoring with me, she asked if there was still time to read. Since we still had some time, I told her of course, and she proceeded to choose the book Spot se pasa la noche (Spot spends the night). She asked me how to pronounce the name Spot from the title, and then proceeded to page one reading every word syllable by syllable. When she reached the halfway point I asked her if she realized that she was only six pages away from reading it all on her own. She simply smiled and turned to the next page. I do not know if she or I was more nervous when we finally arrived at the last page. She was literally only a sentence away from her big goal.

She continued on word by word like the calm champion she is.

When she finished that last word, I turned the page for her to show her that she had finished the book all on her own. She gave me a semi blank stare; then when she saw me begin to literally jump in excitement for her, she broke out one of her infectious smiles and began to laugh in pure joy. She then gave me a big hug, and ran off to her house yelling for her tía (house aunt) wanting to share her exciting news.

That afternoon Magdalena and I both told everyone we encountered the joyful news. She continued to exude pure joy and pride in her grand accomplishment for the rest of the week to come. In a moment of such grace and joy, one cannot help but to grow in hope for Magdalena, and all our kids here at the Farm. They are truly amazing kids, and blessings in our lives.



PRAYERS & PETITIONS

We pray for peace in Honduras, especially for an end to gang-related violence, so that each heart may be filled with the love of Jesus and that His Sacred Heart heals the brokenness and hurt that leads to hostility.

We pray for the Farm and ask the Lord to continue to bless, protect, lead and guide all of us who call it our home so that we may fulfill His will and share with others the gifts He has given us.

We pray for all missionaries and Farm children who are experiencing transition. We pray for guidance and peace for the newly retired missionaries and their transition to their lives in the United States and Nicaragua. We pray for the missionaries and adolescents who just began their time in La Ceiba so that the Lord may strengthen them and give them courage as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

We pray for our benefactors and for all of those who support the Farm financially, emotionally, and spiritually so that they continue to experience the grace of generosity and blessings the Lord has prepared for those who support His works.

Amen.

Gratitude for our leaving missionaries

By Kate Mattoon, Missionary, 3rd & 4th Grade Teacher

December 2 of this year marks the end of a 2-month journey for eight missionaries who came to the Farm in October of 2009, and my time with eight remarkable servants of God. From our first days learning Spanish in Guatemala, stretching across two school years and two birthdays each, and ending in these rain-soaked winter days some of us doubted would ever come, we have seen each other at our very best, our very worst, and everywhere in between. Each and every member of our group of missionaries has brought remarkable gifts to the table, and will be missed for the unique and beautiful person she is.

Sheena, the social worker for the two oldest boys' houses, leaves a legacy of courageous creativity. From Farm-wide art projects to beautiful birthday cards made almost entirely of other people's trash to daily acts of patient kindness for young boys with tough outer shells, Sheena has a gift for seeing the good that can be in the world around her, and challenging those who possess it to let it shine forth.

Francesca has been the social worker for the littlest boys and girls, as well as the adolescent girls. Her calm, loving presence, as well as her incredible patience with the kids will be greatly missed, as well as the care she has shown for the missionary community.

Alisha spent her first year at the Farm as the accountant, and her second year living in La Ceiba as guardian of the teenage boys in Phase II. Her incredible hospitality in La Ceiba, devotion to caring for and loving the kids, and willingness to take on tough questions, have made her great missionary, community member, and friend.

Georleny, a gifted psychologist from Nicaragua, has spent countless hours meeting with our children, caring for

their mental and emotional well-being. Along with her tireless work with the kids, she has formed strong relationships with many of the women who work at the Farm as house parents.

Scarleth, our second Nicaraguan psychologist, brings admirable compassion to her work as well as to our community. Her joyful presence will be missed by children, houseparents, and missionaries alike.

Kristina, who started her time at the Farm in charge of community outreach and spiritual life, shifted gears in the middle of this year to take over as our kindergarten teacher. In her two years here, she has formed lasting relationships with our neighbors and excelled in the classroom, teaching religion to every grade, as well as taking on the great challenge and blessing that is teaching four, five, and six year olds.

Nely, who joined our missionary group two summers ago, started off working with special education, then switched to teaching first and second grade in February. She has also dedicated herself to supporting and sharing life with our neighbors. With her help, a group of women who live nearby have started their own business, using their artistic talents to create products they can sell to support their families.

Erin, who worked in the school as the fifth and sixth grade teacher in her first year at the Farm, spent the past year living in La Ceiba as guardian of the adolescent girls who are studying there. Erin truly has a gift for being present to other people, for listening with compassion, and for entering into the messiness of life with patience and hope. Whether it be through a shared

breakfast, hours of late-night homework help, or daily acts of love for kids who are sometimes hard to love, she shows over and over the immeasurable value of truly being with another person.

Though my life may seem a little less full without the voices of these eight young women joining mine in song in the chapel, without their laughter around the kitchen table, and without the support and love they have shown me day after day for the past two years, I look to the coming year, my third at the Farm, with gratitude for the examples they provide me as true servants of God, and hope that until we meet again, we will carry each other in prayer.

