

Casa de Transicion (the Transition Home)

In June 2007 a dream of hope for teenage girls in Puerto Vallarta was realized with the opening of a special transition home, linked to the Refugio Infantil Santa Esperanza. This smaller, more intimate environment currently is home for five teenage girls and David, a six-year old special needs child with Down syndrome. House parents Lily and Enrique complete the Transition Home family. Located in a quiet, safe neighborhood with convenient access to schools, medical care, and shopping, this four bedroom home offers many advantages to those living there.

Over the years we have found that Refugio teenagers frequently desire more freedom and independence; yet still require support, guidance and security as they transition into adulthood. It is also a time when they experience internal emotional conflicts associated with the realities of their unique lives, such as what it means to be abandoned or not have a nuclear family. The Transition Home, with core support provided by the loving house parents and Sol, the Refugio administrator, as well as special counselors, tutors, and teachers, has helped these teenage girls to learn to function in a smaller family-like setting, to learn about the value of money, to make responsible decisions and choices, and to experience strong educational opportunities. Although they sometimes have tested the limits, with consistent support and love this has become a very successful transition opportunity.

Education plays an enormous part in this transition. Clearly strong educational experiences can provide for a better future by breaking the cycle of poverty that these children come from by allowing them brighter prospects. For the past two years, each of the girls currently living at the Transition Home has received a private school education where they have been able to participate in smaller, focused classes with more individualized instruction, and a stronger academic focus, including daily lessons in English and computer instruction.

Meet the children of the Transition Home:

David has been at the Refugio since he was six months old. He is the newest and the youngest child to come to the Transition Home, where as the “little brother” of the family he receives more personal and individual attention. He has done much to teach the girls about patience, compassion, and the need for consistent routines as they assist in his daily care. David has been able to attend a special Montessori school, *Casa dei Bambini*, since January with his personal tutor, where he is rapidly maturing and becoming much more independent. David loves listening to music, swimming, eating cake, and doing repetitive-type activities.

Aracely (Chely), now 13 years old, arrived at the Refugio two years ago with her four younger siblings, and had never been in school. By attending Montessori school, Chely has been able to complete grades 1 through 6 in only 2 years, and has obtained state-level recognition for her excellent academic performance. She is now ready to attend *Colegio Juana de Asbaje* middle school with the other girls next fall. Even though she has deep

wounds from her background that are difficult at times for her to overcome, she smiles often and is very intelligent, respectful, and focused. Although quiet and reserved, she is always willing to help and is still very protective of her brother and three sisters when she sees them at the Refugio. She plays the drums, wants to study literature because she loves to read, and was delighted to go to the circus recently for the first time.

Lucia (Lucy) is also 13 and lives at the Transition Home along with her sister, Carmen. Her warm smile reflects her soul and her positive feelings; although she must be frequently monitored for a heart condition. Lucy loves other children, particularly babies and toddlers, and is very helpful with David. She has just completed her first year at *Colegio Juana de Asbaje* and does well in school. Her favorite color is pink; she is quiet, observant, and responsible; and she loves to eat (particularly things with SPICY hot sauce). Lucy would like to become a famous hotel chef one day. At times is difficult for her to get up at 6:00 A.M. to go to school, but nonetheless she does it with joy.

Angela, another 13 year old, has a bright and beautiful smile and would like to be an actress or gymnast. Quiet and shy, she often lacks confidence and, as an adolescent this has caused her much pain. She carries many of her feelings inside too close to her heart and has had a particularly difficult time understanding why her family abandoned her at a young age. She has two siblings at the Refugio and likes to act as hairdresser to the younger Refugio children. She loves to work at a computer, but finds mathematics difficult and sometimes frustrating. The special support available for Angela at the Transition Home is making it possible for her to believe that others value her and find her capable and helpful. With encouragement her improved self-esteem will allow her to move away from moods of depression and shine as the beautiful young woman we all see.

Carmen, Lucia's older sister, is now 14 years old and loves to sing and play the tambourine. Since moving to the Transition Home two years ago, she has developed more mature attitudes and accepts life much more easily. With help from psychological therapy sessions, Carmen has been able to forgive issues from her parents and past life. She is like a rainbow because she loves all colors. Carmen would like to become a gymnast one day and is particularly good at speaking English with confidence. She wants to finish middle school at *Colegio Juana de Asbaje* and then go on to complete high school.

Marilu, also 14, has been in the care of her "mother", Madre Mari, since a very young age because her parents died. She is a very talented, creative, intelligent girl who loves to paint and play the piano. She is an excellent student, mature in her attitudes, and enjoys the new experiences available to her at the Transition Home. She loves her older siblings, including 16-year old MariCruz, who still lives at the Refugio, but rarely has the opportunity to see them. Marilu says that she is thankful to go to *Colegio Juana de Asbaje*. She loves the color royal blue, wants to play soccer, and would like to become a great architect one day.

We would like to maintain the smiles of hope for these youngsters. All these special children need your support to continue their education. Their current school offers them the best option for academic excellence and personal support. A generous donor has already guaranteed funds for David. The costs for each of the girls for the 2009-2010 school year include a 50% special discount at *Colegio Juana de Asbaje* (www.colegiojuanadeasbaje.com):

Item	Full Cost before Discount	Discount	Subtotal	Total
Tuition	\$ 2,700 pesos /mo x 10 months	50%	\$ 1,350 pesos	\$13,500/yr
Registration fee	\$ 2,700 pesos /yr	50%	\$ 1,350 pesos	1,350
Consumable materials	\$ 1,000 pesos/yr	50%	\$ 500 pesos	500
School insurance	\$ 350 pesos/yr	0	\$ 350 pesos	350
Books	\$ 3,500 pesos/yr	0	\$ 3,500 pesos	3,500
Total				\$19,200 pesos (\$1,500 US or \$1700 CDN)

With your support, the teenagers will be able to start the 2009-2010 school year in early August with their classmates.

Donations are also needed to support the Transition Home monthly maintenance costs including rent and utilities, food, medical expenses, and personal items.

If you are a Mexican donor wanting to make a tax deductible donation for the Transition Home, please check the Refugio Web site www.refugio-infantil.org under "Donations".

If you are a US donor, you can make a tax-deductable donation for the Transition Home through **Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation** www.childrens-shelter-of-hope-foundation.org.

If you are seeking a Revenue Canada-approved donation, please contribute through the **Canadian Children's Shelter of Hope Foundation** www.canadianchildrensshelterofhope.org