

December 2012



Dear Friends and Family,

We want to wish each and every one of you a Happy New Year! We hope you enjoyed a wonderful Christmas with family and friends celebrating Jesus Christ, the light that came into this dark world to give us hope for this life and the life to come.

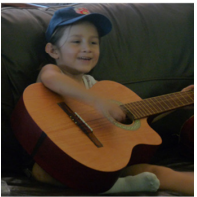


From Samantha

This first semester of school in Pre-K2 has been so much fun. It was great to see my friends from last year after being on summer break, but it was also fun having new friends in my class this year. My favorite thing to do at school is play in the dress-up area. My favorite memory from this first semester was being an angel in our Christmas program and singing Angels We Have Heard on High in Spanish.



In September I turned 5! For my birthday my daddy and mommy gave me a bicycle. I love riding around our porch with Anthony following me on his tricycle. Just recently we started taking our bikes over to the sports center because some of my friends have bikes too. It's fun to ride around with other kids.



At the beginning of December my mommy and I made a chain to start counting down until the day we went to Grandma and Grandpa's in California. I was so excited and every morning I would take a chain off until finally the day came. We fly at night so usually I would be sleeping by the time we arrive in California but not that night; I was wide awake ready to see my Grandma and Grandpa. It has been so much fun being with them. You would think that since I am on vacation that I would not want to go to school, but I really enjoy going to the preschool where my Grandma works. This year I got to go for six days. I met so many new friends and did lots of crafts and played on the playground. Thanks, Teacher Carol, for that treat!



My favorite time was celebrating Jesus' birthday. I got to visit Bethlehem AD, a real live interpretation of Bethlehem. There were camels, donkeys, soldiers, and angels. My favorite place was the manger where Mary and Joseph had baby Jesus. On Christmas morning we sang Happy Birthday to Jesus and unwrapped some gifts. It was such a fun, special day.

From Anthony

After so many people being here over the summer months, the days are not so busy now. I have more free time and have plenty of fun playing with my toys or my two BIG Rottweilers or just out in the yard. I really enjoy climbing, but Mommy always says that whatever I climb up I must be able to get back down; that is her rule. So one day I decided to see how high I could climb and decided that the best place to start was the gate on the door to our house. Mommy was outside hanging laundry so she was right there, but I made it all the way to the top by myself and came down too without any help. It's about eight feet, and I'm just getting started!



In November we had a team come and one of the guys, Evan, became my new favorite friend! I buddied around with him throughout the week helping work around the sports center. I also hung out with him during the youth game night and any other time I could. It's always fun having a team come and work with us.



From Thomas

For me this year has been full of blessings. This year I have gotten to know many of the youth in our neighborhood at a deeper level. I have also realized that many of them are young enough that they have not yet gotten involved in bad habits and therefore are at a good place to continue doing well if they have a good example. Miguel is one of those guys. He is taking advantage of a university scholarship, and his goal is to graduate and be able to help out his mom and dad. He has decided not to get involved in drinking and wasting his time like many of the youth but rather focus on his studies and his future. My hope is to continue my friendship with Miguel and the other youth and to be a good example in showing them a good way to live.



My soccer league ended in September, and my team placed 2nd. The exciting part of the final Saturday was the turnout from the community. There were two games to finalize first, second and third place and more than 80 people showed up to watch the games. It was exciting for the players to have such a crowd to play in front of. I celebrated with my team by having them all over to the house to watch the Spanish classic game – Real Madrid versus Barcelona. Then in November we started playing soccer in two different leagues.





From Amanda

Life has calmed down quite a bit in the past couple of months. It is a nice break from such a busy summer. With Samantha back in school, my days fall into more or less of a routine of going for a morning run, then doing some work around the house or paying scholarships or doing errands with Anthony and then home again for when Samantha gets home from school. For a couple of days this semester I helped out as a sub at Samantha's school- once in her classroom and once as the elementary PE teacher. I have no training as a teacher so let's just say that the experience was humbling. Everything went just fine, but I definitely walked away with a huge appreciation for all that teachers do and at the same time a sense of relief that I had not gone into teaching. It's just not my thing!



What I have enjoyed immensely is seeing the difference a small loan can make in the life of a young man or woman. Laura borrowed some money awhile back and told me that she planned to buy some used clothes in the market to sell in the neighborhood. About two months ago she came to give her final payment on the loan. She told me how thankful she was to have had the opportunity to do this and that it allowed her to have a little bit of her own money instead of always being dependent on her husband. I see a huge need for this kind of work – giving out small loans (\$20-\$200) for small business ventures to individuals who would not be able to apply for one at a bank. I am very interested in starting a mini microfinance program in our area. If you would be interested in helping me fund something like this, please contact me.



Before the year finished we had one more team that came down to work with us at the sports center. They were from Seattle area and helped out with lots of painting as well as doing crafts with the kids. They brought down undecorated ornaments and had each child decorate two. One was for the child to keep and the other was a donation that would then be sold in the States to raise money for the sports center. What a fun idea! The kids seemed to really like the fact that their art was going to be sold; so much so that some donated both ornaments. The group also hosted a movie night and a couple of youth nights. It was a great way to end the year at the sports center!



As we look to 2013 we know that God has a lot planned. I have 15 graduating high school students on my waiting list hoping for a scholarship to go on to college. We have a full summer of teams already planned, and we are looking forward to hosting a young adult mission team for six weeks. In January we have a team coming from State College, PA that always comes to work at the sports center and help pack all of the backpacks. We appreciate your prayers that God would continue to use us and speak through our lives and the various ways we reach out to those around us in Nicaragua.



Seeking Him for life,

Thomas, Amanda, Samantha y Anthony Gutiérrez



Eastside Development

PO Box 301471 Portland, OR 97294

Email: amanda@amandaythomas.com For more info, please check: www.amandaythomas.com