

December 2013/January 2014

Dear Friends and Family,

Happy New Year! We hope you enjoyed a very Merry Christmas celebrating the birth of Christ. We are currently visiting my family in California and are enjoying the cold weather compared to the heat of Managua. Here is just an update from each of us...

#### From Nicole

**I am 4 months old now and love to talk** and make the cutest little faces. No one seems to understand me, but that does not keep me from chattering on and on. Grandma says I sound like a little bird! My big sister, Sami, thinks I am her live baby doll and loves to carry me around. She is very careful with me though and loves me to pieces. Anthony also thinks I am the sweetest thing around, but he does not try to pick me up, thankfully. Overall life is great!

#### From Anthony

**My first year at school has gone really well.** I have really enjoyed getting to know my classmates and love to learn new things. I am quite independent and like to do things on my own. I am also very competitive so everything is a race to be the biggest or the fastest. These past couple of months I have enjoyed watching Halle dig a HUGE hole at the sports center. He brought in a machine to dig out most of the dirt. I love trucks and machines so it was lots of fun to watch. He has also cut down two trees, put up a new wall and a gate and lately set up elevation stakes around the hole. Rumor has it that we will be building a pool at the sports center. Anyone want to have a swimming race? Wait, I might need to learn how to swim first.

#### From Samantha

**School has been so much fun** this year with Anthony going too. We see each other throughout the day and come home together on the bus. While I continue to love school and my teachers, I cannot wait to get home after school to play with Nicole. She is my favorite little sister! Mommy says I am like a second mommy around the house because I am so helpful. When I am not playing with her or doing homework, Anthony and I are often over at the sports center playing with the kids or in the library doing crafts with Meraris, the librarian. She is really nice and always has activities for the kids to do.

#### From Thomas

**Thank you so much for your prayers** for me in getting my US citizenship. Back in July we wrote in our newsletter asking for specific prayer requests about this whole process. One was for having to come back to the States to be fingerprinted. After doing some research, we discovered that I could have them done in El Salvador which would be a lot cheaper. In September while Amanda's parents were visiting, her dad and I took a two-day road trip to El Salvador and were successful in having my fingerprints taken for my application. The second prayer request was that our interview date be given during December when we planned to be in the States. In November we received word that I would be interviewed on December 20<sup>th</sup>. I arrived in California on December 18<sup>th</sup> and two days later I was in San Francisco taking my US citizenship test. Everything went smoothly as I passed the tests and then because of our particular situation, they agreed to swear me in right then and there. So on December 20<sup>th</sup> I became a US citizen!

My work continues to go well in teaching computer classes to Pre K1 through 3rd graders. I have enjoyed having both Samantha and Anthony at the school this fall. My soccer league ended in September in which my team took third place. Then in November we started the league again with seven teams. My team has been playing really well and is undefeated so far. The other day I realized that I have had some players that have been playing with me since they were 13 years old. They are now 18 and still playing, but what is more exciting is that they have recently graduated

from high school and are looking to go to college next year. Amanda is hoping to raise enough funds in her scholarship program to be able to sponsor these young men.

**From Amanda**

**What a year this has been!** A new beautiful, healthy baby. Thomas receiving US citizenship. Seven university students in the scholarship program graduating with their degrees. Another fifty university students completing another year of study. Seven different short-term teams blessing the sports center and the community. And numerous individuals making a difference through prayer, hard work, service and financial giving. God continues to amaze me through His blessings to the sports center, the scholarship program and our family. Back in May we had learned that a foundation was willing to give \$16,400 as a matching gift for us to build a pool at the sports center. A group of girls from Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church had committed to help raise the rest of the funds. In September we were very excited to hear that on the Sunday when the girls spoke to their congregation about their new fundraiser, one gentleman came to them between services and told them that he would like to give the remaining \$16,400. Back in his youth he had been an outstanding competitive swimmer. While in his twenties he realized how much God had blessed him through the sport of swimming, and he made a commitment to someday return that blessing by building a pool for others to enjoy swimming too. When he heard the girls speak about their new fundraiser, he was reminded of his promise and told them between services that he wanted to fund the other \$16,400. You can probably imagine the excitement the girls must have felt when they heard this! We are also quite excited and have begun digging out the place for the pool.

We are looking forward to another full year of teams, projects and new ways to reach out to the community around us. Thank you for your prayers and support. May God bless each and every one of you in this new year!

Seeking Him for life,

*Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony y Nicole Gutiérrez*



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