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**U.S. IRS Federal Identification Number: 84 -1408725**

## **The History of the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund** (March 2016)

The Tres Islas Orphanage Fund began in 1987 as a one-person effort to help orphaned children in Mazatlán, Mexico. One of the founders of Tres Islas, a newspaper reporter by trade, was sent to Mazatlán with a bag-full of film and an assignment to "photograph the children of Mexico." Little did the reporter know at the time how that one assignment would forever change her life.

She photographed children everywhere: on the beach, in the plazas, in the church, on the streets. Then one day she sought out an orphanage after learning that there are numerous orphanages located throughout Mexico. Of course, the children in the orphanage had to be represented in her photographs as well. And on that day, the spark of what was to become the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund was ignited.

The name of the orphanage she went to is Orfanatorio de Mazatlán. Located in downtown Mazatlán, Orfanatorio de Mazatlán is the oldest orphanage in Mazatlán. It was founded in 1902 when an epidemic of the bubonic plague left many children without parents. Primarily, it is a girls' orphanage although little boys also stay there when they have sisters who are living there - thus maintaining a sense of family.

The conditions at the orphanage that day back in the 1980s were sad. While there was some food at the orphanage - eggs, some tortillas and beans - there was not a substantial amount of food on hand, nor was there enough nourishing food to feed the 25 children there on a long-term basis. Many windows were broken and did not have screens. Drainage ran across the courtyard. The children's shoes and clothes were well worn and many were tattered.

While the good people of Mexico give all they can to support orphanages, due to their own family needs they often cannot help as much as they would like. So, she immediately went out and, with the help of the lady who continues

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<sup>1</sup> The Tres Islas Orphanage Fund is a non-profit, charitable organization incorporated in the State of Idaho and registered with the United States Internal Revenue Service as a section 501(C)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

to assist Tres Islas to this day, she bought \$250.00 U.S. dollars of food for the children.

Upon returning back home in Cheyenne, Wyoming, she held photo/poetic art shows where she sold her photography and poetry with all proceeds going to buy food for the orphaned children at Orfanatorio de Mazatlán. She shared the children's plight with family and friends who in turn provided her with financial donations. She began treks to Mazatlán four times a year to buy food for the orphanage.

One day, she decided that perhaps others would want to help the children in the orphanage on a regular basis. But any fund created would need to be different because so much money donated in the name of "charity" actually goes for administration and not for helping those who are truly in need. So, she founded the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund on the premise that the money donated to Tres Islas would exclusively support the children in orphanages in Mazatlán, Mexico - first to buy nourishing food for the children each week, second, assist with educational needs, including, school supplies, shoes, uniforms, clothes, third, make upgrades to the orphanages—their homes, and fourth, assist with the children's medical needs. No money donated to Tres Islas was to be expended on compensation for board members or officers.

Over time, the number of donors and donations increased and offered Tres Islas the opportunity to expand the number of orphanages it supports in Mazatlán. Tres Islas now supports not just one but five orphanages in Mazatlán! Today there are approximately 135 children (total) in the five orphanages supported by Tres Islas. The orphanages supported by Tres Islas are:

1. Orfanatorio de Mazatlán
2. Salvation Army Children's Home
3. Father Tovar's Home for Boys. . .Hogar San Pablo
4. Ciudad de los Ninos
5. FloreSer

In October 2016, Tres Islas will celebrate its 29<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of supporting orphaned children in Mazatlán. To date, over \$1,000,000.00 U.S. dollars has been spent on supporting children in these orphanages through the purchase of nourishing food for them, each and every week; purchase of their school supplies, shoes, uniforms and backpacks; and the funding of necessary orphanage upgrades to ensure the children live in a safe, sanitary and healthy environment.





In addition to the financial support donors provide to Tres Islas, Tres Islas donors also volunteer their time and gather in Mazatlán twice each year making a personal impact on the children's lives. In December, donors sponsor and participate in Christmas celebrations and dinners with the children at each orphanage. Each spring donors gather in Mazatlán for Spring

Mission Week to make upgrades at each orphanage. The Christmas celebration and Spring Mission Week offer donors an opportunity to meet and participate in the children's lives and to meet other Tres Islas donors. Both gatherings are a wonderful experience that forever changes each person who participates, including the children's.

Tres Islas has always maintained an open-door policy with all donors, and, it is believed that because of this, donors will genuinely feel good about making contributions to Tres Islas because of the way it is governed. Tres Islas is a voluntary organization and its bylaws prohibit any director or officer from receiving any monetary or other compensation. In addition, its bylaws require the board of directors to prepare and distribute an annual financial report to each donor who has contributed to Tres Islas that year.

In 2015, the newspaper reporter decided to step away from the administration and governing of Tres Islas. Although she removed herself from the governing process of Tres Islas, the love, kindness and tenderness she shared with the children and donors throughout her 28 years is engendered in Tres Islas. In July 2015, four new board members took over governing the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund. The new board members have been active donors and volunteers with Tres Islas for many years and are committed to carrying forward the spirit and mission of supporting the orphanage children in Mazatlán.

To learn more how you can make the difference of a lifetime for a child in need please feel welcome to contact the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund to donate, volunteer or obtain more information:

-  Via phone in the U.S. at 1-888-459-8463
-  Outside the U.S. phone 1-541-459-7535
-  Email Tres Islas at [email@orphanagefunds.org](mailto:email@orphanagefunds.org)
-  Visit Tres Islas' webpage at [www.tresislal.org](http://www.tresislal.org)

Thank you and may God bless you as you bless the children with your help!