

Mazatlan orphanage receives lift from Golden and area residents

*By Lorene Keitch
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One local family did something a little more meaningful last December when they traveled to Mexico for a holiday. The Cacaci family - dad, mom, children and grandchildren - went to Mazatlan for Christmas, 2006. Along with their bathing suits and sunscreen, the Cacacis brought supplies for an ideal activity for children at an orphanage in Mazatlan.

Lil Cacaci, long-time Parson resident, says the 21 family members going on holiday together were enthusiastic about the idea. "We wanted to do something meaningful when we went to Mexico," Cacaci explains. "Helping kids at an orphanage seemed like a great idea."

Lil Cacaci found out about an organization that connects people and supplies to orphanages in Mazatlan. The organization was started and still operated by Donelle Manton, an American. Cacaci explains that Manton was a professional photographer about 20 years ago and was assigned to get some pictures of Mexican children.

"When she went to an orphanage and saw it was in a bad state of affairs, she started the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund, and umbrella organization that contributes assistance to six Mazatlan orphanages," she says.

The Cacacis called up Manton to see how they could help the children. She gave them suggestions of a few supplies and sent them to the Orfanatorio Mazatlan, located right in the city.

Golden dentist Jeff Dolinsky donated 40 toothbrushes to send. Lil and her husband B collected donations of pants, shirts, flip-flops and sneakers from fellow employees and friends in the area. Manton told them peanut butter was a huge hit with the children at the orphanage, too. So they each brought down a massive jar of peanut butter. The supplies alone were quite the endeavor; Lil and B ended up carrying three massive, oversized suitcases on their journey just for the goods. But instead of just gathering supplies and dropping them off, Cacaci says they wanted some sort of activity all the kids could enjoy and work on together.

The Cacacis' son and daughter-in-law were able to get approximately 35 white shirts donated from The Bay in Kamloops, so all the children made their own tie-died shirts. "All the kids were excited about the different ways you could tie-die them," Lil says. "After they all hung up their shirts, we all had pizza and soda together. It was great." B says the tie-die activity the Cacaci family demonstrated and helped the kids do was a big hit.

Lil says what amazed her was when she heard about the amount of people who were committed to helping children in need. The people who work at the orphanage and especially Manton, were "totally dedicated to this," Lil says. "She really blew me away. Her enthusiasm and love for these kids, she was so into what she was doing," Lil exclaims.

Then there are the work parties that come down twice a year from North America to paint, build, landscape and upgrade the orphanages. "It's really amazing that people come down to work on their vacation," Lil says.

Many of the children at the orphanage have been through a lot for their young lives.

But B says the kids seem happy at the orphanage now, and have a better chance for a good future. "These kids have a heck of a lot more chance now than where they were before," he says. Some North Americans donate money specifically for English lessons and so the children attend school.

There are more than 30 children who live there, including one young girl whose jaw is in need of reconstructive surgery. Lil's heart went out to Luciana, only two and a half years old, and is now hoping to find a way to help her get the surgery she needs. A local doctor is working with Lil to find a humanitarian aid agency with doctors that could perform the surgery on little Luciana.

Want more information? Check out the Tres Islas Orphanage website, at www.orphanagefunds.org.