

Orphanage could close in January

Dear esteemed friend of the orphanage,



The children at El Sauzal need your prayers **more than ever.**

I want to ask for your forgiveness. I know that you have a strong heart and a passion for the sweet children at El Sauzal. You want to know what is happening at the orphanage so that you can continue in your support and prayers for them. I have been remiss in sending you that information, and that has weighed heavily on my heart.

With the exception of the orphanage staff, all of our work is volunteer. We give our own time and money to the orphanage ministry. This year, I have been needing to give my limited free time to my family. I consider it a privilege and a joy that God allows me to help the orphanage from my home in Washington.

There is so much going on right now at the orphanage that it is overwhelming. In April, the government of Baja enacted laws directly governing orphanages. During this same time frame, several other government organizations established new guidelines for childcare institutions. The outcome of this is that El Sauzal, and every other orphanage in Baja, is facing broad, sweeping changes. Many of these changes are expensive and difficult (and in some instances impossible) to implement. The government

has given a deadline of January 2016 to have the changes made or **they may shut down the orphanages.** There are thousands of children who may not have a home in January.

To help you understand all that is going on, this newsletter contains a lot of information:

- An interview with director Erika about how the laws are impacting the kids (page 2)
- A letter from Roy about how God is working through these challenging times (page 3)
- A list of what has changed if you want to come down and visit the orphanage (page 8)

We also have the inspiring story of Ryan, a young woman from California whose life and career choices were changed by visiting El Sauzal. There are fun photos from different visitors and events from the last several months.

We know that God is in control throughout this uncertainty. Please take some time to read this newsletter to see all that God is doing.

In This Issue

Orphanage could close	Page 1
Erika, what's happening?	Page 2
God has kept doors open	Page 3
Update on van	Page 4
Story from Ryan	Page 5
Summer pics	Page 7
New rules for visitors	Page 8

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Con gratitud,

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Fall 2015

Erika, what's happening?

How have the new government laws affected the children?

Because of implementing the new laws, the orphanage has less money to invest on everyday needs, such as school supplies and uniforms. It is hard with the new regulations to hire nannies fast enough (with new rules on background checks and drug tests). The children get less attention than they deserve. In the long term, the new laws are going to help because there will be more prepared staff and the facility will be more secure and ready for natural disasters. Now, while we are working on the details, we are having to take away from the kids to give to the government.

Do you think the orphanage might close?

I believe that God is not going to let that happen. We are not closing our doors, because God is not going to let that happen. How He's going to do it, I have no idea.

If I am just talking with the facts that I have been dealing with lately, with the requirements, we need to have a permit for the use of the land. We are in a rural area. With this new law, we can't have an orphanage in a rural area. And just like that, we are closing. There are a lot of orphanages in rural areas. Before the zoning was done, our orphanage was here.

There are a bunch of requirements we haven't met. For example, to be approved by Civil Protection, we have to get training for all staff and personnel in first aid, evacuation, fire, emergency preparedness and much more. That training is yearly, and there is a cost.

If the government wants to close an orphanage, they have a lot of different ways to do it. By law, children without parents are the responsibility of the state. With the new regulations, the government is putting all of the legal responsibilities and obligations of the children on the orphanages. The government does not have the facilities to

care for them. There are two shelters in Tijuana, and one in Mexicali. There are *over 2,500 kids* in Baja California who are in orphanages.

Baja California has more orphanages than most other states in Mexico. There is a phenomenon in this area. People come to Baja from all over Mexico and from central American countries. They want to be in Mexican border cities or to go the United States; they are trying to get a better life and earn dollars. They come with very few resources. If they have hard times, their children may end up in the system. This is a very local problem.

How can we help the children right now?

First, you can pray for God to touch the hearts of the government. We don't even know who in the government. Everybody is pointing to someone else. But God knows best. Prayer is the number-one need.

Second, inform people about what is going on at orphanages in Baja California. Third, if anyone wants to volunteer their expertise, we could use help from electricians, construction workers, and contractors. Also, we need help from trainers in disaster preparedness, CPR, first aid, childcare, and nonprofit organizations.

Fourth, donate supplies or money for different requirements. We need to professionalize our place. The priority is disaster preparedness—fire extinguishers, signage, smoke detectors, and emergency lights. We also need good computers, good beds, mattresses, curtains, etc. (If you want to see the list, contact Floyd Hoffman at floydhoffman@hotmail.com). Anything that can make the place look more professional. Also you could donate money to purchase the materials needed for other people who can donate their time.

Erika Espinoza
Director

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God has kept the doors open all these years

Today our Home for Kids is facing some significant challenges with the new governmental legislation and regulations, yet God still lives there. He has not abandoned and will not abandon the children. I have often said, “God established and ordained the orphanage and it will not close until He chooses to do so.” I still believe this to be true.



‘Papi’ Roy here with Amalia, nanny Maria, Esthela, and Silvia (in front) at Silvia’s quinceañera this summer. They each have a powerful story about how God has used El Sauzal to direct their lives.

I thought I knew what faith was

My mind drifts back to my first visit to our home in San Antonio de las Minas, seeing how Ramon and Magdalena lived totally on faith that God would provide for their and the children’s every need. I went away (probably like each of you did when you first visited), thinking, “I thought I knew what faith was all about!” I realized as I left the orphanage I did not have a clue what real, genuine, sincere, and authentic faith was. Watching Papa Grande (Ramon) and Mama’s (Magdalena’s) faith journey changed my life. I saw Jesus through new lenses. In my eyes, their situation was harsh, and unforgiving. But through it all, I also witnessed that love flourished there. That was over 37 years ago and much has changed since then.

What does that mean for the Espinoza family and us? First we must have a strong faith in God’s promises. We have some great examples, like when God asked Abraham, (when he was old man like me!) to pack up and move his family to a new

country. Abraham went in faith, not knowing what the future held. God asked Noah to build an ark on dry ground. While he was being mocked, Noah did not waiver in his faith in God, and continued to build.

That’s where I see us. We are not to waver in our faith, believing that God is in charge. Here are some scriptures that give me comfort:

In Hebrews 11:1, we are told, “*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*” That describes us; that’s where we are. Our faith and hope is in the Lord for every area where we cannot see how the new regulations will affect our ministry to the children.

And in 1 Corinthians 4:2 we are instructed, “*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*” God is trusting the Espinoza family and us to be faithful in what He is asking us to do. This should be our everyday prayer—God help me to be faithful to your plan for the El Sauzal children.

Roy Ketring, III

President

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Update on van

Last spring we told you about how our current van is dilapidated, and breaking down. We urgently need two good, used, low-mileage, 15-passenger vans. Each van will cost around \$20,000.

We are very grateful for your response. **So far you have donated \$8,080.** We are well on our way to getting the first van. Muchas gracias!

If you are interested in helping us get safe transportation for the children's daily activities, please see the enclosed response form.



Our kids need the van for their daily activities, including school, sports, church and entertainment.



A dad to all of the kids



The children love Josue's attention. On Father's Day at the church service, several of the kids went forward. They publicly

thanked Josue for being their father. It was a beautiful, emotional time.

A debt I'll never be able to repay

Ryan visited El Sauzal several times while growing up in California.

I never would have imagined that my involvement with El Sauzal would eventually lead me to law school and shape my goals the way that it has, and still does.

My first visit to El Sauzal Orphanage was an experience I will never forget. At nine years old, I saw firsthand the disparity between my upbringing and those less fortunate. I truly realized how lucky I was to be born into such an amazing family. My eyes had been opened to something that I never wanted them to be closed to again. Each trip to El Sauzal was incredibly memorable. I did not know then that my interactions with the orphanage were continuously affecting the trajectory of my life.

After beginning law school, I discovered that I wanted to pursue a career in international human rights. I became a member of the International Law Society. Each organization was supposed to host a philanthropic event each year. I immediately thought of El Sauzal Orphanage. We only had a few weeks to promote our fundraiser. I was ecstatic to see so many people come together to pull off this event and how many were interested in finding out more. As I was asked numerous times about why we chose this orphanage, I began reflecting on my experiences with El Sauzal over the years.

Experiences with El Sauzal at center of my decisions

Looking back, in my statements for law school, internships, and other programs, I spoke of how El Sauzal shaped my desire to pursue particular



Ryan is from Southern California. She has recently volunteered in human rights law at the Hague, Netherlands.

goals. In almost every big choice for what I wanted to do with my life, my experiences with El Sauzal were at the center of my decision-making process.

During the trips to the orphanage, we provided necessities for the children with food, clothing, toys, and playtime. At the same time, the children provided necessities for us with genuine unfiltered joy, gratitude, and love. My experiences with El Sauzal Orphanage cannot be summed up in any amount of words. The gratitude I have is something I cannot fully express but will cherish forever. My interactions with the orphanage have shaped my life in unimaginable ways. And that is a debt I will never be able to repay.

“I cannot think of another organization that has shaped me, has given more to me, and is more deserving of the funds.”

When I was asked why I chose El Sauzal Orphanage as the organization to receive funds from our recent fundraiser, I replied, “I cannot think of another organization that has shaped me, has given more to me, and is more deserving of the funds. It is the least I can do to try to give back for all that they have given to me through my life.”

Ryan’s fundraiser raised over \$500 for the orphanage.

Why buy a calendar?

- Beautiful full-color photos of our kids
- High-quality, standard-sized 13-month wall calendar
- A special gift to share with others
- A practical tool to help you remember our children
- Prayer requests to keep you emotionally and spiritually connected to our ministry



Order your "Family Is..." 2016 calendar

Suggested donation: \$14 each

(Includes shipping & handling)

Two ways to order:

1. **Order online** through PayPal. Go to elsauzal.org/ordercalendar.
2. **Order by mail.** Fill out the order form on the insert and mail it in with your donation. You can pay by check, cash, or money order.

Got questions? Email Gary Stark at gary.stark@elsauzal.org.

Calendars will be mailed in late November/early December.



Give a different kind of Christmas gift

Are you looking for an alternative way to share Christmas this year? Or have you been searching for a present for that hard-to-shop-for family member or friend?

This Christmas, instead of buying gifts, you can give a donation in honor of your loved one to help the children at El Sauzal. We will send this lovely glossy, large card to let your loved one know.

Get yours today:

1. Fill out enclosed form and send in.
2. Or order online at elsauzal.org/gifts.



You are part of giving hope to abandoned children in Mexico.

A gift has been given in your name to bring comfort and joy to children at the El Sauzal Orphanage, in Ensenada, Mexico. Thank you for being a part of this blessing!

"O tidings of comfort and joy."

Feliz Navidad from the El Sauzal Orphanage.

www.elsauzal.org

Some Summer Pics



Brooke and Alejandro hanging out on the steps



Janet from Spokane, Washington with nursery girl Silvia



Adrianna with Ashlee from Auburn, Washington



Silvia and her handsome escort on her special day

New rules for staying with us

Due to the Mexican government's new laws, there are new requirements if you want to visit and **stay overnight** at the orphanage. (These regulations do not apply to day visitors.)

Group leaders will need:

- A letter to director Erika with the dates of your stay and the names and ages of the people in your group
- A background check
- Three letters of reference
- Copy of passport and/or visa
- Copy of utility bill, establishing residence

Adults (age 18 and over) will need:

- Copy of passport and/or visa (see below)

Children (under age 17) will need:

- Copy of photo ID (such as school ASB card, ID card, etc.) and/or visa (see below)



It is a little more work to visit the kids now, but it is worth it! Here is Heather at church with Daniela.

You can read more at elsauzal.org/visitorrequirements.

New entry requirements into Mexico



Come visit happy nursery baby Daniel

Mexican border guards are requiring anyone stopped for inspection entering Mexico to obtain a tourist visa. To get a visa:

- You will need a passport. We have been advised that Mexican immigration officers are not accepting Enhanced Drivers' Licenses (such as those issued from Washington state).
- The tourist visa costs around \$24 (American dollars).

You can read more at elsauzal.org/visitorrequirements.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

~James 1:27a