

July 2008



ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA CATHOLIC CHURCH  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Mission to Mexico News

# August Focus: Education

By Rachel Fannin  
Mission to Mexico, Ministry Director  
St. Catherine of Siena, Austin TX

The focus for our August 1-2 trip is Education. Education is our hope to help fight poverty in the colonia. The children are not allowed to attend school without a uniform, black shoes, white knee socks and school supplies.

Approximate costs per child:	
Supplies	\$ 8
black shoes	10
white knee socks	2
Uniforms	<u>20</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$40</b>

If you would like to help sponsor a child/children, please mark your donation "*children*."

We are also in need of gently worn children shoes and socks.

### How may I contact Rachel Fannin?

Phone: (512) 288-1621  
Email: rfannin@austin.rr.com

### How do I make HOTEL RESERVATIONS?

What should I bring with me?

See page 4

### Inside this issue:

<b>August Focus: Education</b>	1
<i>By Rachel Fannin</i>	
<b>Thank You For Your Donations!</b>	2
<i>By Maria Carrillo</i>	
<b>From a Newbie</b>	2 & 3
<i>By Joe Sigel</i>	
<b>How Long Has It Been?</b>	3
<i>By Deacon Mike Meisner</i>	
<b>August 1-2 Mission to Mexico Trip</b>	4

God bless you for caring for the children in Nuevo Laredo.

Thanks in advance to the volunteers that will brave the hot August heat to bring love and support to our brothers and sisters in the colonia. Please bring lots of water and sunscreen!

Amor y Paz,

*Rachel*

### August Special Needs

- CASH donations
- Children's Shoes (new or gently worn)
- Children's Socks (all sizes)
- Wheelchair
- VOLUNTEERS for August mission trip
- Vehicles and drivers to haul the "love cargo"—especially on Friday morning
- Baby clothes
- Baby strollers

### Mission to Mexico Future Trip Dates

**August 1-2, 2008**

**October 3-4, 2008**

**December 5-6, 2008**

# Thank You For Your Donations!

By Maria Carrillo  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Bless all the wonderful people who donated to MTM. My husband, Tony, and I have been going to the mission for over two years. Tony and I were able to see how these donations were put to good use. In June we were in charge of buying groceries for 600 families and sack lunch supplies for 2,000 people. To see their faces when they receive their bags is a wonderfully satisfying experience. We also distributed

some laundry detergent (jabon). When I was helping out, a lady saw it, her eyes lit up and she said "jabon"! They are pleased with so little! I also worked as a translator at the Clinic. Again, thanks to all who donated medicines, vitamins, etc. These donations allowed us to satisfy some of their medical needs and provided vitamins for the children.

I thank God for giving me the

opportunity to help the people at the colonia. I met so many wonderful volunteers. We all become a big family.

Please continue with your prayers and donations, and get involved. It is an experience that you will never forget!

God bless you all,

**Maria Carrillo**

## From a Newbie

By Joe Sigel  
St John Neumann, Austin, TX

Like many of us, I had seen the bulletin announcements and heard the pulpit talks about the Mission to Mexico trips, but never quite got around to calling until May of this year—and I am so glad I did. What a great experience!

It's all VERY well organized by our fearless leader, Rachel Fannin. By 8:00 am Friday, we—the advance team—were on our way. Those who can't get off work Friday just come down Friday evening for the Saturday distribution. But, I had a big heavy-duty van, so I went on Friday to carry donations.

The drive is easy—just set it on cruise control for three and a half hours down I-35 and you're there. I checked into the hotel in Laredo, ate lunch with Cecelia, Steve (long time volunteers and organizers) and Wil (another newbie who rode down with me).

After lunch, off we went to the church in Nuevo Laredo. Though I had apprehensions about driving in Mexico—and was even a little wor-

ried about safety issues down there—I can honestly say that I had no problem with either issue. I never felt at all concerned for my safety. All I encountered were poor honest people.

As we approached the clearly "home-made" church on the very outskirts of town, we could see many people already camping out and in line for Saturday's mission distribution—24 hours ahead of time.

We parked and got right to work unloading all the donated items we had brought and setting up canopies for shade from the hot sun for Saturday.

About 3:30 p.m. I was recruited to take my large van to the huge HEB-like grocery store to load up with—literally—thousands of pounds of rice, beans, flour and cooking oil. The heavy-duty van did not even seem to notice the huge amount of weight we put in it. Other pickups were also loaded, and back we went to the church. The supplies were

**How may I make a monetary donation to the Mission to Mexico effort?**



Checks can be made out to "**Mission to Mexico.**" Put in the collection baskets at Mass or mail to:

St. Catherine of Siena  
4800 Convict Hill Road  
Austin, TX 78749-2202



off-loaded and we were done for the day.

The trip back to the hotel was longer than it should have been for me—as Wil and I took a wrong turn and ended up at a bridge for trucks only. No worry. It was just a 20 minute detour. Soon we were back at the hotel, ate dinner and crashed for the night.

*Continued on page 3*

## From a Newbie *(continued from page 2)*

Saturday was the really fun day. Up early, breakfast at the hotel, prayers and we were on our way by 7:30. No problem crossing into Mexico. Soon we were back at the church. From 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. all 50 of us moved in a blur of quickly and efficiently stuffing 600 bags of the groceries we had bought and 2,000 sack lunches.

We were relentless, determined worker bees obeying Queen Rachel. Hot—yes.



Sweaty—yes. Totally and completely energized—yes.

At 12:30 we were ready. Had a half hour break for lunch, last minute instructions from the Queen and the gates were opened. Over 2,000 of the most beautiful, grateful people streamed in, very orderly and thankful for the groceries, lunch and electric fan each family received. By 3:30, we were finished,



cleaned up and put away everything and relaxed, having done a little bit for the least of our brethren. So many beautiful babies and children, so many very tired looking husbands.

By 8:00 Saturday evening, I was home and ready for a shower and sleep. I'll be back for the next trip in August—and the next, and the next.

*Joe Sigel*

## How Long Has It Been?

By Deacon Mike Meisner  
Sacred Heart, La Grange, TX

Seems to me that the distribution at Nuevo Laredo is going more smoothly and orderly than ever despite the fact that the lines are still there—maybe even longer than ever before. Maybe it's because we arrive in the colonia a little earlier than we used to, or could be that we're not trying to solve every problem and totally cure poverty. Whatever the reason, it's a real joy to serve alongside the dedicated and loving volunteers working at Nuestra Senora de los Angelus on that special Mission to Mexico weekend. I'm so proud to witness the volunteerism of the local parishioners as the hombres police the grounds outside the fence and the senora's take care of the area within the fence. On their faces, you can see their enthusiasm and joy they feel on this special distribution day that they have been waiting for—a festival day of sorts!

I am always impressed by the lines of people standing and waiting for their meager lunch and small sack of groceries provided to each family. The lines begin forming on Friday mid-afternoon, and remain there all night and finally, around Saturday mid-day, they pass through

the gate for the distribution. Some will get a chance to see the doctor, a few will receive a fan or blanket, depending on the season, much valued bicycles, strollers, wheelchairs and other more costly goods given, as needed, as supplies last.

Religious goods, sacramentals, and the Gospel are offered. School supplies, shoes and certain other needs are scheduled for certain times of the year. So much is provided, but so, SO much is needed. The poverty in the colonia is probably as severe as any in all Mexico.

As the poor pass through the church grounds, one can see a world of suffering and pain pass before their very eyes. In June, one child was walking on one leg, dragging the other; another was walking on the side of his ankle—he had two legal visits to a (*free*) Orthopedic Hospital in Houston and made three illegal visits. They were helping him, but now it's too difficult to make the journey and so he hopes, and his father prays that maybe we could help?

Several young mothers pass by smiling from ear to ear because of the beans, rice and oil in their hand.

One can notice that one of the mothers has lost almost all of her teeth due to lack of dental care. Senior Roberto, one of my buddies, is so happy because he has his herbs that he takes for his heart disease; sometimes he can't afford the herbs. And the elderly—barely able to walk—are so grateful to us as they move with their walking sticks, one step at a time.

So terribly sad, even depressing one might say. Yet so much good is going on here. Not that we are doing so much good, but that the poor beyond the river bring us Texans a sanctification, a grace. We are blessed and our Lord is pleased with those who love His poor and help with their problems. Spiritually, we receive much, much more than we contribute.

Finally after a job well done, we pack up our supplies and bid our friends goodbye. They really will miss us—I'm sure of that. They will pray for us—I know that. These people do love us and their greatest fear is that we will never return.

How long has it been since you returned to the colonia?

*Deacon Mike*

# August 1-2 Mission to Mexico Trip

## Are you planning to be a volunteer on the August 1-2 MTM trip?

Please notify **Rachel Fannin** or **Kelly Contois** at least one week prior to the mission weekend, that is, no later than Friday, July 25. It is vital to know ahead of time how many volunteers to count on for the weekend, so that mission activities can be planned for Friday and Saturday. It is very important to know if you are willing to help haul “love cargo.”

**Rachel Fannin**—(512) 288-1621 or  
rfannin@austin.rr.com

**Kelly Contois**—(512) 291-1623 or  
rkcontois@sbcglobal.net

## Budget-minded? Share a Room!

We try to keep your expenses down to a minimum by making arrangements for you to share a room with other volunteers if you request it.

Please work out details regarding roommate(s) and payment arrangements when requesting a hotel room reservation with **Kelly Contois**.

## Riding Back to Austin—

In the interest of not leaving anybody behind in Laredo, we try to keep track of who is riding back to Austin with whom. Please let Rachel Fannin know who you are riding back with.

## Want a room reserved at Marriott's SpringHill Suites at MTM's special church group rate?

Marriott's SpringHill Suites group rate is \$70 per room—2 beds, sleeper/sofa, refrigerator, microwave, continental breakfast, etc.—no limit on guests per room. Notify **Kelly Contois** no later than Monday, July 28 (preferably prior to that date), if you want a room reserved at MTM's group rate.



## Driving directions to Marriott's SpringHill Suites:

I-35 south to city of Laredo; take exit 4, stay on I-35 access road/San Bernardo AVE. The hotel is next to Golden Corral.

Address: 5940 San Bernardo AVE, Laredo TX  
Phone: (956) 717-0800

## Late arrival, after 10 p.m.?

Notify **Marriott's SpringHill Suites Hotel** directly at (956) 717-0800; request to HOLD your room.

## Cancellation of hotel reservation—

If cancellation is necessary (for whatever reason), notify **Kelly Contois AND Marriott's SpringHill Suites Hotel** (956) 717-0800 and request to CANCEL your room reservation.

## What to bring with you -

VOLUNTEERS please bring these personal items with you for Friday and/or Saturday:

- Bring enough drinking water and a sack lunch for Friday and/or Saturday to be consumed while at the colonia.
- Sunscreen.
- Comfortable clothing, shoes, cap, hat, etc.
- If you are riding with someone else, bring money to help pay for gas.
- Legal document(s) for border crossing purposes (passport, photo ID, driver's license, birth certificate, etc.). Check for details and updated information on the website for the U.S. Department of State at: <http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/>

## Transporting Supplies & "Love Cargo"

**FRIDAY** — Those volunteers who will be helping to transport supplies to Mexico on Friday morning, please be at St. Catherine's parking lot (near garage area) by **7:30 a.m.** on Friday, August 1 to load the vehicles (cars, trucks, SUVs, vans, trailers, etc.). We will be leaving for Laredo as soon as vehicles are loaded. Thanks.



*Rachel*

**Website**—Check the Mission to Mexico website at [www.stcatherine-austin.org](http://www.stcatherine-austin.org) (select “Community Ministries,” “Organizations” and then “Mission to Mexico”) for the current newsletter, future mission trip dates and “Video: See the Mission in Action.”

**MTM Newsletter**—Do you want to add someone to the *MTM Newsletter* list, have you changed your e-mail or mailing address, or, are you having difficulty receiving the newsletter?

Notify **Jeanette Terrell**—[jeanettetterrell@austin.rr.com](mailto:jeanettetterrell@austin.rr.com),  
512 444-3179(home) or 512 426-4363(cell)