

January 2001 Update

As I write to you, the Micah house is a-buzz with activity. Six of the boys are just outside my office window on the patio, practicing a mime-skit called "Light the Flame," working to coordinate their movements and timing. They will present the skit on Friday for a group of 15 people who are coming to the Micah House for a training session on how to open a program for street kids.

Two of the boys are in an upstairs bedroom, practicing the trumpet, which they want to play in a worship band we are forming, complete with a keyboard, two guitars, bongos and the trumpet (although I admit that the trumpet seems like a mixed blessing at times, especially where the eardrums are concerned!)

In the living room, fifteen neighborhood kids are learning a drama under the supervision of a teacher from a local cultural center who volunteers at the Micah Project a couple days each week. Harvin, one of the Micah boys who has studied theater for four years, is directing the play.



These are my favorite times at the Micah House, when the laughter and bubbling conversation that echo throughout the various rooms are signs that we have created a place where joy and peace are a real presence. In an hour or so however, as the day begins to unwind itself, the house will begin to quiet. The boys will hurry off to the library/computer room to finish their homework before heading out to play soccer after dinner. I admit that I also love these times, when you can almost hear their minds expanding!

In this, the first week of classes in the new school year, we have just completed a strategic planning session with the boys. We looked at what God accomplished in their lives and in the Micah Project last year and how we can begin to build on those experiences in this new year. Each boy participated in personal and group goal

setting. If there was a common theme in this time, it was that all understood the unique gift that God has given them through the Micah Project and intend to use that to its maximum benefit in 2001.

One goal that I have this year is to provide the means for you to take a peek inside our project. Now you can watch our boys growing, learning and serving on our new website: www.micahcentral.org. We will update it often with pictures and stories of how God is working in the project.

Also, we have published our 2000 Annual Report. If you would like a copy of the report, please write me at migsmil@micahcentral.org and I would be happy to send you one! Below, I have copied the introduction of the report for you.

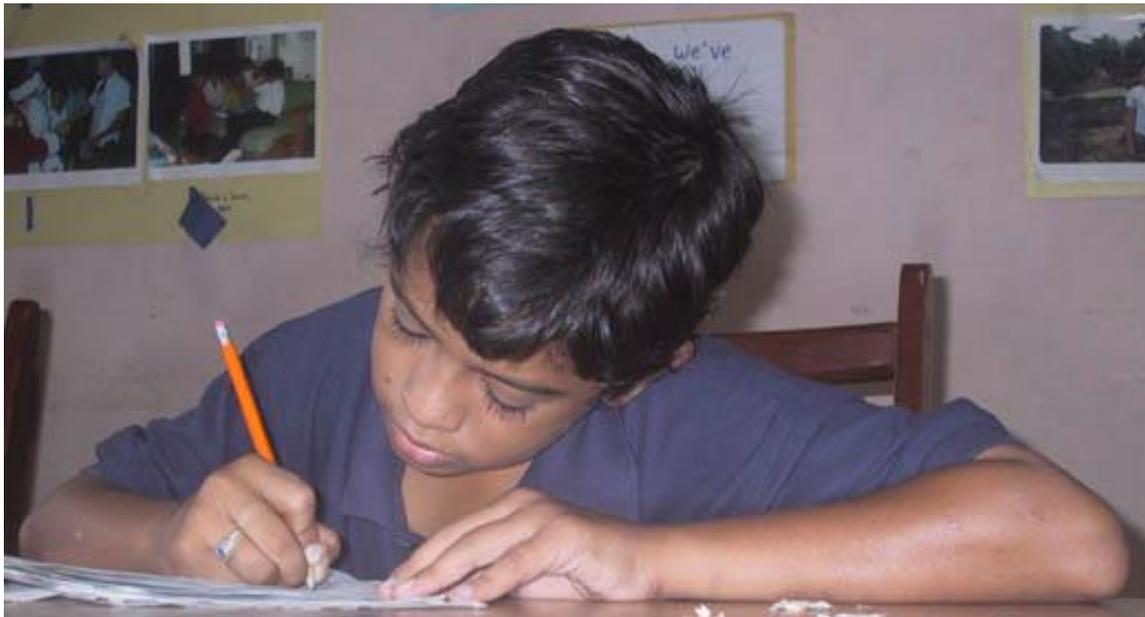
Please know that we pray for you each day before beginning classes. Thank you for accompanying us into this new year!

Sincerely,
Michael Miller

February 2001 Update

I sat alone in the Micah home two weeks ago last Saturday, working at the kitchen table while the boys were playing in a soccer tournament in a small village on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa. I admit that I was enjoying this brief interlude in a home which is usually echoing with the laughter and constant chatter of nine energetic teens, and was using the break in the action to get some administrative tasks done. After a few minutes of typing on my laptop however, Nelson's mom knocked on the door. It was her first visit and, with her eight and four year-old daughters in tow, I took her on the tour of the Micah House, anxious to show her where her son had lived for the last three months.

As we talked while waiting for the boys to return, I assured her that, while Nelson is the smallest boy and the youngest by three years, his spunky creativity and easy laugh have quickly made him an integral member of our project. She seemed proud as I told her how well Nelson was doing in classes, yet after a few minutes, a darker look crossed her face. She suddenly, almost urgently, asked me to make sure that Nelson never goes to visit her on Saturdays or Sundays. When I asked the reason for this strange prohibition, she began to tell me the story of her 20 year-old live-in boyfriend, who works all week in the outdoor market, only to spend all his money on a drinking binge every weekend. He becomes a violent drunk, hitting Yolanda and her kids and often destroying furniture and other household items in his rage. The ragged scar that runs along her right arm silently speaks volumes of the misery she has endured. Suddenly, this lingering weekend visit made sense to me; she was afraid to go home.



(Above: Nelson works on his homework after classes.)

She later told me that she gave birth to her first child--Nelson--when she was sixteen. Because she suffers from "nervous attacks," she often loses her temper herself and become abusive, especially toward her eight year-old daughter who is "as stubborn as a mule," as she put it. As the two sullen girls and I listened to their mom's stories, I began to get a clearer picture of why Nelson had to abandon his home.

When Nelson got home that day, he was at first shocked and reserved to see his mom and sisters waiting for him. He quickly warmed up to them though, and insisted that they take their second tour of the Micah project facilities, this time from his point of view. He showed them his schoolwork, then spent hours teaching them how to use the computers. Late in the evening, when they were most likely hoping that the boyfriend was by then sleeping off his alcohol, Nelson's mom and sisters headed back to their barrio. As they walked down the street, Nelson called after his eight-year old sister to work hard in school.

The Micah Project receives a steady stream of daily visitors. Some come suffering and in need, others come to assist us in the daunting task of raising nine teen-age boys, and others come simply to experience and take part in the beautiful and loving environment we have created. Each visit, whether it be a family member, friend, or other acquaintance, provides the boys with a chance to learn about and impact the society in which they live.

Last week, we had a famous visitor! Angelito was a street kid in the late 1950's, shining shoes in order to survive and living in much the same way as the street kids of today. His life story was the basis for the most widely read novel ever written by a Honduran writer, "Cipotes" by Ramón Amaya-Amador. Although severely crippled and in constant pain, Angelito has a fine sense of humor and a hearty laugh. The boys were immediately drawn to him as he told of the awesome ways that God has worked in his life despite his severe handicaps. Likewise, Angelito was so impressed by the boys' testimonies that he joined them the following day in an outing to a local church where they shared their dramas, songs, and testimonies during the service. This amazing man truly is a "little angel," as his name translates in English.

Another day, Harvin's brother Darwin appeared at our door. Filthy and dressed in rags, Darwin is the kind of street kid that most people cross to the other side of the street in order to avoid. A seemingly hopeless glue addict, Darwin has been on the streets for five years. If he enters a shelter or rehab program, he normally returns to the streets within the week, drawn by the desire to inhale yellow glue.



(Above: Harvin visits his brother Darwin on the streets of Tegucigalpa.)

Darwin's visits bring out the parenting drive in the Micah boys. Before he knew what had hit him, he was out of his clothes and in the shower, with two boys supervising to make sure that the months of grime on his undernourished frame were completely washed down the drain. Another boy washed his clothes, while yet another looked for a t-shirt to donate to him. As they washed him, the boys encouraged Darwin to leave the streets and the drugs. Fourteen year-old Darwin, however, is so damaged by years of toxic inhalants that he doesn't understand the majority of what is being said to him, and he rarely speaks in reply.

After getting cleaned up, Darwin took a three-hour nap on our sofa. He refused to take off his shoes while he slept, for fear that someone would steal them. When he woke up, he was ready to leave. He turned over his baby-food jar full of toxic glue to his brother Harvin, who made him promise not to buy another. Most of us knew, though, as he walked down the hill to downtown Tegucigalpa, that he would soon find a way to pay the few cents that a fresh bottle of glue costs. Harvin was very quiet for the rest of the day; though he was with us physically, his mind was wandering the streets with his lost brother Darwin.

Marvin's brother Geovany is another frequent visitor of late. Marvin used to dread these visits, since Geovany came only to ask for money. As a street shoe-shiner, nineteen year-old Geovany had graduated from glue to harder drugs. In his early visits, he and Marvin would spend an hour or so talking on the street outside the Micah House. But as his visits increased in number and frequency, they began to go into Marvin's room for their lengthy talks.

Last week, Geovany agreed when Marvin asked him to accompany us to a church where Marvin would be singing and giving his testimony. After Marvin sang two songs in front of the 200-person congregation, he began to give his testimony. He

spoke of his broken home, his time on the streets, and the transformation that God is working within him. Then, on an impulse, he invited Geovany to join him on the platform in front the congregation. As the brothers stood side-by-side, Marvin told the congregation about some of the problems his brother was experiencing, and asked them to pray for him. The whole congregation shared Marvin's tears at that moment for his brother Geovany.

Last evening, Geovany participated in the youth group that we have in the Micah house living room. Twenty-four teens from the neighborhood joined us. At the end of the evening, which was filled with games, worship songs and a Bible lesson, the leaders of the group talked about the importance of turning your life over to Christ. When he asked who was ready to do this, Geovany raised his hand! He prayed, and caused a party in heaven (and in the Micah Project living room!) as he became a new Christian.

Geovany stayed with us last night, on a little mattress by Marvin's bed. I'm sure they talked through most of the night! After years of praying for and worrying about his brother, Marvin is now praising God for what He has accomplished in Geovany's life this week.

Today is a normal day at the Micah House; by that I mean there is a stream of new visitors! I walk into the dining room, and find two young men whom I have never met, eating breakfast with the boys. We've grown accustomed to planning meals for thirteen or fourteen people instead of just nine! As they dig in to their bowl of Corn Flakes, I overhear one of the boys inviting the visitors to church with them in the evening. How wonderful it is that the boys are seeing the fruits of their ministry, and how much it has emboldened them! Even a breakfast of Corn Flakes has become an opportunity to reach out to someone in need.

I was reminded of the Micah Home recently when I heard a song by Fernando Ortega which is a blessing over a home. In one verse, he sings, "May a burdened friend in their company rise/ A heavy heart is soon released to fly./ May their table be blessed with laughter and grace,/ and by the comfort of kinship be surprised."

I ask that you would join me in this prayer, that the burdened visitors that enter would find redemption through the testimony and love they feel within our walls. Especially pray for Nelson's mom Yolanda, for Harvin's brother Darwin, and for the brand-new faith of Marvin's brother Geovany.

We know that many of you pray for the Micah Project continuously. Please know that the victory in Geovany's life is your victory also. Thank you for your prayers!

Also, thank you for your continued financial support. Your faithfulness in donations allows us to continue growing our ministry!

Donations to the Micah Project may be written to "The Micah Project, Inc." and sent to the following address: The Central Presbyterian Church, c/o Mr. Randy Mayfield, Missions Director, 7700 Davis Dr., Clayton, MO, 63105. Receipts are available on request for tax purposes.

Also, please take a look at the updates and new photos we have added to our website at www.micahcentral.org.

Thank you, brothers and sisters in Christ, for helping us to plant the seeds of eternal life through the work of the Micah Project!

Sincerely,

Michael Miller

April 2001 Update

There is nothing poetic about poverty. This is one of the first lessons learned by the three groups from St. Louis and Houston who came to visit the Micah Project this March. These groups came to Honduras to support the Micah Project in our ministry and to learn about the reality of life and ministry in this needy country. In our first evening reflection with a group of St. Louis-area college students, several reacted to the poverty and chaos that they saw in their first day with tears of sadness and frustration.

These students had spent their first full day in Honduras trudging through the busy streets of Tegucigalpa to encounter the street kids. Walking along the banks of the putrefying and trash-strewn Choluteca river, they found kids amidst the filth, kids who were slowly destroying themselves on the fumes of toxic glue. Yet not only in the hidden places, they also found kids using that same glue on those teeming streets, where thousands of shoppers, students and professionals passed by without even blinking an eye. Or if they did look, it was to stare at these strange foreigners who were wasting their time talking to street kids.

The groups quickly discovered that these weren't the happy-yet-poor kids whose winning smiles and shining eyes are used to win hearts in t.v. and magazine advertisements for relief organizations. Rather, when our visitors reached out to the street kids to take the hands and look into their eyes, they saw...emptiness, a young, damaged soul lost in some foggy, drug-induced other-world.

Seeing a street kid face-to-face teaches a hard lesson to every visitor who spends time with us: this is indeed a broken and corrupted world in which we humans have done much to wipe out all signs of God's beautiful creation. How can we sit by and let kids kill themselves? How can we politely walk around them as if they didn't exist, like the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan? How can we bear children doomed to such misfortune?

These are the hard questions that the groups ask themselves when they spend time with us here in Honduras. Yet the lessons do not end there. The deeper they understand the horror on the Tegucigalpa streets and the powerful hold that the Kingdom of darkness has on these boys' lives, the greater they are impacted by the redemption that God has worked in the lives of the Micah boys.



(Group members look on as Cristino digs a hole in order to plant a tree in Villa Linda Miller.)

One of our greatest challenges with visitors is to help them realize that each one of our boys walked on the edge of that same chasm; that they were very nearly victims of these same soul-robbing streets. They see our boys now, full of youthful energy, robust personality, and a true thirst to know and serve their God, and it just doesn't compute. How could these be the same as those boys who are rotting on the streets this very minute?

That is the miracle! Christ's redeeming love can overcome all the darkness and sin that we can throw at it. He reaches into that other-world where these street kids have hidden themselves from the terror of their reality and He finds his sons and daughters again.

As impacted as our visitors are by the streets, they are invariably more impacted by God's hand on the Micah boys' lives. It is beautiful to see our boys work on the streets. Often as we trudged through the streets, we adults became little more than bystanders as our boys sat down in the trash and had heart-to-heart conversations with the street kids, imploring them to follow the same path that they themselves followed to redemption. It was amazing to see diminutive Nelson get in the face of a

tattooed street kid who was twice his size and tell him how God can rescue him from the streets. Who better, though, to reach into that hidden place where the street kids live, than the very boys who have learned the way out?

I mentioned how hard it was for our American visitors to believe that the Micah boys were once street kids. I have to admit, though, that if it weren't for the pictures I have in the Micah House office of our boys when they were on the streets, it would be awfully hard for me to remember as well. One reason that I appreciate the groups that come to visit us is that it gives me a chance to see this work through fresh eyes, to remember not only the tragedy, but also the miraculous change that God has wrought in the boys' lives.

Two incidents during the group visits helped me to remember this transformation. As the college group from St. Louis sat in a circle in the Micah Project living room talking about their experiences on the streets one afternoon, Miguel wandered into the Micah House. Freckled and gaunt, this twelve year old street kid stumbled into the midst of our meeting so high on glue that he could barely stand up. We all sat speechless as he fell to the floor giggling and mumbling senselessly in the middle of our circle.

At that very moment I was talking about street kids with the group, giving statistics and talking about the characteristics of street children in Honduras. Miguel's sudden presence in the room was an overwhelming dose of reality to underline the facts and statistics. Here was a little boy who, in a few minutes, would leave the Micah House and have absolutely no place to go, no one to care for him. Even though I have been around this for a long time, experiencing Miguel's presence that day in the Micah House brought home to me the anguished reality of our boys' pasts and so many kids' present reality.

Two weeks later, we arrived at the dusty, remote women's prison with a St. Louis youth group. We sent the Micah boys in ahead to set up the sound equipment for our program. After a few minutes, Noel came out crying. He informed us that he found his cousin, whom he did not know was incarcerated. She had recently been sentenced to a 15-year term in the prison.

Walking into the room where over a hundred women were gathered, Noel asked me if he could give his testimony during our presentation. As he took center stage a few minutes later, he began to talk about his life. He talked about both times he almost died, once at the hands of his own step-father. He talked about living on the streets, using drugs and stealing to get the money to pay for them.



Left: the boys perform a passion play at the prison.

Suddenly, he stopped, overwhelmed by tears. He told the women that there was someone else in the room who needed to know God's love. Saying this, he asked his cousin to join him on stage so that he could pray for her. In tears, she put her arms around Noel. He began to pray, but tears once again overwhelmed him. He and his cousin stood arm-in-arm, sobbing.

After a minute or two of silence, first Marvin, then Cristino, then Nelson, then the rest of the Micah boys, approached Noel and his cousin on center stage and encircled them in a hug. Marvin began to pray for both of them as the boys laid hands on them. As Marvin prayed for healing and transformation, the Holy Spirit was a palpable presence in that jail. I looked up after the prayer, and every woman in the jail was weeping along with Noel and his cousin.

That moment will live forever in my memory. One brave Micah boy faced his past, and indeed, his present anguish with an open and honest heart and through that one act, offered God's healing to many people. At the same time, I watched the other Micah boys, prompted by no one but the Holy Spirit, become true ministers in a time of great need.

I praise God for not letting me forget that his love is capable of overcoming all the corruption and sin we can spread through this world. I praise him that the Micah boys are living reminders of his grace.

One final question many visitors ask during their visits: why are some kids transformed by this grace and other left in the darkness? The answer they take home with them is this: the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Indeed, many of them leave Honduras after a week ready to be used by God in a new way to do His work among the lost!

I ask for your prayers in this. Pray that God would raise up workers here in Honduras to reach these kids. Pray for the more than eighty American visitors that spent time with us in March, that lessons He taught them here would translate into a new work in each of them life. Finally, pray for the Micah boys. Satan would love nothing better than to get back these souls; he must be quaking when he thinks of the powerful ways God will use these young men in the future! Pray for protection, growth and continued healing for the boys.

This is a transitional time for the Micah Project. My co-founder and dear friend, Aminah Al-Attas, returned to the States in April to pursue new paths that God is opening up for her. At the same time, we are beginning an intense strategic-planning process, to explore the avenues of growth that God has planned for this project. We are formulating plans for a community library and study center in the Micah house, which will be used as an outreach tool for neighborhood children and teens. We are also developing a college scholarship endowment fund in order to begin to prepare for the boys' future! I'll send more information soon regarding these new projects!

It is my sincere hope that these letters help you to experience some of the joy that I experience as I watch our Lord move in our boys' lives and in the Micah project. I hope you can use these letters as a tool to know how to pray for the boys and the project. I also hope that they bless you with the testimony of God's grace in the boys' lives. Please understand also, that your prayers and support are also tremendous blessing to us! Thank you!

In awe of our Lord's grace,

Michael Miller

[The Micah Projects exists through your generous contributions. To donate to the project, please write a check to "The Micah Project" and send it to the following address: The Central Presbyterian Church, c/o Mr. Randy Mayfield, Missions Director, 7700 Davis Dr., Clayton, MO 63105. For more information, please check out our website at www.micahcentral.org, or write me at migsmil@micahcentral.org.]

Micah Project May/June 2001 Update

Do you want the challenge of your life? Here's what to do: choose fifteen drugged out street kids and teens, take their drugs away from them, enclose them in a room for several hours, and try to teach them something. Now, imagine yourself doing it when you were sixteen years-old! Sound difficult? Just ask Micah boys Jarvin, Oscar, David, Noel and Cristino, who have been volunteering at a crisis center for street kids for the last five months as part of our leadership training program. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons, the boys work with ten-to-twenty kids who walk into the crisis center from the streets. Most of the kids come in high on industrial glue...and most come ready for battle!

Our boys come back from the crisis center each day with their clothes rumpled, their hair mussed up, and a slightly dazed look on their haggard faces. "I had to break up three fights today!" sighs one. "I had to chase Roberto for twenty minutes to get the crayons away from him," laments another. When I asked one of our boys if he was like that when he was on the streets, he replied with an impish grin: "No, I was worse!"

Many street kids in Tegucigalpa leave their homes for the streets at the age of five or six. Not only can they not write their names, they have neither learned basic life skills, such as how to bathe, how to eat a meal at a table, and how to sit still for thirty minutes to receive a lesson. What they may have learned about life skills in their homes soon becomes blurred by the new survival skills they must learn to get through each day on the streets. To rescue them from the streets is to start from the beginning, and it takes patience, dedication and imagination.

According to our boys, Emerson is one of the toughest street boys to work with at the crisis center. A fair-skinned, tow-headed boy, 12 year-old Emerson looks more like he's eight. I often see him downtown clinging precariously to the bumpers of trucks and buses, enjoying the thrill of a free ride while inhaling his yellow glue. That "need-for-speed" seems to carry over to the crisis center where, in Jarvin's words: "When you need to find Emerson, just look in the places where he's not supposed to be." As with most street kids, Emerson finds it difficult to adapt to a structured environment after years of living by his own rules.

But our boys have found out that if you can capture their imagination, if you can entrance them in an irresistibly interesting activity, they will begin to channel some of that creative energy they put into surviving on the streets. Emerson got excited one day by an activity that Cristino planned in which he had to cut out magazine pictures that had objects beginning with the letter "M". Two hours later, he had filled his posterboard with pictures and had written the names of each one with Cristino's help. Two hours of concentrated effort seemed like a huge victory for Emerson and for his teacher, Cristino!

The pastor who runs the crisis center, after gaining confidence in our boys, has given them a lot of responsibility. For a couple hours each day, our guys are the only ones in charge. In the beginning, I thought they were going to throw in the towel. But as we encouraged them to use their creativity and leadership skills, slowly they began to gain confidence in their abilities to work with the kids.

Last Friday, Jarvin burst into the Micah house saying, "Michael, I had double-duty today. I was an educator and acting- director of the center!" It appears that the two adults in charge of the crisis center had a conference to attend, leaving our boys in charge! And apart from two-or-three boys who were especially high on glue, all eighteen kids participated in the educational activity (making 3-D geometrical shapes), the Bible activity, and the science experiment (making tornadoes in Coke bottles) that our boys planned. The boys came back to the Micah House with their confidence buoyed by their success that day.

While each one of the boys has developed a tremendous amount of leadership skills through this experience, sixteen-year-old Jarvin seems to be particularly impacted. He wrote in a recent journal entry: "I thank God for giving me this experience. It has helped me to grow as a leader and to serve these kids who need so much help."

Perhaps Jarvin has internalized this experience so much because of his frequent contact with his brother Darwin, whom I've written about in past letters. In the three years that I have known Darwin on the streets, I have never seen him without his glue. Last week, we ran across Darwin near the national Congress. Jarvin decided not to wake him as he slept on the concrete sidewalk underneath a hamburger restaurant awning. When his older brother tried to slip a bag of chips under his shirt, Darwin jumped up suddenly, with the instincts of someone who knows how to avoid street dangers.

Upon recognizing his brother, Darwin slumped back down onto the concrete, put his hands over his eyes and refused to talk with him. Jarvin begged Darwin to enter one of the crisis centers in the city and to leave the drugs, but Darwin simply pretended to fall asleep again, without ever saying a word to Jarvin.

It's hard to know exactly what these two boys feel about each other, boys who fled their home together before they were old enough to start first grade. What does Darwin think about when he sees his well-dressed older brother kneel down on the sidewalk to talk with him? And what conflicting emotions does Jarvin deal with each time he sees his brother wasting away both physically and mentally?



Above: Jarvin tries to talk with his younger brother Darwin.

Their relationship certainly has something to do with the reason that Jarvin dedicates so much of himself to the kids in the crisis center. He may not be able to rescue Darwin, but God can certainly use him mightily in the lives of many other street kids. And it is easy to see the impact that he is having on the kids in the center. He recently used his acting skills to teach the boys of the crisis center a skit called "street kids" which they performed very successfully at a local church. We praise God for the way he is working through our boys' experience at the crisis center. Through the help and support of our young men, perhaps these street kids will eventually leave street life once-and-for-all, a decision that each Micah boy had to make is his own not-too-distant past. This experience not only benefits the street kids however; God is also preparing the Micah boys for a future in which they will be at the forefront of helping street kids in Honduras.

The future is not something that most poor kids can afford to think about. In order to help our boys and other poor children and teens prepare for the future, the Micah Project is launching two new efforts: a community library and a college scholarship fund. Access to books is almost nil for the majority of Tegucigalpa's kids, and access to a higher education is an even more remote possibility.

We have already begun the planning and design for our community library, which we will open in September in a multi-purpose space in the Micah home. We hope to

develop four aspects of the community library: a children's section, a teen and adult literature and reference section, a reference section for people in Christian ministry and outreach, and an "electronic section", with access to internet and CD-Roms. Thanks to friends such as John and Charly Potts from Colorado, who brought two suitcases full of Spanish books with them when they came to Honduras last month, we have a small but ever-growing selection of books for the library!

One of the first projects of the library will be a reading club. We will invite kids from the poor barrios around the Micah Home, and kids directly from the streets to come to the library two afternoons a week to participate in a variety of literature-and-Bible-based activities. In addition to these activities, designed to put books into their hands and turn them on to reading, we also want to establish a reading room where teen-age and adult students can come to research topics that they are studying in school.

Our second investment in the future of these youth is a college scholarship fund. We will soon be announcing the creation of an endowment fund that will subsidize the Micah boys' college education when they graduate in the next few years. In the meantime, we would like to offer scholarships to teens from other poor homes who would otherwise not be able to attend college. We have decided next year to focus on teens from the Villa Linda Miller reconstruction project, which we started in 1998 for 161 families who lost their homes during hurricane Mitch (see www.villalindamiller.thinkhost.com).

We have identified our first participant in the college scholarship fund. Darwin Pavon will graduate from high school this November. I met his family two days after hurricane Mitch had destroyed their home and possessions in 1998. Since then, I have watched as he simultaneously finished his last two years of high school and built his family's home in Villa Linda Miller.

Darwin and I have talked at great length about his future. He would like to go to the National University to study medicine, but without a scholarship, he will have to get a job to support his family. Their situation was made much worse last month after the tragic death of his dad in an automobile accident, leaving a widow and seven kids between the ages of nineteen and eight months (Darwin, age 17, is the second-oldest). Since tuition fees are nominal at the National University, I believe that Darwin can buy his books, support himself, and help support his family on a scholarship for three hundred dollars a month.



Left: Darwin receives his high school diploma alongside his proud mom Flora!

I will send you more information about these new efforts in our mid-year report. In the meantime, I appreciate your ongoing prayers and financial support. Please know that God uses them in powerful ways!

As I finish this letter, the boys come back into the Micah House from the crisis center. I can tell from their voices that they are happy it's Friday. A frazzled-looking Cristino comes into my office and says that eight new boys showed up from the streets today and they caused so much trouble that he was ready to walk out the door and quit. "Why didn't you quit?" I ask, somewhat bemused to be hearing this complaint from a boy who was no angel himself just a couple of years ago. He thought for a minute and then replied, "If I give up on these boys, who else will be there for them?" Spoken with the persistence and dedication of a true leader.

Thank you for providing a foundation for these boys' future!

Sincerely,
Michael Miller

August 2001 Update

A miracle has occurred in the Micah Project, and I am convinced that it is because so many of you are praying for us! I write you today not to update you about the project, but to ask urgently for your continuing prayers for a very special boy.

In my last update, I wrote about Harvin's brother Darwin, a 15 year-old who has spent the last six years of his life on the streets. He has been the most lost and unreachable kid I know on the streets. In fact, I stopped looking for a spark of life in him a long time ago. Last month, when we ran into him, he would not even look at his brother Harvin while he tried to talk with him. Darwin is so lost in the world of drugs that he often doesn't even recognize his brother when Harvin encounters him in the streets.

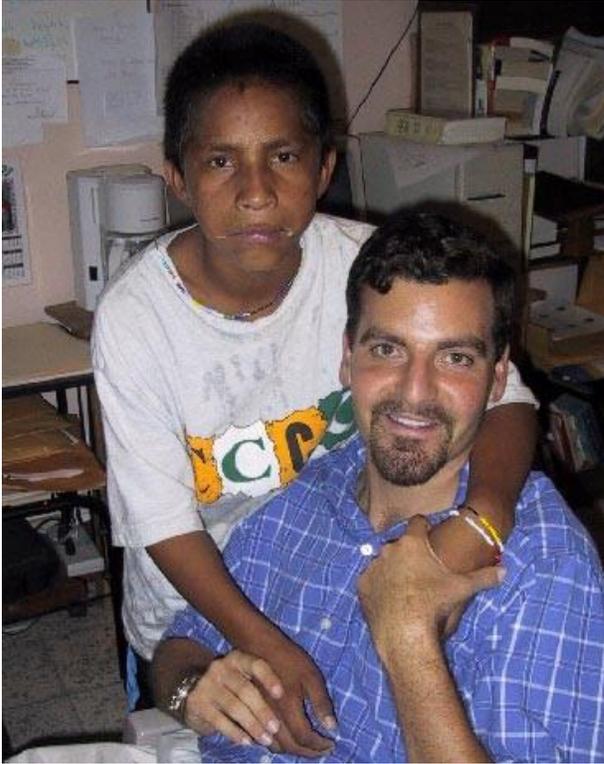
But something truly incredible has happened!

Last week, a group of high school students from St. Louis joined us in ministry. All of us were amazed by the powerful ways in which the Lord worked through us. It was a time of tremendous renewal for the American kids and for all of us here at the Micah Project.

At one point during the week, a couple of girls from the group got off the bus on the way back from visiting a senior citizen's asylum in order to buy some souvenirs. They asked Harvin to go with them to show them the way. At first, he declined, saying that he was tired, but upon reflection, he decided to accompany the girls. On the streets, Harvin and the American girls ran into Darwin. I'm sure Harvin expected the same rejection as always, but this time, Darwin was ready to talk.

Harvin is sitting here with me as I write this. According to him, after talking with Darwin for a while, they sensed a new desire in him. He talked for the first time about his desire to leave the streets. After a while, they laid their hands on to pray for him. According to Harvin, "we prayed that God would take possession of Darwin's life so that Darwin would have a heart ready to change. We also prayed that Darwin would truly desire to leave the streets. We also thanked God for using us in Darwin's life and prayed that he would continue to use us to help Darwin. And God answered our prayer!"

Today, Darwin may have made the biggest decision of his life. He showed up at our doorstep at about ten o'clock, asking to talk with Harvin. We excused Harvin from classes so that they could talk. About an hour later, Harvin pulled me out of class. "I think Darwin is ready to leave the streets for good," he breathlessly told me.



Left: Darwin's first day!

We called Darwin in, and for the first time, I heard him talk without being under the influence of drugs. He said that he was tired of street life and he wanted a new life. He said that he is committed to leaving drugs once and for all. We asked him if he wanted to live in the Micah Project and he said yes, because he has many friends here who can help him. After talking with him for an hour and praying for him, we welcomed him into our family!

After he showered and took a nap, we met with the boys to talk things over. For the past few days, the boys and I have been sensing that the Lord is ready to lead us to a new level of faith and ministry. We have been praying that God would open our eyes and hearts to renewal and spiritual growth. As we gathered around the living room today, I told them that perhaps the challenge of taking care of Darwin will be the beginning of that new time of growth. I told them that it is not so hard to go into a jail or an orphanage for a couple of hours to do ministry, but when there is a needy person living under the same roof, the ministry is much more challenging.

We talked about the years that Darwin has lived on the streets. He has not had one day of school, he knows no routine, he lacks the knowledge of how people treat each other with respect and love. He doesn't even know how to use a fork and I doubt if he has ever used a pillow. Darwin's change requires us to start from the beginning, and it will require the commitment from each one of the boys to help minister to him. Are they ready to accept this ministry?

The boys began to talk, and I quickly realized that they are indeed ready for this battle. Danilo talked about how Satan wants Darwin's life, and is not going to give it up easily. But he also said that the Lord has given us the authority over Satan. Marvin talked about the need for us to be more unified than ever, to encourage each other to pray and read His word, in order to resist the attacks that are likely to come as we take on this great work. I sensed the Spirit moving in the boys as they talked more and more excitedly about what the Lord will do in Darwin and what he will do in them. In the end, each one of us prayed, asking for God's miraculous and transforming love to flow through us to Darwin.

And here we are! Darwin has been with us for five hours now. Soon, he will begin to have urges to use drugs. He will most likely feel pent in by this new routine and structure and will think about going back to the streets. But victory is possible in his life!

Harvin wants me to ask you to keep praying. He says that there is surely a party in heaven today because of this victory, and that if you keep praying, God is going to keep providing. Harvin is sure that God is going to continue answering your prayers.



Left: Darwin with big brother Jarvin.

With a faith-filled big brother like Harvin and ten newly adopted brothers who are ready to help, Darwin is in very good hands! But I would like to echo Harvin in asking you to pray. I feel strongly that the battle for Darwin's life is a spiritual one. Please pray that he would have the strength to give his life completely to God. Also, pray for the Micah boys. This is a tremendous opportunity for them to minister on

the cutting edge, and they are ready to go at it with all their hearts. I believe some tremendous growth will come out of this!

As I write, there is an amazing energy in the house. The boys are ready for battle. Would you be willing to provide a foundation of prayer for them and for Darwin and for the boys as his ministers? Together, we can be the hands of Jesus that lead Darwin into new life!

In the glory of the ever-expanding kingdom of our Savior, and in gratitude for your prayers,

Michael Miller



September 2001 Update

Can God take a situation filled with evil, destruction and hate, and somehow bring His good out of it? In my life, the people most able to answer this question are the twelve boys who live at the Micah Project. Each one of them has experienced tragedy from the very beginning, when they were born into impoverished and often violent homes. Each one of them fled their homes hoping to escape this tragedy, only to find a quasi-human, horror-filled existence awaiting them on the streets.

Yet each one of them thanks God for his life. How can that be? How can they not be embittered by the nightmare that has been their childhoods? Yet each one of them will tell you this: God's love is greater than the human evil that put them into the streets.

Last Thursday evening, as we sat chatting with a guest in the Micah House library, she asked the boys if they were able to forgive their fathers for what they did to them. An important question, since escaping the alcohol-induced rage of their fathers was a major reason that most of them fled to the streets. After a few minutes, each one of them began to say that yes, sooner or later he had been able to forgive his father. One said that he hated his father for many years. But after he began to understand God's forgiveness of our sin through Jesus Christ, he was slowly able to forgive his father. As testimony to that, this same boy gave all of his savings to his grandmother last week so that they could get his dad into a treatment center for alcoholics.

What an amazing testimony--to see our boys forgiving those whom most damaged them! To forgive those who have wrought evil in our lives is to truly and radically take on the attitude of our Savior.

As most of you, the boys and I watched in horror as evil claimed so many lives on Tuesday, September 11. We sat not wanting to watch, yet not able to do anything else. For hours we sat, not being able to grasp the truth, even though CNN's horribly graphic and repetitive coverage slammed it in our faces time and time again. On the second day, when we began to see the tragedy not as steel and concrete but as human lives, as shattered families and lost friends, we could finally cry.

Last week, I so wanted to be with other Americans. I wanted to hug and hold and grieve with people who were asking the same questions as I. How could this happen to Americans? How could a band of hate-filled men take away so many innocent lives? How could they spread so much terror as to be able to destroy our hard-gained sense of security?

As I talked with the boys about this tragedy, I began to see that their perspective is different from mine. They agreed that the attacks were horrible...definitely yes; but surprising...not so much. For our boys have never enjoyed security and comfort,

never known what it is like to take peace and prosperity for granted. In their homes, they never knew when their dads would come home drunk and looking for victims. On the streets, they learned to sleep with all senses actively alert, ready to jump at run when the nighttime dangers lurked close. Even in the last month, they have seen gang riots close down Tegucigalpa. They have seen violent strikes, and a level of crime high enough that the army has had to begin patrolling the streets of their city. In the last month, one of our boys has had a cousin shot through the back and another sat beside his three-year old sister in a coma in a hospital after a fall crushed her skull in their teetering cliff-side slum. Yes, insecurity, terror and tragedy have accompanied them through life so as to become a common and not-so-surprising companion.

Yet at the same time, I believe that they are better prepared than we to see that God's grace can still shine victorious despite our evil ways. Our boys, especially the older ones, have an unwavering understanding that God rescued them from the tragedy in order to help them minister to those who are still suffering. They are beginning to see already that God has transformed the tragedy of their past into a foundation of compassion and love for their present and future ministry.

Even Darwin, our little tornado-in-a-bottle so recently rescued from the evil of the streets, shows compassion and understanding that we thought would be impossible after so many years of inhaling brain-destroying glue. When we walk with him on the streets, he will inevitably give the few coins he has in his pockets to the elderly women and the kids who live on the streets. Today at church, he won a toy dump truck during a "children's day" celebration. He brought it to me for safekeeping, still in its package. He wanted to save it in order to give it to his little stepbrother when he goes to visit his mom this week. This is true kindness, from a boy who has never owned a toy truck himself.



Left: Darwin is learning lots in his new life as a Micah boy!

Darwin may not understand everything that is going on around him, but six years on the streets did not wipe out his ability to empathize. As I watched the tragic reports on the news last week, Darwin came in every so often to sit down beside me, his usual boisterous self quiet. He did not understand what happened in New York and Washington, but he understood the grief that I was feeling and was able to comfort me with his quiet presence.

One day when Erin, our volunteer from Chicago, and I were working at our desks in our office, Darwin came in and gave her a big hug. "Did your mom hold you when you were little?" he asked her. When she replied affirmatively he thought for a few minutes and replied, "I think my mom did too."

Darwin wants to be good and he wants to be loving. But before coming to the Micah Project, goodness and lovingness were but dimly remembered memories from his infancy. Thus, he must begin from scratch to learn exactly how to do these things that are ingrained into most of us by at least one nurturing parent.

Darwin is in a good place to begin learning these things. He is surrounded by eleven big "brothers" here at the Micah Project, young men who sincerely want God's love to reign supreme in their lives. Darwin is already learning, and I believe that his faith education will be a fast one.

I have often asked for your prayers, primarily because I have seen so clearly how God's love has flowed through them. The victory in Darwin's life is a direct result of your prayers. At this time, while I still beg for your prayers for the Micah Project, I also want you to know that we are committed to praying with you. The boys and I are praying for those who have lost loved ones, and we are praying for the United States.

May God bless you with his unity, his peace, and his love during this critical time.

Your brother in Christ,

Michael Miller

November 2001 Update

These days, in order to get work done at my desk at the Micah House, I have to dig out my computer! Our new boy, Darwin, who spent six years on the streets with nowhere to keep his meager possessions, loves to stockpile all sorts of trinkets on my desk. On any given day, I find simple woven bracelets (of his making), puzzles, balls, pictures, shirts and a variety of interesting objects hidden away behind my computer monitor and on top of my printer. I guess, at this point, there's no safer place for Darwin than on my desk.

To see the difference between the Darwin of the streets and Darwin in the Micah house is to see God's hand at work! On the streets, Darwin's emotions, intelligence and spiritual striving were honed down to one basic concept: survival.

Now, as Darwin completes his fifteenth week at the Micah House, he becomes more and more a part of our family. Besides losing the gaunt, sunken-in look of a starving child (he's gained twenty-five pounds!!!), we have seen the visages of the streets begin to fall away from him. He has thrown his creativity into crafts...his current kick is making Christmas ornaments, and he reminds me at every opportunity that it is almost time to get the Christmas tree out of the closet!

Last week, I feel that he finally began to trust me fully. One day, as I walked into our little storage area, I tripped over a ping-pong table that we have stored there. Suddenly, I heard a little giggling voice behind me; there was Darwin trying not to laugh at his not-so-coordinated Project director! In retaliation, I started a tickle war, which we are still battling out to this day.

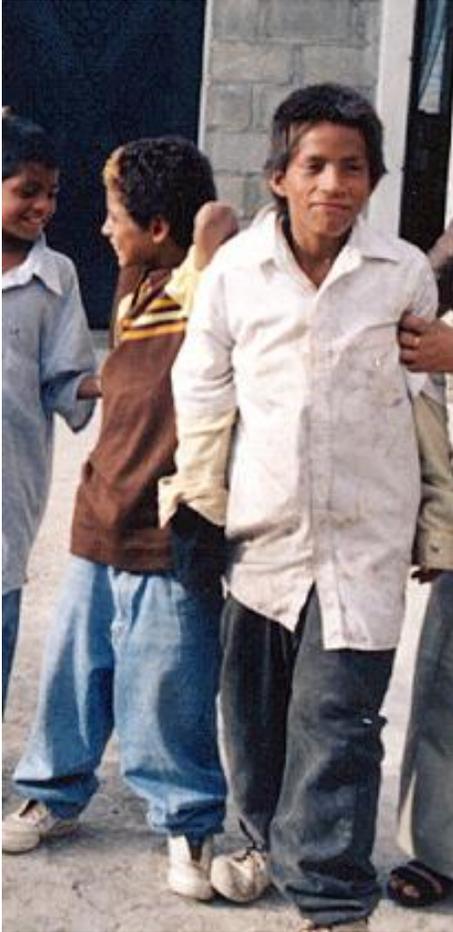
While Darwin is still learning the ins-and-outs of human relationships, he is doing remarkably well, considering his six-year hiatus from society.

It hasn't all been straight uphill, though. One day, during my three-week trip to the States in October, Darwin got sent to his room for playing too roughly with one of the neighborhood boys. Instead of going to his room, he got angry and headed downtown, back to his old haunt on the street and back to his precious drug.

Imagine...after all he had gained, all that he had been given... he was ready to throw it all away to get high on a thirty-cent bottle of shoe glue. But when you have lived in survival mode for your whole life, how do you learn to think through consequences, to make decisions based on your long-term outlook?

In Honduras, when a street kid chooses to leave an organization, he has every right to do so, and the organization cannot hold him against his will. When Darwin hit the streets, however, the love that our boys felt for Darwin mattered more to them than the law.

With Roger, our group home educator, the boys hit the streets in search of Darwin. For two hours, they visited all of Darwin's old haunts. Finally, they found him in a little park in front of the Honduran National Congress building.



Darwin was well into his first bottle of yellow glue when the boys found him. They tried to reason with him, but his first response was to ignore them, then to get angry. Finally, after pleading with him to consider his future and all that he was leaving behind, he seemed to listen. But about that time, a group of older street kids gathered around and began to goad Darwin on. He resisted our boys, then ran.

At that time, the boys made a decision. Should they let Darwin be free to make his own decisions about life, or show him the true meaning of tough love? They chose the second option. The boys ran Darwin down and tackled him, leading him kicking and screaming to our waiting van.

Things could have gotten very ugly at that point. A crowd had gathered, including two policemen who walked up to see what all the commotion was about. It's obvious that angels were surrounding the Micah van at that point, because when Roger and the boys explained Darwin's situation to the police, they gave their blessing to the little "search and rescue" operation, instead

of charging them with kidnapping, which would have been well within their rights.

When I called from the States a few hours later, Darwin seemed to have forgotten the whole incident. Talking to Darwin on the phone is a lesson in patience, since he needs long pauses in the conversation to process what you are saying and to respond. It's more fun talking to him in person, when you can see the whole process at work. When asked a question, he crinkles his eyebrows, shifts from foot-to-foot and wrings his hand while he forms his thoughts into words on brain cells that are still struggling to get free from the effects of the glue.

Talking with him that night, however, I was assured that he was going to make it. He told me that he was happy to be back at the Micah House, and promised not to leave again. After making me promise to bring him a teddy bear, he disappeared from the phone line, not yet grasping concepts such as "good-bye."

Fifteen weeks off the streets would not have been possible without the support of the other boys. As we finish up our school year this week and enter our vacation period, we are focusing on two themes: radical love and total honesty. During the planning of our ministry and educational experiences for the vacation months of November and December, we are also challenging the boys to plumb their motives to make sure that they are based on love, not obligation.

How different this is from the environment that surrounds the boys! Honduras in recent years has been swept up in violence and senseless bloodshed. The reason? Thousands upon thousands of teens and young men are joining gangs, trying to find some source of community and meaning in their lives, which otherwise are beaten down by a sense of hopelessness and a lack of options. Gang violence surrounds us: we have already painted over gang slogans on our house's outside walls three times this year. In March, a boy was killed in a gang fight two blocks from the Micah Project, and in August, all of downtown Tegucigalpa was shut down one day because of a gang turf war.

In the midst of this desperate environment, isn't it amazing that twelve young men are exploring how to live a life of radical love instead of "nothing-to-lose" violence? I praise God as I watch our boys make decisions in their lives based on their Savior's love...

Jarvin comes into my office to talk as I finish this report. He talks about his work at the crisis center, how much he loves the kids there, and how much he is learning about God's love by having to display it day-after-day to a group of otherwise unloved children. As he talks, his brother Darwin comes in with a band-aide and asks his brother to put it on his hand (he has been hoeing corn rows all day at the boys' church and has developed a blister). Jarvin continues talking about a couple of the street girls at the crisis center as he doctors Darwin's hand.

Darwin wanders out and wanders back after a couple minutes. He is in a quiet mood tonight. He hugs his brother from behind, resting his chin on Jarvin's head. They both talk—Jarvin about his work and Darwin about planting radishes at the church land today. I know I'll soon forget what we were talking about, but I am also just as sure that I will never forget the love that passes between these two brothers as they enjoy each other's presence after having been apart for so many years.



(Above: Darwin smiles with his big brother Jarvin.)

Last Saturday, Marvin sang at a Mission's conference held by a church here in Tegucigalpa. One of the songs he chose to sing ends in the following manner: "Whom will I go to in my need? Whom will I go to in search of peace? Whose love will change me for an eternity? No one but you, Jesus, no one but you."

When I think about how many of you are praying for these boys, guiding them to His peace, my heart wells up with joy! I encourage you to keep praying for them! Starting this week, you can find our current prayer requests on our website (www.micahcentral.org) so that you can continue to keep up with us in prayer.

I would also ask you to consider supporting us in 2002. We are excited by the ways that God will increase our ministry next year! Even as we continue to disciple our boys, reach out to the kids on the street, minister kids throughout Tegucigalpa with our community library, and begin our scholarship fund, we know that God will continue to expand our ministry in ways that we can't imagine.

It is our hope that, as you support us, that you will also be blessed by what our Lord is doing in these boys' lives and ministries!

May the love that God has poured out on these boys also abound in your life this season!

Your brother in Christ,
Michael Miller