

HOME *sweet* HOME

Last Tuesday, a little nine-year-old boy appeared on the doorstep of the Micah House, crying so hard that he was shaking uncontrollably. Dressed in dirty pants and torn flip flops, he clutched a smudged yellow towel as if his life depended on it. One of our missionaries, Natasha Wiggs, discovered him outside and coaxed him into the house. When she sat down with him, he clung to her for hours, refusing to let go.

When we got home with the rest of the boys a while later, we discovered that the little boy was the younger brother of Marvincito, a 16 year old who lived at the Micah House for two years before leaving earlier this year. Having no parents, little Angelo lives with an aunt and several drug-addicted relatives. Though he should be in second grade, he does not go to school; he is forced instead to go downtown every morning to sell tortillas for his aunt. The day he ran away, he had been beaten for losing a few lempiras while on an errand to buy diapers for a young cousin-- a beating that left him with bloody and swollen lips and bruises on his arms.

Angelo did what many children do in Honduras when their homes become unbearable: he fled. Though he had only been to the Micah House once, he set off to find us. He got lost along the way, but finally found someone who knew the Micah House and could point him in the right direction. So there he sat in our dining room, clinging to Natasha, whom he had never met, but with whom he felt safe. Finally, just before dinnertime, he fell into a sleep so profound that he did not wake up until the next morning. Though we tried to wake him later in the evening in order to talk to him some more, he refused to wake up...it was as if he was using sleep to take a mental and emotional break from the traumatized reality of his existence. And in the Micah House, he somehow knew that he could sleep safely.

What had this little boy seen in the Micah House that drove him to search us out even though he barely knew us? Somehow, he realized that at Micah, he would be protected and cared for...something that every little child desperately needs but something that did not receive in his aunt's house. Though his aunt provided him with shelter and food, what he was really looking for was a home.

Since we started the Micah Project ten years ago, it has been our desire not to be a project, nor an institution, but a home. For most children, the word "home" evokes warmth and safety...a place where the world and its terrors are locked out. When I was a little boy, I used to imagine that when I got in bed at night, our home took off into the clouds, and floated safely above all of the terrors that night holds until it landed back to earth every morning. When nighttime storms raged, I would sneak into my parent's room with a blanket and curl up in the space between their bed and the wall. For me, that was the safest place in the world. For most of our boys, though, there was as much terror within their homes as without; to the point that the streets began to look safer to them than the place that was supposed to be home.

Because of that sad and twisted reality, we feel that our number one mission on a daily basis is to provide our boys with a safe, God-centered and loving home. As with any family, we strive to protect them from harm. At the Micah House, that means firstly protecting them from exterior forces that coax them back to the streets, including the drug addicts and gang members that run our neighborhood. Providing them a safe home also means protecting them from each other. Since they learned on the streets that brute force was the only way to survive, we must re-train them to understand that interpersonal relationships are about mutual respect and caring, not about dominance and "might-makes-right." Finally, we must protect them from themselves—from the interior voice in each one that says it is just too hard to keep moving forward...that the fumes of yellow glue really are more pleasant than a loving home...that maybe the people who constantly told them that they were delinquents and street trash really were right after all.



Angelo wakes up after a long deep sleep in the comforts of the Micah house.

In our continual efforts to provide the best home possible for our boys, we have come to this realization: the current Micah house is no longer an adequate space to protect and nurture our boys in the way they require. We have begun to look for a property to build a new Micah House. Drew Smith, a friend from St. Louis who spent an entire day last month observing the Micah House in action, summed up our vision for the new house well. After watching dozens of people come in and out the front door for the Micah moms sewing program, the technical school and several other activities, after watching our boys trying to play soccer on our tiny interior patio, and after trying unsuccessfully all day to find a space to have a quiet conversation, he summed up the vision for the new Micah House in this way: *design out the chaos*.



Miguel surveys a potential site for our new home.

As we have begun to look at properties, we are dreaming about doing just that. We have found three different properties out in the green, rolling hills near the Villa Linda Miller community--about a twenty-minute drive from Tegucigalpa. Although right now all we see are cattle pastures, our mind's eye sees a whole lot more! We see a simple yet spacious home, intentionally designed for the spaces we need. We see a soccer field where the boys are happily running and playing. We see a couple of paths through the trees, one leading to a vegetable garden and another leading to a quiet corner of the property where there is a gazebo with a view of the mountains—a place where the boys or staff can go to read, pray or take a nap in a hammock (actually, I see *me* in that hammock more than anybody!). We see a dedicated space for the technical school, far enough away from the house that the roar of the carpentry and welding machinery will be nothing but a pleasant hum. We see a few individual cabins, where staff, volunteers and visitors can live on the property in community with the young men.

In short, we see a safe and happy *home* that has spaces to promote individual growth within a caring Christian community. At the same time, the gates of our new property will remain open. It will become an integral part of Rio Abajo, the community where the properties are located. The boys will continue to interact with their neighbors, just as they do in our current *barrio*. They will also be able to catch a bus back into the city so that they can participate in soccer leagues, church events and other extracurricular activities. They will never be isolated from the rest of their society, but at the same time, they will always have a peaceful place to come home to...a *true* home.

Pray for us as we begin to hone in on the property that we will purchase and as we put the above dreams on paper and in architectural plans. We are so blessed to have received an anonymous donation of fifty thousand dollars, which will go a long way in purchasing one of these properties. We will let you know in the weeks to come once we have made our final decisions on a property and have architectural plans drawn up!

Additionally, pray for our boys and staff as we live out the last few months in our current facility. Our young new group of ex-street kids is finding it tough to live in a home so close to their former lives on the streets. Several of them have given us the slip lately and gone back to the market to use yellow glue. Though they have all returned, their time back on the streets rewinds their process and makes it harder to move forward. It is also hard for them to see kids arrive at our front door several times a day with bottles of glue in their hands. Often, it just takes one whiff of the toxic fumes to create a ton of anxiety in our boys that are addicted to it. In the future, our current facility will be used as a transitional facility for young boys as they come off the street, while the new home will be a safer distance from the temptations of the streets.

We are so profoundly grateful to all of you that have helped us to provide a true home for these boys over the last ten years. You are an important part of their extended family! We pray that many of you will be able to come down to Honduras in the months to come to help our new home take shape!

Muchas gracias!

Su hermano en Cristo,

Michael Miller



Hector spent about a week this month living on the streets.