

A Place to Call Home

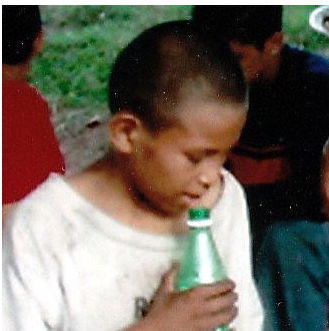
The Micah Project Summer 2011 Letter

Dear friends,

I still remember the day that I met Wilmer for the first time back in 2007. It was his baby face and tiny frame that set him apart from the other, more hardened street kids under the bridge. Sadly, you get used to seeing kids wandering around barefoot and dirty, sucking the fumes out of a bottle of yellow glue while they dig through the trash bins by the river. But when it is such an innocent face, and such a small size, it reminds you that your heart is supposed to be broken by such tragedy.

That first day, we brought some toys, games and balloons to play with the kids under the bridge. These brightly-colored things seemed out of place in their dirt-toned surroundings; even so, Wilmer played with them like a child would play with new toys under a Christmas tree. The only difference was that he could only play with one hand, since he refused to give up the bottle of glue clutched in the other. At one point, as we ran and played with the street kids under the bridge, Wilmer wandered over to me, looked up at me with those bambi-esque eyes, and asked, *"Can you build a house for my mom?"*

Such a conflicted and heart-wrenching question, especially coming from a boy with Wilmer's past. His mom lived in a seedy, rented room on one of the most dangerous blocks of the market district. Due to a combination of mental illness and past experience, she really had no ability to love or nurture her children. His dad was serving a long prison sentence and only called to threaten his mom for starting a relationship with yet another new man. Wilmer's mom could have easily gone to the bridge and taken Wilmer back home, since her room was just a few blocks away...but she never did. Even so, somewhere in this little child's brain, there was a tiny spark of hope that said, *"Maybe if I can just get my mom a house, everything will be better."*



A few weeks after that first day, Wilmer did find a home. Not in his own broken family, but in a family that God had created in Honduras for boys just like him. And Wilmer became our newest son. His heavenly Father used the Micah family to begin to bless and transform his life in areas where he had only before known curse. But in the same way, God also brought Wilmer to our family to bless us as well...which he continues to do to this day.

I don't know why it is, but whenever God brings us a new boy, only a few weeks go by, and we can't even imagine how the Micah House would have been without him. There is a sense of completeness--of rightness--as each boy moves in and becomes a part of our family. People always ask me how it is that we choose the boys who will be a part of the Micah Project, and I can never give them a really good answer based on some policy or guideline. That's because, honestly, it's God who chooses the boys, in His perfect timing, in a way that renews our home and makes it more complete. While the boys definitely, desperately need us, our Father knows that we also need them. That may not really makes any sense to you (it's even confounding to us!), although I think it becomes clearer when you spend a few days getting to know the boys!

When Wilmer became our newest family member, we had to begin at the beginning with him. He had never been to school, so we literally began with A, B and C. We stuck a lollipop in his mouth every few minutes so

that he would be distracted from the desire to suck on a glue bottle, and we bought him a bicycle so that he could wear off all his nervous energy as his body began to detox from its craving for toluene. It wasn't a perfect process; he ended up back on the streets several times in his first couple of years. But, with each successive time that he went back to the streets, he knew more and more that he was out of place there... he was a Micah boy now, and he knew exactly where he belonged.

I could write a whole book about the ways Wilmer has grown over the last four years of being a Micah boy. On March 15, 2009, he accepted Christ and was baptized in a mountain stream in northwestern Honduras. He has taken his faith seriously, and he desires more than anything to become a disciple of his Savior. At our Sunday night worship times on the Micah House patio, John Bell will stop in the middle of a worship song and just look at Wilmer. While Israel keeps the beat on the bongo drum, Wilmer will begin to rap a freestyle song of worship. Words will flow from his heart, through his lips, and they will join the pulsing beat of the bongo. Words about salvation, about being rescued from the darkness of the streets, about new life in Christ...as the old hymn goes, "Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life..." At that moment, on a Sunday night on our patio, Wilmer becomes a powerful, living testimony of a God who saves.



On June 11 of this year, Wilmer turned seventeen. Even as he approaches manhood, he still retains some of that sweet innocence that he had when we first met him under the bridge four years ago. A few days after his birthday, he wandered into my office with his brow furrowed. His recent birthday had caused him to do some math, and he realized that he was seventeen and only in the sixth grade. "*Michael, how many more years until I graduate from high school?*" "Five years, Wilmer." A long silence ensued, but I waited for him to ask the question that I knew was coming. "*Will I be able to live at Micah until I finish high school?*" The boy from under the bridge who had found a home and a family at Micah was suddenly wondering if that family came with an expiration date. I held my arms out, and gave him a big bear hug as a reply. "As long as you keep moving forward, Wilmer, we'll keep moving forward with you!" Happy with that answer, he flashed his famous Wilmer smile and ambled back out of my office.

When I ponder all of the ways that Wilmer and the other boys have grown despite all odds against them, I realize that it is because of one, important truth. I believe that the reason that Micah has been so successful for eleven years now is that we have provided our boys with a family which serves as a launching pad for reuniting them with their heavenly Father. For boys that became intimately acquainted with death and destruction in the miserable years of their childhood, guiding them to Him has to be so much more than an academic curriculum in an institutional setting. It requires loving them when they feel unlovable, leading them to forgiveness again and again when they can't get beyond the guilt of past sin and relentlessly pointing them towards hope when the defining quality of their lives up to this point has been despair.

Although God has been incredible faithful in bringing healing in this process, for the last couple of years, the current Micah House has no longer been an adequate place to do this kind of deep discipleship. Last week, for example, I needed to have a heart-to-heart conversation with one of our boys about something he was struggling with. We went from room to room in the Micah House without ever being able to find a solitary space. We even tried to talk outside, but there were five needy people waiting at the Micah door for help (and ever since getting held up at gunpoint in our neighborhood a few weeks ago, it's hard for me to have a deep conversation out there without feeling the need to check out every car and pedestrian that passes by!). Counting our boys, staff, the Micah moms, Timothy House guys, the young men in our technical school

program and other folks that visit us daily, we average more than fifty people a day that are in-and-out of the Micah House for various reasons. Those of you who have visited us for any length of time can attest to how chaotic it can get!

That is why we have been planning for a new Micah facility for over a year now. We want to design a place that has intentional spaces to disciple our boys and to minister to others in a truly effective way. When I need to have that one-on-one conversation next year at our new place, we can go to one of the gazebos out by the soccer field or simply stroll along the green rolling acreage. Every time we dream about our new land, we come up with new ways that we will be able to reach and teach our young men with greater impact...ways that are simply not possible now due to the limitations of the original Micah House.

In the next few weeks, we will be signing the contract in order to purchase seven acres of land directly adjacent to the Villa Linda Miller community, which we helped to build in 1999 after Hurricane Mitch. While the idea of moving the Micah House from our original location can seem daunting, we are so encouraged by the ways that God has already provided for the new facility. Thanks to several generous donations by friends of the Micah Project, we have already raised the entire \$170,000 needed to purchase the land! Wow! Thanks to all of you who gave towards the purchase of the land...before we even officially began raising funds!



We're not quite ready to roll out our capital campaign yet...we are still working on finalizing our architectural plans and putting together a budget for the new Micah facility. Once we get all those details ironed out in the weeks to come, we'll send you some more specific information about the new project. In the meantime, we wanted to let you know that the summer months are an important time for us to build our operational fund back up so that we get through to the end of the year. We rely so much on the generosity of individuals such as you who see what God is doing in the lives of our boys and want to play a part in that miraculous process!

In those same Sunday night worship times where Wilmer raps his heart out, our chaplain John Bell always challenges our boys to continue to grow closer to their heavenly Father and to each other. When he really wants to remind them of what God has done and is doing for them, he will quote the words of one of the songs that our older boys wrote a few years ago. He will ask: *¿Quienes somos?* (Who are we?). And all of the boys will respond: *¡¡¡Los Micah Boys!!!* John will then ask: *¿Y donde estamos?* (And where are we?). And with one voice, the boys will shout: **¡En el proceso!** (We're in process!).

We can't tell you enough what a blessing it is that you all are "in process" with our boys and missionaries. While much of Wilmer's story is as yet unwritten, it gives us so much strength and hope to know that you are helping us to write it. We'll keep you updated as he keeps taking steps forward!

Your brother on the journey (and in the process!),

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael S. Miller".

Michael S. Miller
Executive Director

