

November 1999: Email requesting for fundraising to open the Micah Project

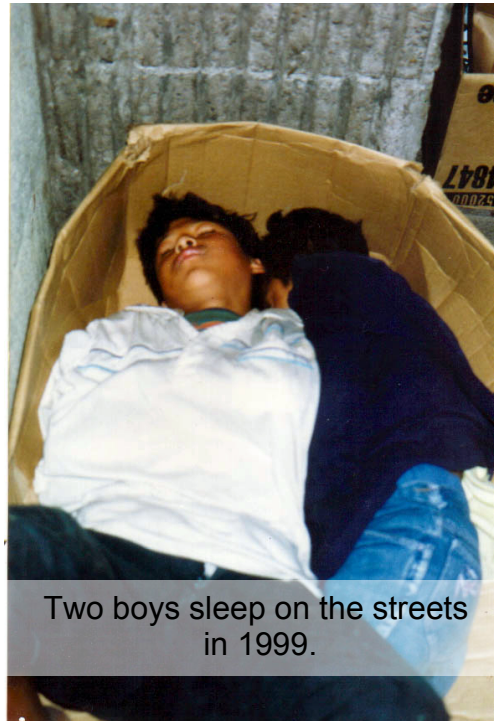
Dear friends,

Why are there five thousand homeless children living on the streets of Honduras' capital city? Why are these children forced to live like stray dogs—eating out of trashcans, begging for food, and sleeping in dark corners? Why are these children considered disposable by society—abandoned, abused, and even murdered by those who are embarrassed or angered by their presence?

It is one of Honduras' most tragic problems—thousands of children living on the streets and surviving any way they can. According to UNICEF, the 5,000 street children in Tegucigalpa, Honduras' capital city, are pushed out of their homes by poverty, abuse, or family disintegration. Forced to live by any means they can, they resort to shining shoes, picking pockets, or even selling their own bodies to child prostitution.

It was to work with these abandoned children that I came to Honduras in 1993. At that time, I saw eight-year-olds, who should have been playing on a swingset in a sunny park, who instead were sitting on dirty street corners, peering over their bottles of yellow glue with drug-deadened eyes. Behind those cold eyes, I knew that there was a beautiful creation of God, waiting to be brought back to Him. It was then that God planted in my heart the call to work with street kids.

Since 1993, that call has grown and bloomed into a vision. In January of the year 2000, we will open the Micah Project, a place for street kids to develop into Christian leaders. The Micah Project will open a group home for those street kids who have the desire and capacity to continue their studies. The home will be centered on Christian values, especially focusing on the loving leadership of Jesus, who led by serving those around him, even those most-rejected by society.



Two boys sleep on the streets in 1999.

Christian leadership skills will thread through every aspect of the Micah Project. They will be taught through the way the staff treats the kids, through the way the kids treat each other, and through opportunities to serve others less fortunate than themselves. The staff will work with each young person to implement a comprehensive plan designed to foster spiritual, emotional, academic, social, and physical development.

The Micah Project will also teach critical thinking skills so that these young people can confront the problems that face their country and become leaders in the quest for change.

According to a recent study, Honduras is the third most corrupt nation in the world. This corruption is a major reason why the country is poor and gets poorer with every passing year.



Who better than a rescued street kid, who has an intimate knowledge of hunger, homelessness, and abuse, to lead the way to solving the overwhelming problems that keep the majority of Hondurans in poverty? As our young people begin to develop their own vocations, the Micah Project will do everything necessary to empower them to follow the example of Christ in this country.

The Micah Project will be a small program. The first year, we will only accept between ten and fifteen boys. We will not focus on the numerical growth of our program; we will instead focus on the growth of each individual young person.

Two Honduran Christians and one American share this vision and will be working with me beginning in January. Five boys, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, have already been selected for the project. I have worked with these boys for three years, and they have convinced me of their desire to follow God's will in their lives. I will be introducing you to Marvin, Danilo, Cristino, David, and Harvin in future letters.

This week, the future of many street kids in Tegucigalpa became much more uncertain. The organization in which our boys currently live announced last Friday that it will be closing all of its group homes due to a lack of funding. Over seventy children will be put back onto the streets in January, with no place to go and no one to help them.

This announcement makes the opening of the Micah Project much more urgent. We are praying that God will open up the necessary doors to give these children a place to live in January.

We are just beginning to raise funds for the Micah Project. We will need capital funds in order to rent or purchase a home and monthly operational funds in order to run the home, pay the staff, and fund the educational aspects of the project. We have recently located a home that would be perfect for the project, with a cost of \$60,000. Once the project is up-and-running, we are estimating a monthly cost of \$2,000 to cover the group home, the activities, and the educational expenses of the project.



Here, is our first home in 1999 when it was still a store. We lived here for about 13 years before moving out to Micah 2.0. Currently, we plan to use this facility as a "half-way" house for boys and men coming off the streets.

Please pray about supporting the Micah Project and giving these ex-street kids the opportunity to become leaders in their country. If you would like to support the Micah Project, please send a tax-exempt check to the following address:

The Central Presbyterian Church
c/o Randy Mayfield
7700 Davis Dr.
Clayton, MO 63105

Please include a note indicating that the donation is for the Micah Project. A full project profile, including a proposed budget, and a video are available on request. You may contact Randy Mayfield for more information at (314) 854-0133.

The Prophet Micah, after railing against the leaders of Judah for turning against their God and for oppressing the poor, shows us how Our Lord wants us to live: “to act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” How would Honduras change if her leaders began to live these three things? With your help, we can be instrumental in the formation of leaders who are filled with the love of Christ and who are fully prepared to share that love in their struggling country.

Please pray for the Micah Project and the boys who will participate in it!

Sincerely,
Michael Miller

December 1, 1999 Email Update

Dear friends,

The weeks that have passed since my trip to St. Louis in October have been intense and full of the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have continually been amazed by the way He has opened doors for the Micah Project.

During the past few weeks, I have been conducting visits to the homes of all the boys who will be part of the project. Visiting these broken and impoverished families is devastating; it becomes much clearer why these boys decided that life would be more easily won on the streets than with their families.

One family that I visited was that of Danilo, a robust and happy fourteen-year-old with an easy smile and a booming laugh. Danilo's family lives in a very small shack on the north coast of Honduras. I visited the home with Danilo last weekend in order to talk to his family about the Micah Project. Their shack lacked

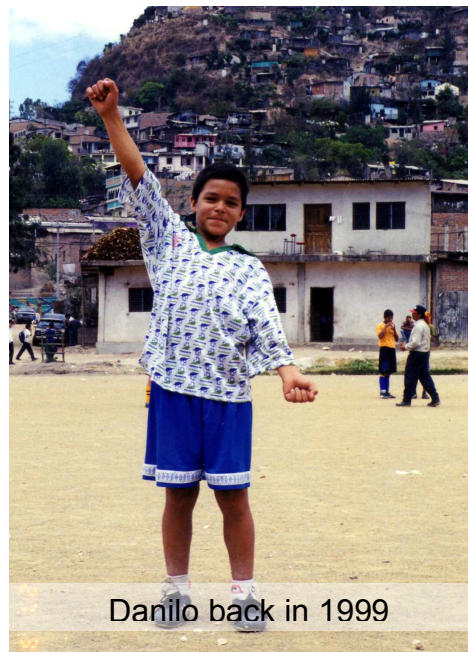


basic services, such as electricity, water, or sewage systems. They have no furniture on their dirt floor either. Danilo's mom, Maria, explained that whenever she buys a piece of furniture, like a wooden chair or a bed, her husband destroys it in one of his usual drunken rages.

Half-way through our conversation, Danilo's dad entered, drunk and stumbling. He began to boast about what a good job he has and about how well he takes care of his family. As he rambled on, Maria leaned over to me and said, "The words he is saying are lies directly from Satan."

When Danilo was eleven, he couldn't take the beatings and the hunger any more, and he left for the streets. He lived for a while on the streets in a town on the northern coast of Honduras, a town called Progreso. He begged food from the people who passed by on the streets, and slept in the entrances of the stores at night. Sometimes, he earned a few cents by working on the buses, collecting the fare from the passengers. Mostly though, he suffered alone on the streets of Progreso.

A couple of years ago, Danilo stowed away on a bus that went to the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa. He spent some time on the streets of the capital before finding Covenant House, a program that shelters abandoned children. In Covenant House, Danilo got a second chance at life. He began to go to school, and he joined a soccer team. He made fast friends with the other boys at Covenant House, who became like his brothers. His best friend is Marvin, the boy who came with me on our visit to the States.



Danilo back in 1999

Danilo's older brother, Geovany, has had a much different experience. Geovany, who is now fifteen, also fled their home about the same time as Danilo. But when Geovany came to the capital, he did not enter Covenant House like Danilo did. Instead, he began to use yellow glue, a highly toxic and addictive substance that destroys the kids' brain cells. For three years, Geovany has been an addict of yellow glue. He refuses to come in off the streets because his addiction to the glue is so strong. If his life continues as it is, he probably won't be alive to celebrate his eighteenth birthday.

A few days after our visit to Danilo's home, Maria, Danilo, and Geovany's mom, came to Tegucigalpa to look for Geovany. Currently, he lives with a group of street children on the streets near a park by the Honduran Congress. As we talked, she asked me if I would take a picture of Geovany since she had none.

When we reached the park where Geovany lives, we stayed hidden while we watched Geovany play soccer with several other street kids, all the time holding on to his little jar of yellow glue. Although fifteen-year-old Geovany is older than Danilo, his emaciated frame looks more like the body of a ten-year-old. Finally, Maria walked up to Geovany. When he saw his mom, he immediately took off running, hiding in the crowded city streets, afraid that she would force him to go home and give up the glue on which he had become so dependent.

We walked away from the park, the hoped-for reunion having failed. After a while, Maria looked at me with sad eyes and said, "A mother has so much to fight against when she has to raise her children alone." Living with an alcoholic and abusive husband and raising fourteen kids has been an unbearable life for Maria.

Danilo's family, tragically, is all too typical here in Honduras. While Danilo has survived to overcome the horrors of his childhood, Geovany has become a victim of it. What is the difference between the two boys? I think, somehow, these street kids have to see a spark of hope for their lives before they are willing to give up the anger and sadness that keeps them hooked to drugs and to the streets.

Danilo has seen that spark of hope; Geovany has not.

Danilo's time with Covenant House is coming to an end. Because of funding problems, Covenant House will be closing down the group home in which Danilo has lived.

I believe that God is calling me to open the Micah Project to keep that spark of hope alive in Danilo and the other boys and to see it mature into a bright flame of

faith in our Savior. I don't believe that it is His will to have these boys back out on the streets again.

This week, I will sign a contract on the home that we will use for the Micah Project. It is a beautiful space; five bedrooms, three bathrooms, a large communal space, a library, a kitchen, dining room, storage space, and an office space. The boys have already visited the home and are excitedly imagining how it will look when we move in.

Last Friday, I had a meeting with the owner and my lawyer. I came out of the meeting with the figures swirling around in my head. I was praying (and, I must admit, worrying) about all those details as I distractedly walked through the streets of Tegucigalpa on my way back home. Suddenly, I heard someone call my name from above. A telephone cable repair called my name again and came down off his ladder. I had met him in September when I took the boys to get baptized. I had not seen him since then.

"Michael, I knew I would run into you today," he said. I have been praying for you, and God has given me an important message for you. He wants you to know that he is about to grant you something that you are asking for, and it is going to be a tremendous blessing."

I was stunned, since this man knew nothing about the Micah Project. I said something general about how God blesses his children, but he cut me off...

"No that's not what I'm talking about. He is telling me to tell you specifically that he is about to grant you what you are asking for right now."

He hugged me and headed back up his ladder to continue his work. I felt as if a current of energy had run up and down my spine. What an amazing blessing!

A prayer covering for the Micah Project and the boys who will participate in it is vital at this time. God has blessed us with a little more than 50% of the funds we will need to purchase the house. We will need to raise the remainder, approximately \$30,000 by February 15. The owners of the home have been very kind and flexible; they are very happy that the home they are selling will go to advance the Lord's work.



At the same time, please keep the boys in your prayers. While they are excited about the Micah Project, this time of uncertainty is very destabilizing for them. As Covenant House begins to shut its doors, many of the friends that the Micah Project boys have made are beginning to leave. For any young person who has had to live the kind of fragmented and abuse-filled life that these boys have had to live, even a small change can be terrifying and tumultuous. Please pray for a smooth transition for each of our young boys as we prepare to open the doors of the Micah Project.

These few weeks before Christmas are often called “the season of light,” as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Light into the world. Let us pray for the Micah Project boys: Danilo, Marvin, David, Jarvin, Miguel, Ronal, Cristino, and Charly, that God would use the Micah Project in each one of them to transform them into reflections of the glorious light of our Savior.

Your prayers are felt here in Honduras. Thank you for your faithfulness in prayer!

Sincerely,
Michael Miller