



Friends:

March 8, 2006

As the children we loved grew older, we faced the daunting challenge of education. Children in our community have especially low expectations for themselves in school. Their environment at home and on the street does not encourage success or achievement in school – drop out rates continue to be high. Many families that we serve, including extended relatives, have never had a child graduate from high school.

We developed three life-changing educational programs that help children from ages 3 through 19 succeed in learning. Here is an updated report on our progress and our reason for hope!

- 16 preschoolers not only attend the **Head Start** program on our campus, but receive loving before-and-after-care as well. We call it our “wrap-around” program and our federal partners with Head Start love it. They appreciate that parents need to learn how to support their children’s education along with getting the children ready for elementary school. Many of the children’s mothers participate in Moms Place, where single mothers learn how to love their children and break the generational cycles that have held them back.
- 21 children, grades K – 4, are mentored once a week by caring adults in our **Partners in Learning** program. We are still seeking mentors for 19 other children.
- 94 students, ranging from grades 5 – 12, participate in **I CAN DO IT** – an incentive-based support program that helps at-risk students stay in school, complete the requirements for graduation and be prepared for further study or training. We partner with schools in 12 districts representing 34 public schools and five alternative/charter schools.

Educational achievement is an important goal. Along with success in school, a loving, supportive community is what brings the most strength, stability and motivation to children and their families – and help them to feel important. Building character, community, and empowering academic achievement work together!

Keep reading – God is doing miraculous work in the lives of children and families!

In our immediate neighborhood:

- Of the young people aged 16-19: 38.8% are not enrolled in school or not in high school.
- Of the adults over 25: 42.8% have less than a 9th grade education.
- For adults 25-34: the percentage with a bachelor’s degree is zero.

(2000 Census information – Tract 1128)

Our biggest need with education programs: prayer, mentors and continued financial support!

Upcoming Events:

- Neighborhood Ministries Golf Classic at FireRock CC on March 20. See www.nmgolffclassic.net for details. Sign up today!
- Spring break for NM programs: March 20-31
- Spring Parents’ Store: April 22
- Moms’ Place Spring Camp: April 7-9

For example:

✓ As a result of success in school during the Fall semester, 40 boys and girls from **I CAN DO IT** recently earned a ski trip to Telluride, Colorado. The kids, along with youth leaders and parent volunteers, skied the snowy slopes and had the time of their lives. What an awesome incentive and experience for kids who often see no reason to go to school or do their homework!



✓ Maria is a single mom with ten children. Seven of her kids - Esmeralda, Damien, Amadeus, Ximena, Francella, Rubi, and Lisa- participate in **I Can Do It** and each has a mentor who spends time with them every week. Last December, Maria's entire family, together with their mentors, met together in the neighborhood at the home of our staff member, Jeremy, for a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. This wasn't only a Christmas dinner – it was a wonderful evening of Christian community and family - breaking bread together, playing games, laughing and sharing “heart” stories. It was especially significant for Lisa who doesn't live with her family anymore. She said that she could see “how many people really love her family!”



✓ Pat and Meegan are a husband and wife who mentor Anthony and Abigail – brother and sister in our **Partners in Learning** program. Pat and Meegan originally volunteered in our **Head Start** program where they got to know the children and



became friends with Claudia, the children's mother. The relationship was a natural fit and Pat and Meegan have literally adopted Claudia and her children and have become their educational advocates. But it doesn't stop there. When Claudia's youngest daughter is ready for **Head Start**, Pat and Meegan's daughter, Kelly – age 25, is excitedly waiting to become her mentor as well. Meegan says that, “this special relationship is a gift from God. We look forward to every Monday when we get together – we feel

like family. We also attend church together. Positive change is easy to see – the kids are more open and love to talk about their lives – and about what God is doing in their lives.” She and Pat decided a long time ago that for their family, “Your calling is where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet (F. Buechner).”

In the strong name of Jesus,


Kit Danley
President


Richard Speck
Executive Director