
Linaca Village Update April/May 2008



You Can't Judge a Book by Its Cover

His eyes are alive. I keep staring at his picture trying to describe what I see in those expressive eyes.

On top of all the emotions that run the gamut from pain to joy, I see in those beautiful eyes – love, hope, and most of all, life.

Edgar is an engaging little boy. He shows up at our center neat as a pin in his clean school uniform shirt, pants and new shoes. He diligently works at his homework.

When a newcomer arrives, he looks them in the eye, politely offers his hand and says good day. Those he knows often get a great big hug.

Edgar was not always this way. A new confidence has been born in him this past year.

Edgar is stepping up to the plate and taking batting practice at life - life that pitches balls at him harder than Roger Clemens ever could dream of throwing.

At the public school, Edgar's teacher says he is doing far above average in his studies. She is most pleased with his progress and work ethic in the classroom.

In the world of appearances, Edgar could go toe to toe with any little friend your children would bring home to play.

**Little Edgar
is stepping up
to the plate
and taking
batting practice
at life..**

**...A life that
pitches balls
at him
harder than
Roger Clemens
could ever dream
of throwing**

Imagine day after day your child brings Edgar to your home after school.

You watch them happily at play.

You see what we see - a sweet, well-mannered, thoughtful young boy that you are happy to have associate with your child.

Now, imagine one day your child comes to you and says, "Instead of having Edgar over here to play tomorrow, he has invited me to his house."

You know that Edgar lives with his father and older sister just down the road from the school. But you are new in town and don't know the family.

You heard that when Hurricane Felix blew into Honduras after devastating Nicaragua that Edgar's father refused our center's staff's pleas to move the family to a safer location.

Thankfully Hurricane Felix wrapped itself around the whole of the Linaca Valley, leaving a huge circle of mercy around our entire area. Linaca barely got any rain much less the devastating winds that were predicted.

Armed with this tidbit of information you decide to escort the children to Edgar's house. As you trudge up the hot, dusty road Edgar makes a sudden turn.

Opening the gate, Edgar shyly invites you into his home.

continued on page2

You Can't Judge a Book... continued



This is possibly the worst dwelling you have ever seen in your life.

One of our partners in the work fell in love with Edgar the first day she met him. After seeing his house she could barely breathe, much less speak.

Incredulously, you wonder how such a beautifully turned out little boy could live in a place like this. You want to grab him and run.

The stove the family uses for cooking is stoked with wood, belching smoke, and heating some water for washing up. Precariously leaning toward the rickety and charred wood that rings this outer room, the stove is also crumbling, creating a terribly dangerous situation.

Water for the family's needs is carried in from the polluted stream hundreds of yards downhill from the home. There is no toilet. An orphaned puppy trembles in the doorway, its mother recently killed. There is no food to feed the family, much less the starving pup.

Edgar's 13 year-old sister stands at the gate, eyeing us shyly. She dropped out of school after the third grade to care for the family when their mother abandoned them. We give her a new backpack normally reserved for children in our center who attend public school. It is probably the only new thing the child has ever gotten in her life. She seems to be in awe over it.

The father comes home and we talk to him about the importance of keeping Edgar in school and in our center. Rail thin, with his shirt literally hanging by threads, Adolfo acknowledges that Edgar is bright. He, on the other hand, could never learn to read.

We offer to help Edgar's father build a new home. Adolfo is asked to make a small contribution by putting some adobe bricks together to be used in the construction.

The next trip back to the home, it was still standing and we saw some of the most odd looking adobe bricks ever. But at least he is trying. We made Edgar's father promise to keep him in school and attending the center as a prerequisite for helping him build a new home.

Edgar is in our center's nutrition program. One day, as he was happily gobbling down chicken and rice, I asked him what he ate for dinner the day before. Tortillas and salt was his answer. It broke my heart.

Every time I look at children like Edgar I wonder how they are not completely broken. Smashed to pieces. How does the little soul behind those life-filled eyes still dare to hope after all he has been through?

It reminds me of Paul's words to the Corinthians. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

Witnessing the life and hope in this precious child whose aim is to grow up and be a leader in our center, I cannot but help think that God has a very special purpose for this little one (and so many others that we care for in Linaca).

Please pray for all our little Edgars and stay tuned as we watch miracles unfold in his life.



FLAMES THAT NEED TO DIE an update from the February/March newsletter



In the last newsletter we discussed the problems with the wood-burning stoves used in Honduras (such as the one in Edgar's home) that are causing a lot of damage for the children and the environment in all of Honduras.

For those who missed that report you can read the whole story on our website at www.wrgnews.com or write to us at the address on the first page of this newsletter and we will mail you a copy.

Here is a brief recap of that report with an update. In Linaca alone there are over 500 homes. Nearly 100% of those homes use a wood burning stove, called a fogon, to cook their food and heat water for bathing.

The young boy, *pictured above*, is carrying the amount of wood a typical family would need per day to cook their beans. But this, we were told, is not enough for cooking *and* bathing. That would require even more.

Multiply his load times the 500 homes in our area of the Linaca Valley, and that times 365 days a year and you begin to see the problem. Now, think of an entire country and its millions of citizens who rely on wood as their only source of cooking and heating and your head begins to swim with what this is doing the environment.

On top of this consumption of wood comes an increase in health and breathing problems in children. In most houses, smoke belching from the stoves is so thick you can hardly breathe. (See a video of this at www.wrgnews.com.) Lungs burn and eyes tear. At night the carbon blanketing the walls sloughs off bacteria laden and carcinogenic molecules that the family inhales all night.

Many children are kept out of school to go foraging for firewood every day. It can take a whole day for a small child to gather enough wood to meet the family's daily needs.

One answer to all the problems caused by the fogons can be found in a new technology that turns wood burning ovens into a far more eco friendly device. The eco-fogon is a highly efficient oven that uses a fraction of the fuel consumed by regular fogons. The eco fogon can burn sugarcane and corn husks among other things.

There is far less smoke and it is exhausted away from the home. Carcinogenic molecules are not accumulating on the walls and ceilings. Children have to spend a fraction of their time hunting for wood. More trees that protect the water source are spared.

All in all the eco fogon is a Godsend for this problem. We received a generous grant from a church in Boston and to date have installed over 50 of these ovens in Linaca. The next fifty will begin next week.

Reports are in from those who received the ovens and everyone is ecstatic. I cannot wait to go to Idalma's home and see if the new oven has made a difference in her health. Last trip, Idalma was sick again – her oven was installed days after we left.

As the people in the community see the benefits of these ovens, many are sending their children back to school and to our center so that they may profit from this technology.

Our goal is to raise the funding to furnish every home in Linaca with an eco fogon. To date, two of our partners donated an extra hundred dollars last month to install two more ovens.

If you want to sponsor an oven, simply designate eco fogon on the memo line of your check.

Thank you for helping us make Honduras greener and healthier for the children!

HOPES AND DREAMS FOR 2008

- Ø Funding for expansion into surrounding communities in partnership with other educational foundations
 - Ø Truck or van for expansion and transportation of students and teachers
- Ø Funding of \$40,000 for expansion of eco fogons into 400 homes in Linaca - 100% goes to ovens
- Ø Funding for scholarships for teens to continue into higher education - 100% goes to teen education
- Ø Village sponsors for Linaca and surrounding villages at \$30 per month - 100% goes to Honduras
 - Ø General funds to continue traveling to Honduras for several weeks each month
- Ø Funding for the poorest of the poor, like Edgar's family, who desperately need a new home - 100% goes to the poor

WEB UPDATES

Please take the time to check out our new website at www.wrgnews.com. There are many new features there, slide shows, and videos that show every day life in the places we live and work in Honduras.

If you have friends to share our Linaca family with please pass this newsletter and link on to them. Please send us your recent email address.

We created a video for a group of friends in Atlanta who are part of our Linaca family. It can be seen in four parts on You Tube. The video is called *Linaca Children's Center*. Or write to us and we will send you a the DVD.
