



# Happy Spring



## Newsletter for the Mission of Friendship

Diocese of Erie, USA

April 2024

### Goodies That Bring Great Hopes

Over the past several months the girls of the Nueva Vida Program have been taking baking classes. This activity was incorporated into the program simply as something new and fun. However, after a while we noticed that this activity brought a special interest and motivation to the girls as well as the teachers.



Over time this program grew in popularity and importance for everyone. Eventually we realized that this could become a very valuable learning opportunity for the girls – it could teach them how to make and sell products and how to start a small business. The Nueva Vida girls are learning how to make a different kind of dessert each week, such as cookies, cakes, breads etc. Their possibilities are endless!

We are most grateful for the willingness of our volunteers Gabriela May and Rocio Casanova to bring their expertise and enthusiasm to this project. They are delighted to pass on their great culinary skills to our girls and their teachers.

Our plan going forward is to offer our home-made products to our community as a way of encouraging our girls to continue learning and putting their best effort into this project. And, it also helps us to raise funds to benefit the “Nueva Vida” afterschool program.

We had our first official bake sale last February 14, offering cookies on a pre-order basis. The sale was a great success!

We know that we still have a long way to go in learning how to set up a small simulated bakery business. However, this tasty opportunity is creating a lot of interest and excitement. Stay tuned for more updates to come!



## Enjoyable Visits, and Wonderful Learning Experiences!

As spring arrives, the Daycare program is in full swing. Lots of exciting things have been going on. Most exciting though, is that we have welcomed several groups from the Diocese of Erie in recent months!

We've been delighted to welcome five groups from the Diocese of Erie since the start of the year. These include a group of Gannon University students, Fr. Paul Siebert with a group of his parishioners at St. Mark's Parish, Emporium, a group of students from Mercyhurst University and the St. Mark seminarians from the Diocese of Erie. Visiting with these groups were some special guests such as Fr. Scott Jabo, Rector of St. Mark Seminary and Fr. David Renne, Vice-Rector. We also welcomed Damaris Tomlison, who is a new Amigos family sponsor who came to meet her new Mexican family in person, and spend a great time with them. We were excited and happy to have had the opportunity and privilege to receive the visits from all of these groups. It is encouraging for us to know that over the years more people are interested in learning about the Mission of Friendship and the people we serve, and more importantly to support the work that we do!

We would like to extend our gratitude to the students from Gannon for the mission service provided by them during our yummy fundraiser event "Salvute and Panucho Sale" held during their Spring break visit.

We also cannot forget to mention all the support giving by our volunteer Berit, who spent three months with us helping the daycare teachers. We will always remember Berit with much affection.

Thank you Gannon students and Berit!



Damaris Tomlison



Students from Gannon University, Erie



Volunteer—Berit



Continued next page



This Spring we were also very pleased with the visit of students from Mercyhurst University, Erie. The good energy and positivity that they brought to “Los Amiguitos daycare” were contagious among our little ones. They played with them and helped the children with their cognitive activities. And these young Mercyhurst students also volunteered at the kitchen to cook the meal for the kids -- this certainly was a sweet and enjoyable way to practice their Spanish skills!

Thank you Mercyhurst!

Last but not least, the seminarians from the Diocese of Erie did a great job helping at the Amiguitos facility by manually demolishing an old elevated water storage tank. This certainly was a challenging work considering the extreme high temperatures that we have been experiencing in Yucatán -- up to 90 degrees!!!

Many Thanks to the Erie Seminarians and the seminary Priests!

Group from  
St. Mark, Emporium



Group from  
St. Mark, Emporium



Students from  
Mercyhurst  
University, Erie



Erie Seminarians



## Amigos Success Story

Greetings to you! My name is Javier Moisés Pech Ek. I would like to share some of my life memories with you. The first memory is when I was little and my mother came home saying that we would be sponsored by an American family - and that they would help us with food and school supplies. She told us that the only thing they wanted in return from us was that we make good grades and put in our best effort in order to do well in school.



Another memory that I have from when I was little, and one that I did not understand (at the time), is that even though my mom was always dealing with severe diabetes, she was willing to take care of all of her children and support us along with our aunts and uncles. In addition to taking care of us and herself, she was also working hard to give us a better in life.

The Amigos Program of the Mission of Friendship was a great blessing for my mother, for my siblings María Alejandra, Josué Israel, Daniel Isaías, Irene Berenice and I, because thanks to the support of our sponsors' contributions, we had the opportunity to continue studying. It was not easy, but we worked hard to overcome all of our difficulties.

Because of my mother's illness a lot of money was spent on her medications and other treatments. I remember that we began to receive help with groceries. And we received cash gifts to help pay for my mother's medical expenses. My siblings married very young, had children, and began living in their own houses with their families. I was not married. I continued studying. My goal was to finish high school, and when I finished it, I would have the opportunity to go to university. Thanks to the support of my sponsors, and with gratitude for their belief in me, I went to the National Technological Institute of Mexico, Conkal Campus, which is located in a small town outside of Mérida. I graduated from the Agricultural Engineering Program.

Attending school was hard for me especially during my first year. To get to class on time I had to leave home at 4:40 a.m. There were many days when I couldn't get breakfast. The transportation was tough also, since I had to take two bus rides and a van to get there. Sometimes, when I missed my last ride, I had to walk to campus, as the classes used to start at 7:00 a.m. As my studies progressed the school expenses increased - in supplies, in bus fares, and books.

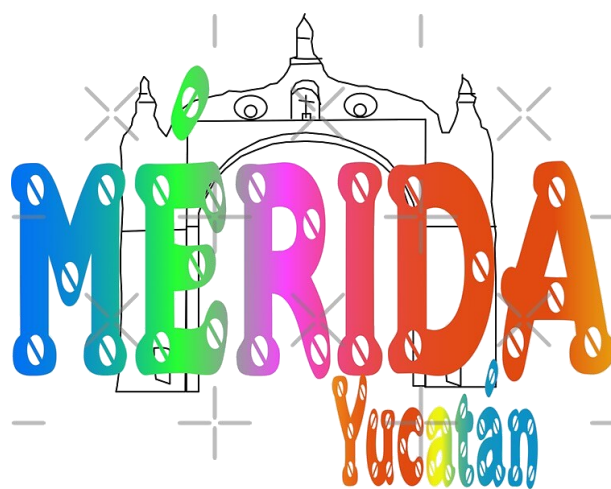
When COVID started in 2020, everything changed for the worse. My siblings sometimes had work, and sometimes not. There were days that we had some money, and days with nothing.

After many challenges and financial struggles, I was finally able to get into my professional residency (internship) which was a requirement for graduation. I did this internship at the Tecnológico laboratories in Conkal. When I finally finished the university program, I graduated with an average grade of 90.

I overcame all the obstacles, the late nights, the forced fasts, the stress, the expenses -- not only personal but also family problems. But I thank God for my family for supporting me. And I also express deep gratitude to the Mission of Friendship Amigos program and my sponsors for being in my life and in my school journey. Their support made it possible for me to move forward in life. I will always be grateful for becoming an Agricultural Engineer.



# SISTER PARISHES TRADITIONS IN YUCATAN



## A Note From the Director's Desk

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Amigos Program, Nueva Vida Program and Sister Parish Program participants for the marvelous support you give to our sisters and brothers in Yucatán.

I would like to take the opportunity to encourage you to never forget that your financial support to these families and parishes means more than a simple help. It is an enormous blessing to them.

We are working on a new online payment solution which will allow us to offer you the opportunity to make recurring or one-time donations to the Mission of Friendship or to a specific program like Daycare, Nueva Vida etc. When the page is activated, you will find it on the Mission Office website.

We want to invite you to visit your Yucatecan family. Doing so is an unforgettable and life-changing experience. There in Yucatán the Mission of Friendship staff members are able to provide transportation, tour guidance, translation and lodging for a modest donation to the Mission of Friendship. Please prayerfully consider this possibility. As always please feel free to contact me if you have any question.

May God bless you and your family this Spring!

### Some Important Reminders

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of important points. The Mission Office in Erie will continue to receive the donations sent by **Amigos sponsors, Nueva Vida sponsors, Day Care sponsors and Sister Parishes** by way of checks and online credit card contributions. These funds will be wired periodically to the mission account in Mérida.

Amigos sponsors can send special donations, in addition to their regular monthly contributions, that are earmarked specifically for their particular sponsored family as Christmas gifts, Easter gifts, or birthday gifts. These special gifts are not added to the common Amigos fund. They are kept separate to be given only to the sponsor's particular Amigos family. If you would like to give a special gift just for your sponsored family, please make a note in the memo line of your check or enclose a note of explanation with your donation. Your intentions for the special gifts will be communicated to the mission staff in Mérida.

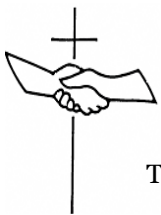
The Mission Office of the Diocese of Erie is still receiving letters, cards, and photos from sponsors to be sent to families in Mérida as usual.

If you have questions regarding your donations, tax deductions or new sponsorship, or would like to communicate changes in your contact information or sponsorship status, please contact mission office director **Indira J. Suárez** by e-mail: [isuarez@eriercd.org](mailto:isuarez@eriercd.org) or by phone: (814) 824-1231.

Please know that we are grateful to all of you who sponsor a family in Mérida through the Amigos Program, supporting them with your prayers, concern, and financial support.

We look forward to hearing from you!

*Indira*



**Mission of Friendship**

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