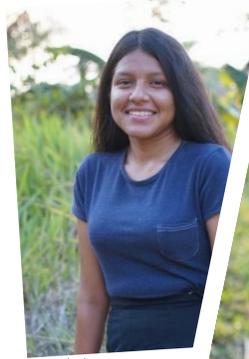




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Merry Christmas! We have some new arrivals we want to tell you about, stories of kids your giving has impacted, and a brand-new way you can connect directly with our kids here! We are thankful for having been blessed with new donors, who will continue to support us in the nurturing of our children, and we are so thankful for every one of our kids, and every one of you. It is because of God's wonderful blessings through your continued prayers and donations that we can give the love and necessities these children need. Thank you for your devotion to these bundles of joy. Because of you, there is joy and hope in their eyes.



Over the past month, Familia Feliz has increased in size by four incredible kids who can now claim Familia Feliz as their home and refuge. Emily, William, and Daniel are still doing well and now we want to tell you about our most recent addition to Familia Feliz.

Mary, 15 years-old, is our latest arrival having joined our family here just this October. Mary was the product of the rape of her mentally challenged mother who had suffered a stroke. Mary's mother never wanted her and growing up she never let her forget that. Her mother would physically and verbally abuse her and often take her to their local town of Rurrenabaque and abandon her there. As a baby, her

mother tried to kill her multiple times by throwing boiling water on her. Growing up Mary also had many different abusive stepfathers who would frequently beat and rape her. To support her family Mary worked any job she could find from washing dishes at restaurants to picking up rocks in the streets. But while working in town she was also attacked and sexually abused on multiple occasions.

Mary's mother was so abusive that one day she ordered Mary's eldest brother to kill her. He beat her over the head with a stick until she nearly died but somehow, she escaped. She found refuge at the Rurrenabaque department of defense against domestic violence. From there Mary was sent to live with her aunt in La Paz where she was sexually abused by her uncle upon her arrival. After running away and seeking shelter at the La Paz department of defense, Mary was sent to live with her other aunt back in Rurrenabaque. Her aunt could not afford to care for her and so arrangements were made for Mary to come to live here at Familia Feliz. Shortly after her arrival Mary was rushed to the hospital multiple times due to attacks of convulsions which the doctors attributed to the psychological trauma she has suffered. Having been here for a while now we have noticed serious improvement: Mary's

convulsions have ceased, and her depression and other symptoms have diminished. Mary can finally live in peace and safety here at Familia Feliz.

Today, Mary is one of the most friendly and spunky girls in our house of teenage girls, "La Casa de Amistad." She has an amazing sense of humor and a big heart. She is the first to offer a hug and can be found making cards for the volunteers and other girls here at Familia Feliz reminding them that they are loved. Mary has had the opportunity to meet Jesus and experience peace for the first time at Familia Feliz, and she has decided to give her heart to Him. Thank you so much for your contributions which provide Mary with the opportunity to finally receive the love and care she deserves and the opportunity to heal, grow, learn, and ultimately to rewrite her story with Jesus by her side.

Mary's story isn't over yet it is only the beginning and you can be a part of her transformation. This Christmas we are launching a new program connecting the kids on our campus with our donors. For the first time, you can directly sponsor a child here at Familia Feliz. These kids live at Familia Feliz because their families cannot or will not support them. They rely on people like you to commit and step up to provide these children with their basic needs. To join our Familia Feliz joint-sponsorship program is only \$25/month and what joining our family means is that you will receive handwritten letters from the child you are supporting and updates on what they have been accomplishing monthly. We know that God provides He cares so deeply for every one of them, and so do we. Every child deserves to be cared for and loved, which is why we need you! It means the world to every one of them to know that someone cares for them and is supporting them as they grow and blossom into young adults. It also encourages them to do the same once they are stable and can give to bless others the way that they have been blessed, and the chain continues. Jesus has called us to give and love those in need, He gave of what He had to help others in need.

These kids are no strangers to need. Most have had to worry about what their meals would be and where they would sleep that night at some point in their lives. This story is about Miguel, who came to Familia Feliz in 2016 when he was about 7 years old. The police had found him dirty and roaming the streets alone looking for food and brought him to Familia Feliz. Miguel's mother had gone to the defense department asking for intervention with her abusive husband. She offered to press charges and support, but the mother did not wish to separate from her husband or take legal action. Due to the potential of domestic violence not being limited to the mother, Miguel and his siblings were found at school and it was arranged for the child protective services department to meet with the school's director to assess their situation. During the assessment, it was found out that their father regularly came home drunk and abused the children and their mother physically, psychologically, and sexually. They were able to intervene and brought Miguel's eldest half-sister to Familia Feliz away from her step-father but needed the cooperation of their mother to obtain the father's biological children including Miguel. A year after his sister was rescued and taken to Familia Feliz, Miguel escaped his abusive father and ran away from home when the police found him wandering the streets. Upon his arrival to the child protective services department he was recognized as Flor's brother and was immediately taken to Familia Feliz, a home where for the first time he is loved and cared for without fear of abuse.

Within the past year, Miguel's mother has since left her abusive husband and is living safely with Miguel's aunt and grandmother. Now, Miguel can visit his mother during breaks while also enjoying school, worship, and community here at Familia Feliz. Miguel is now a thriving, energetic, and



personable 10-year-old with a captivating smile. He is often found playing soccer and laughing with his many friends here at Familia Feliz.

Miguel's story is now a beautiful one, thanks to people like you who have been faithfully giving over the years and making his healing possible. Mary's healing is just beginning. Both of them urgently need your support. We have over 60 kids on our campus right now and all the time we are having new cases, children with sad stories who have nowhere to go.



For those that have been with us for a long time, you might remember Alex, 6 years old, who was featured in another one of our letters back in March when he was our latest arrival. If you don't remember, sign up for our email newsletter and we will share his story one more time for our new donors. Alex has been here for over 8 months now and has grown so much. He is just about to finish kindergarten and has changed a lot in his time here. Here is what his house mom, Emiliana has to say about his growth. "Alex is now very caring, has learned to eat his vegetables, and is always looking for ways to help others. Just this morning he moved a rock to help his little sibling get down without falling. He has changed from being a boy that was just trying to get everything for himself to one that always is looking out for those with less."

Your support has provided Alex a place to go to escape an abusive environment and thrive, learning about Jesus and how to help those around him. Thank you for the impact that you have made in Alex's and Miguel's life and are making in Mary's. Not only are they cared for, but

they are learning how to care for others. Many of our kids have stories similar to Miguel's, Mary's, and Alex. It is truly a blessing to watch them grow and see them enjoy their day-to-day lives in safety and surrounded by Christ's love. Your support means the world to these kids and we are so excited to introduce this sponsorship program to give you an opportunity to be included in the lives of our kids that we know and love here on campus. You can sign up by filling out the slip included in this letter or go to <https://www.familia-feliz.org/> and fill out the sign-up form online. Thank you for your support and I am thrilled to see what will be done in the future in these kids' lives and through your continued giving with our sponsorship program!

Thank you,

*Melissa*

Melissa Harding, Founder/Director of Familia Feliz



*P.S. Hi, I'm Arthur, I have really enjoyed helping mail out these letters this year for my daughter Laura who is at Familia Feliz. She is a student missionary from Southern Adventist University and she plans to return home later in December.*

*God has blessed and several new students are already in Bolivia to take her place. Laura recently reflected on her time at Familia Feliz to encourage future student*

*missionaries. I would like to share her story:*

Rolando has been the child I have been most responsible for here at my time at Familia Feliz. He is the youngest child in my house being two years old, bringing his own set of adventures. He is an avid fan of cars, cicadas, and chupetes, their word for lollipops. "Little kids little problems" and the refrain rings true. God only gives us as much as we can bear and He sure knew my limits in entrusting me with potty training instead of the drama that comes along with teenagers.

He's cute, and I'm going to miss him. He has a rough life ahead of him and I am infinitely grateful for the chapter I got to be a part of. Some of the older children here are getting baptized this week and I can't help but think of all the volunteers over the years that have played a part in their spiritual journey. All of us have different roles and it's really cool to see the kids at their very different places in life and interact with them accordingly.

Rolando has been my son for the past nine months and he's changed my life. Potty training, temper tantrums, I don't think I will remember how annoying those have been when I get back stateside. The hugs, the giggles, the times he walks by randomly and blows me a kiss, that's what I'm trying to imagine right now how I'm going to possibly be able to live without. He's the youngest of nine kids in my house here at Familia Feliz, nine kids who have straight up stolen my heart. Right now, my thoughts are on how there is only a few weeks until I'm back home. That doesn't seem like enough time. I know it's the next step, and I'm excited to continue on with my education and see all my family and friends again, but it feels like it's coming all too soon. I remember stepping off a plane and thinking that 10 months felt altogether too long.

If you're debating being a student missionary but think it might take too much time, you won't be able to raise the funds, or maybe you're just scared that's ok. It's ok to be scared what's not ok is to let fear stop you. Think about it. Pray about it. Maybe God's calling you here, and I promise you, the time will absolutely fly by when you are exactly where you know you need to be. – Laura Gibbs