

*For I was hungry and
you gave me food, I was
thirsty and you gave me
drink, a stranger and
you welcomed me.*

- Matt. 25:35

Summer 2010



New Beginnings

Frightened, Hungry, Cold

Frightened. Hungry. Cold.

Those are the words repeated over and over when Nelson tells the story of his journey to safety. Those words, along with walk, walk, walk.

Nelson, 18, grew up in the streets in Honduras. In November, 2008, street gangs and violence forced him and his 20-year-old brother to try to find safety in the United States. They had no money, so they walked much of the way - a distance of more than 1,000 miles. In Mexico, they hopped a train. At a stop, bandits boarded and demanded money from those aboard. Nelson managed to hide, but his brother was caught. Nelson hasn't heard from him since. He travelled the rest of the way to the border by himself, on foot. He was only 17.

When Nelson arrived at the Rio Grande, he was fortunate to be taken in by a compassionate woman who lived nearby. "It was the first time I ever slept in a bed," Nelson said.

Nelson swam across the Rio Grande in December, 2008, was taken into custody by border patrol, and put in detention. He remained

there until December 2009, when he was released to La Posada. He is now in the process of obtaining legal status and takes daily language and life skills lessons here at the shelter. He recently obtained his work permit and got a part-time job at a local pizza place. He rides his bicycle the three miles to and from work and is saving his money for the future. He hopes to move on to settle with another client from La Posada.

One must wonder: how bad was Nelson's life that he was willing to go through all of this?



Nelson working to secure a better future.

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In Gratitude for Blessings Received

Former client Yoanki Hernandez Levya spent this summer volunteering at La Posada Providencia. Near the end of his stay, he was invited to speak to the Sunburst Rotary Club of Harlingen. He gave a fabulous introduction to the shelter, outlining how it helped him prepare for his new life in the United States. The club then presented Yoanki and Program Director Zita Telkamp, CDP with a check for \$1,000 for La Posada.

Yoanki, who emigrated from Cuba in 2006, is in his final year of college. He spends many of his breaks from school helping at the shelter where he once found the assistance he needed.



We thank the Sunburst Rotary Club for their gift of \$1,000 to La Posada Providencia. Pictured are, left to right: Rotary President Gayle Reger, Yoanki Hernandez Levya, La Posada Board President Deborah Grayson and Zita Telkamp, CDP.

Porch Renovation

Clients at La Posada Providencia experience a lot of anxiety and stress. New language, new food, court appearances, group living, no family and lots of forms! In this situation, a chance to relax is a welcome respite. That's why it was a special joy for us to have the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council Board approve our request for funds to renovate the porch of the men's dormitory. It can now serve as a recreation room for them, a place to simply relax.



The \$10,000 project was completed in just over a month. We send thanks to Danny Ybarra and his construction company for performing a few of the extras at no charge. Next up: landscaping renovation, funded by the the City of God Foundation.

More Ways to Keep up with La Posada

La Posada is in constant whirlwind mode, so there is no way this newsletter can keep you up to date. Instead, consider getting news from La Posada in two new ways, both electronic.

To receive a **weekly email** from Program Director Sister Zita Telkamp, simply visit our website: **www.LPPShelter.org** and enter your email address in the signup box on any page. We promise **we will never sell or transfer your email address.**

Or stay in touch through Facebook. Visit us at **www.facebook.com/LPPShelter** and click on the "Like" button. It's a fun way to keep in touch and exchange ideas.



What the Teacher Learned: One Volunteer's Experience at La Posada

Eve Marie Blasinsky is 19, a senior at John Carroll University. She wants to become a college professor some day, so she went to La Posada Providencia to gain experience teaching. In the unfathomable way of Providence, she wound up doing a lot of learning along the way. Her month-long stay as a volunteer was "challenging, really eye-opening" and may have changed her life more than she can appreciate right now. Here's what she had to say about her visit:

Q. How did you find out about La Posada?

A. I'm friends with Sister Cathy Frost, (a member of the Sisters of Divine Providence, the community of Catholic Sisters that sponsors La Posada.) When Sister Cathy told me about her trip at Christmas, something about it drew me to it. I wanted to come right away.

Q. What have you been doing?

A. Mostly teaching English as a Second Language. Working with people from different backgrounds was great! Just listening to people – getting to know them and becoming friends – is the best thing.

Q. What have you learned?

A. Every time I was about to make a generalization about a culture or a person, someone acted in a way totally different from what I expected. I realize you can never really understand why a person

says or does something until you understand their experience. I've also learned there are no bounds to friendship. There is a very strong bond between Cynthia, 18, from Honduras and Mietek, 50-something, from Poland. They don't understand each other's language, but they are friends.



Eve Marie Blasinsky, right, spent several hours each day working with clients to help improve their English skills.

Q. What has been the biggest challenge?

A. At La Posada, clients not only speak many different languages and dialects, they are at different education levels. Some are college graduates; others have never been to school and are not literate in their first language. For instance, there's Felipe, from Honduras. He was from an indigenous people in a remote village, so he spoke only his native tongue – no Spanish, let alone English. It took weeks for Felipe to master telling time, but now he's great!

Q. Do you have a favorite memory?

A. One day Sister Thérèse (Cunningham, La Posada's Irish-

born client mentor) was teaching the National Anthem and other patriotic songs. I heard all these voices from different continents, with different accents, and I realized I was the only person in the room who was lucky enough to have been born in the United States. Those songs mean something different to me now.

Q. Did your time at La Posada change the way you look at immigrants?

A. I have more understanding for what it means to be an immigrant. I can feel homesick when I'm away from my family, but it's not like it is for them. I can go home; most of them cannot. I know I will see my family again when it's time; they may not. It's lonely and scary for them. It is definitely not easy.

The stories I've heard are powerful and horrible. The cruelty people inflict on other people is horrifying! And it's not just the violence. We had a client from Somalia who was first in his class, but he wasn't allowed to go to university because he was from the wrong clan.

Q. What would you tell others about La Posada Providencia?

A. I have a lot of respect for Sister Thérèse and Sister Zita (Telkamp, the program director). La Posada is an important place. It's a safe haven for people while they work on the process of legal immigration. It helps them with paperwork, the language, life skills. It's a resting spot before they begin their new lives.

Cooking up a New Life

In the last edition of *New Beginnings*, we introduced you to Said Ali Mohammed, who fled the violence in Somalia. Said, 25, whose culture prohibits men from kitchen duties, cracked his first egg at La Posada. Now he has his work permit and has been hired as the shelter's part-time cook, responsible for preparing the noon and evening meals.

To help Said learn this new craft, we have a special volunteer: Bridget Montana, who has a Food & Beverage / Hospitality Management Degree from Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island. She will spend the next three months assisting with food operations and tutoring English, with the particular assignment of overseeing Said's culinary education.

Bridget says, “I have done two previous border trips, one in Texas and one in California. I plan to take this experience at La Posada as a lifetime opportunity to learn and grow from other cultures and others’ stories to help and assist others to have a better quality of life.”



Co-op student volunteer Bridget Montana with her group of eager students.

You can help clients like Said and Nelson create their own New Beginning.

Please use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.LPPshelter.org. Thank you!



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