



It is possible to create a world in which fewer innocent children suffer. Camus

30 years of loving children.

4th Quarter 2004

Christmas Caravan!

2004 Caravan on New Year's Day '05 a Smooth Success

New Year's Day 2005 turned out to be a great day for the 2004 Christmas Caravan. The Caravan traditionally rolls out the first Saturday after Christmas, and this year, that happened to make it January 1st, 2005. After a solid week of rain in late December, we were looking at the possibility of a drenched Caravan and axle-deep mud, but New Year's Day dawned clear and dry. We still had to deal with some mud, but it was all pretty tame and made for good splatter stories later.

Each year is a little different and an adventure of its own, and 2004 was no exception. Partially because we were traveling on New Year's Day when the commercial port at Otay Mesa is closed, and (mostly) because there are new directors with new import policies at both of the Mexican agencies that control access to the border, there was a bewildering amount of confusion and new red tape in the week leading up to the Caravan. We need to thank Olivia, our staffer in Mexico, and her daughter Karla who spent hours trying to obtain the authorizations for us to get our 2-3 tons of toys across the border.



Some of 600 to 700 kids patiently waiting their turn.



Volunteer Jenny Bayless hard at work bringing in the catch.

In order to comply with new regs, a crew of 5 of us took a truck across two days before the Caravan to get most of the toys across. We were delayed 5 hours at the border as messages were carried back and forth between 3 different agencies in what can only be described as a surreal, Orwellian kind of experience. At a certain point, we just had to start laughing at the nature

of modern governments. And remind ourselves of the smiling faces we'd be seeing in a couple of days.

But we did get through, and on Caravan Day we had over 70 volunteers in 17 vehicles all flying yellow caution tape streamers (to keep us together)

rumbling out of San Ysidro to cross the border. With no trucks allowed, we had a comical time repacking the toys into the 17 passenger vehicles so there was approximately \$400 worth of toys for each passenger--the limit per our authorizations. I can only imagine what that scene looked like to passersby as all the toys came out of the vehicles, got shuffled around, and then put back in. It worked, though...no one was stopped at the border except the last car containing our Mexican staffers, Olivia and Karla--and they weren't even carrying any toys! No problema.

As you look at these pictures, you can see the final effect. Somewhere between 700 and 800 kids came out to meet us in the streets around our two main dining rooms. Standing so patiently in line for hours, they were treated to candy and smiles before finally getting to go wander through the mountains of toys to pick out their treasures. We even had enough toys left to take a pickup load to our newest dining room in a remote, offroad area. Another 40 to 50 kids were waiting there and weren't disappointed.

Once again, to everyone involved and all of you supporting this work, thanks for making this experience possible for the children and us and many blessings in 2005!



We're next! Just outside the gate to the toys.



The smile says it all...

Of Kids and Tsunamis

The shocking images of the Indonesian tsunami that hit so hard last month have left us indelibly marked and struggling to make sense of such an immense tragedy. The response from the entire world has been inspiring, though--millions of people and their governments mobilized to help others in need. Our hearts go out to those all over the world who have been affected by this disaster and especially to the families and children immediately in the tsunami areas.

When I started working with Children of The Americas back in the early '80s, there was a single statistic that hit me with the force of a tsunami: that over 40,000 children die from malnutrition and vaccine-preventable disease--every single day. I almost quit this work early on, because I kept thinking, what did it matter if we feed a few hundred kids today when 40,000 will still die? It was a mind-numbing, paralyzing number. Today, it's a little better, but still over 30,000 children die every day. In 1999, the WHO placed the number at 10.8 million annual deaths of children under age 5.

150,000 deaths around the Indian Ocean is unbelievably tragic, but think about it--that many kids die every 5 days, week in and week out. We react when a plane crashes,

but we would have to put 400 kids on a 747 every 20 minutes and crash every plane for 24 hours, to equal the deaths that occur every day in the world. Or repeat the 9/11 tragedy 10 times every day. Why do these daily child deaths go so largely unnoticed?

I think human nature is such that we react to urgent events much differently than sustained processes. No matter how intense the process, if it's not seen as urgent, it fades to gray--and the media just doesn't cover it. I got through my personal paralysis when these few hundred children in front of me became more important than a statistic I couldn't control. And I want to thank you for continuing the work as well. Your concern for our children is as important as any relief effort, even if it doesn't write headlines.

I pray that all people will begin to see the daily tragedy of the world's children as equally important--and urgent--as any other disaster, natural or man-made. Because when people begin to see, they act. And when they act, statistics change.

In Other News...

● We're organizing a construction day to repair and waterproof a school house damaged by the recent torrential rains. Anyone interested in going with us, just call Dave for more details. 949-709-0673.

Parting Shots

● Couldn't resist just a few more shots of the 2004 Christmas Caravan. A mountain of toys, kids and U.S. volunteers connecting, and one of the intrepid COTAmobiles...



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One Child is the quarterly newsletter of Children of The Americas.

Our work began in Santa Teresita Orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico on March 31, 1974. Paul Weiss and his friends founded an interfaith organization, Los Ninos, to help the girls of Santa Teresita. The work and the dream grew and by January, 1984, a new structure was needed. Children of The Americas was created to match the work with the expanding dream to reach children throughout our hemisphere, but especially kids in the US and Mexico. Help us continue to create hope, one child at a time.

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*Give a man a fish,
 and you feed him
 for a day. Teach
 him to fish, and you
 feed him for a life-
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Please Join us at TAM every morning for two minutes of prayer for all children.

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