



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN AND AGING

Offering hope. Restoring dignity. Worldwide.

WINTER 2005

Leaving a legacy...

Discovering new life after loss, sponsor finds children to love, shares Lord's blessings

By **Marcelo Gomez**

After the death of his beloved wife, Jerry Menard wondered who he would care for, and who would care for him.

Jerry's wife, Charlotte, had taken care of his every need for 47 years, cooking for him, buying his clothes, making bill payments on time and ensuring his home in Bourbonnais, Ill., was tidy.

Three months after her death, Jerry found himself browsing through the local Joliet diocesan newspaper, the Catholic Explorer, while drinking his coffee on a Sunday morning. Jerry noticed an advertisement for CFCA's sponsorship program, and his curiosity led him to call the number.

The name of the newspaper, the Catholic Explorer, foreshadowed Jerry's future exploration of culture, friendship and personal fulfillment by sponsoring 15 children through CFCA.

"When my wife died, I had never seen a checkbook," Jerry said. "I went to my lawyer and I found out what we had. I almost fell over when I saw what she had saved. That's

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when I decided to sponsor.

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Jerry, a retired commercial construction supervisor and Navy officer, began sponsoring Melrose from the Philippines in April of 1998.

She was 9 years old at the time, and Jerry realized he enjoyed writing letters to Melrose, telling her about his life and learning about her studies in school. As Jerry was able financially, he sponsored another child.

"And then another, and another - I just kept sponsoring," Jerry laughed. But corresponding with his sponsored children through letters wasn't enough for the 74 year-old; he wanted to see them all in person. "I decided I'd go

visit them. I mean, I hope the Lord lets me live long enough to visit all my kids, because I'm not getting any younger."

Jerry's sponsored children live on four

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Marcelo Gomez/CFCA

Jerry with his photo wall of sponsored children.

Mission awareness trips 2005 schedule

Bolivia	Sept. 3-11
Chile	Oct. 8-16
Colombia	June 19-26
Costa Rica	April 9-16
El Salvador	July 16-23 Sept. 17-24
Guatemala	Jan. 29 to Feb. 5 March 21-28 May 7-14 July 9-16 Aug. 6-13 Dec. 26 to Jan. 2, 2006
Honduras	June 25 to July 2
India	Nov. 5-18
Kenya	Sept. 17-29
Mexico	
Juarez	July 16-23
Cuernavaca	Oct. 1-8
Merida	April 23-30 Oct. 22-29
Monterrey	March 5-12 Oct. 15-22
Nicaragua	Aug. 13-20
Philippines	Feb. 20 to March 2

The first and last dates listed for each trip are the days that travelers will depart from and arrive back in the United States. For trips to Bolivia, Chile, the Philippines, India and Kenya, you will arrive at your destination one to two days after departure because of overnight travel.

On all CFCA-sponsored trips, every effort will be made to assure the health and safety of our participants. For more information, contact our trip coordinator at (800) 875-6564 or trips@cfcausa.org. You may also visit us online at www.cfcausa.org.

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continents, making the task of visiting them a little difficult. He sponsors two children in the Philippines, four in El Salvador, one in Colombia, one in Kenya, two in Nicaragua, four in Guatemala and one in Costa Rica. In contacting CFCA about mission awareness trips, Jerry found that his quest of visiting his sponsored children was welcomed and encouraged by the Kansas City office.

Jerry said that before he went on a mission awareness trip, he had visited much of the world. The retired petty officer for the Navy was on the first American warship to sail into the Persian Gulf to collect soil samples and create maps with government contracted oceanographers. He had visited most of Europe, Japan and Korea, and sailed through the Pacific and Atlantic oceans during his military service.

He was still compelled to meet his sponsored children, and to understand the living conditions and poverty they faced.

"It was curiosity for one thing," said Jerry. "I thought I had seen just about everything during the Korean War. But when I went to El Salvador on my first mission awareness trip, I realized I hadn't. I decided that I wanted to visit Melrose, my first sponsored child who was 9 years old when I started sponsoring her."

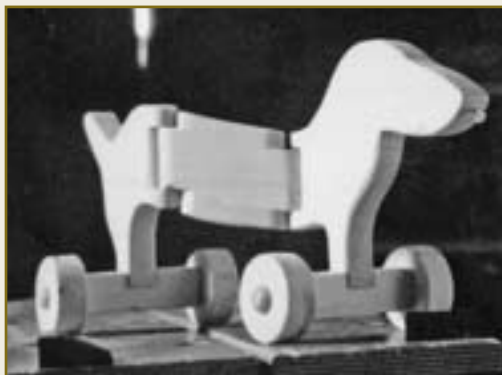
Melrose is sponsored through the Legazpi project, located in the southeastern area of Luzon, Philippines. In her third letter to Jerry, Melrose spoke of a typhoon that had destroyed half of her house. Jerry then financially supported the rebuilding of Melrose's home, which he saw for the first time on his mission awareness trip.

"The thing I like best about the Philippines (mission awareness trip) is that when you go, they take you right to the homes," said Jerry. "I told Bob (Hentzen, CFCA president) that I liked that because I can really see where they live and how they live."

Jerry also went as far as to make payments toward Melrose's college education to ensure she had the opportunity to pursue her goal of majoring

in criminal investigation through a university in Manila.

Mission awareness trips helped Jerry see how \$20 a month could provide a child and family with wholesome benefits to help them in their struggles to overcome poverty. Jerry said that key contributors in the delivery of CFCA benefits are the people



CFCA/Marcelo Gomez

A lot of effort and care go into Jerry's handcrafted toys. Above, a rolling wooden dog is depicted. Right, Jerry demonstrates "dancing" of one of his wooden men.

who work at the projects.

"What really impresses me is the dedication of the lay people," Jerry said. "CFCA people are amazing. These countries are so fortunate to have these top-notch people doing three times more work than they should, and they're doing it efficiently."

Besides financially assisting children he sponsors, Jerry said he likes to give a gift from the heart when he visits. Jerry travels with two suitcases: one for his clothes and the other stuffed with hand-crafted, wooden toys he creates for his sponsored children. His "dancing men" are popular among the older kids, and he crafts wooden dogs that younger children can pull along by a string.

"I make sure and sand each piece so it's smooth," Jerry said. "And I take and assemble the parts of the toys when I'm on the mission awareness trip using a stone as a hammer."

Jerry's doctors have told him that he needs to slow down. He has trouble breathing, and his doctor has recommended that he start using an oxygen tank.

"The last year and half, I've really been pushing," he said. "I've already been on four trips this year. I've told myself that I have to go now because if I get on oxygen, I won't be able to go."



CFCA/Marcelo Gomez

Jerry's family supports his endeavors. His daughter, Renee Bleich, has accompanied him on three mission awareness trips, twice to Philippines where she sponsors two children and once to El Salvador. Her son, Scott Kuchel, also went with Jerry on a mission awareness trip to Guatemala in 2003 when he was 15 years old.

There has been a lingering question posed to Jerry on several occasions. What

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are you going to do when you have visited all your children?

Jerry answers by saying, "I got that all taken care of. I'm going to keep sponsoring new kids so I know the Lord can't take me, because I haven't seen all my kids."

For now, Jerry continues on his quest to visit all his sponsored children. He documents all contact with them by putting pictures and his thoughts in little notebooks. In another small notebook, he records when he receives a letter from a sponsored child and when he replies.

"Sometimes I open the letter and I don't have to read the name to know who it is, because I recognize the writing," he said. "These kids that I have, I got every letter they've ever written, from every kid. I have all the stuff I get when I go there. I never give anything away."

Jerry points out details of one of the "dancing men" that he crafts for his kids.



CFCA/Marcelo Gomez

All the information he received in his sponsorship folder and letters from his sponsored children are placed for safekeeping in individual manila envelopes labeled with each sponsored child's name. In a small picture book that he carries with him on his trips, he keeps the first photo he received of each child. Adjacent to each child's photo is a picture of Jerry and the child when they met for the first time. At the front of the book is a picture of his wife that he proudly shows to all his sponsored children.

"I have no desire for luxuries; I'd take the visit to the kids any day ... If I didn't have these kids I wouldn't be here."

With two more children to meet, one in Guatemala and one in Costa Rica, Jerry has his sights set on achieving his goal this year. He plans to go on the trip to the Philippines at the end of February to visit Melrose before she graduates from high school in March. A month later, he plans to go to Costa Rica to meet Andrea, his latest sponsorship. His final visit to meet Oscar will be to the Hermano Pedro project in Guatemala on one of the six mission awareness trips offered.

Jerry said that his relationship with his sponsored children is far more important than any luxurious trip he could afford now. Many of the children Jerry has visited have written him asking when he could come back.

"I have no desire for luxuries; I'd take the visit to the kids any day," said Jerry. "I'm telling you, if I didn't have these kids I wouldn't be here.

"They keep me going."

CFCA CORE VALUE SPOTLIGHT

CFCA is modeled on four core values, each vital to the sponsor, sponsored person and the partnerships developed worldwide.

To recognize the dignity of the person

Recognizing the God-given dignity of each person is essential to sincere, lasting, loving relationships. The dignity of the person is reflected in the structure and activities of CFCA. The right of each person to participate fully in society, to have adequate food and housing, to have an opportunity to get an education and to develop talents is inherent to each person's dignity as a child of God.

Staying connected to your sponsored friend

Mailing tips

If you would like to send a card, letter or small gift item to your sponsored friend, here are some things you can do to help CFCA projects with delivery.

- Send your greeting or gift item via international air mail directly to the CFCA project serving your sponsored friend. Check with the post office for international rates.
- Be sure to put the project's complete address on the envelope, including the subproject designation, listed in capital letters following the project's name (e.g.

Manila ABN). We recommend using the pre-printed mailing labels enclosed with letters from your sponsored friend. You may request additional labels at www.cfcausa.org or by calling Sponsor Services at (800) 875-6564.



Encourage your friend

Send a card. Write a letter. Share some encouraging words:

I'm praying for you. I'm proud of you. Keep up the good work in school. Please remember me in your prayers. God loves you and so do I. You are special to me. I'm blessed to have you as a friend.



April reaches out to Aprilyn

By Ben Henry

April Deller was looking through a group of child folders following a CFCA parish sponsor event at her church in the fall of 2001. She came across one folder, in particular, that caught her attention.

The folder contained information about a 10-year-old girl from CFCA's Legazpi project in the Philippines. Her name was Aprilyn, and one of her hobbies was singing.

April decided to sponsor Aprilyn. Her reasons for doing so were twofold on the

surface. The girl had a first name similar to her own and shared a love for singing that April herself possesses.

Nearly three years later, April remains Aprilyn's sponsor. The two have come to know each other through regular written correspondence and have established a connection despite living half a world apart.

"She's always wanting me to come see her," said April of her sponsored child. "I send her pictures of myself and have received two pictures of her. But it is my intention to eventually go over there and meet her in person."

April's determination to have a positive impact on people's lives began at an early age. The eldest of eight children, she excelled in school, and was active in music and athletics.

In August 1999, April made a leap of faith when she left her home in rural Texas to take up residence in New York City. There, she attended New York University for three semesters where she was a music business major. She would eventually transfer to City College of New York in the spring of 2001.

Following an interest in national service, April enrolled as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer in the fall of 2001. During her year of volunteer service with the organization, she worked for the Community Health Care Association of New York State.

April attributes her spirit of giving to her faith in Christ. One of the ways she expresses that faith is through singing and writing songs about issues she feels

strongly about.

"I've been singing since I could talk," said the 23-year-old. "Music is the best way to catch people's attention. It is also the best way to inspire the emotions that you are trying to convey."

April began writing songs at the age of 11. As she gained experience in life and in songwriting, she turned her attention to subjects that focused on the relevance of social awareness. In her song "We're Living in a World," April proclaims that the world would be a much better place if people would listen to their hearts.

April listened to her heart when she went on a CFCA-sponsored mission awareness trip to Cuernavaca, Mexico, in June 2003.

"The children were always very happy to see the sponsors," she said. "They wanted to treat us as guests."

April was impressed with the generosity of the sponsored children and their parents. They gave her many gifts during her stay, and were glad to share their food with her. She left having learned that there was much joy and enthusiasm for life among the people she met, despite the conditions of poverty.

April's extraordinary confidence and potential are apparent in her seemingly unlimited energy. She has resumed taking classes in her pursuit of a music career as part of the baccalaureate program in the City University of New York system. She also works as an editor of a New York literary magazine The Reading Room.

Still, April finds the time to give of herself. She hosted a sponsorship party, inviting members of her Bible-study group to sponsor a child or aging person through CFCA. The party was a success, as three of her friends decided to sponsor a child.

April's commitment to her sponsored child is something she takes seriously. It is a relationship that has given her the satisfaction of knowing that Aprilyn will continue to receive the health benefits and the education she needs to succeed in life.



April Deller reaches out to a little girl in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on a June 2003 mission trip.