

DESERT BLOOMS

February 2012

Many of you will remember one of our co-workers, Isidra. Her son Angel was one of our first arrivals at the Santo Niño Project. He had cerebral palsy and died two years ago at age 28. Isidra has continued to serve on our team of mother-therapists, saying that the center is a place she still feels close to her son because it was where he was happiest.

Isidra has brought her granddaughter, Brisa, to the center with her since she was born in October 2010. Brisa (her name means “breeze”) has been a breath of fresh air in Isidra’s life—and at Santo Niño. She is a petite happy baby with wild black hair and bright eyes.

We’ve missed seeing Brisa in recent months and heard that she went with her mother to Vera Cruz on the southeastern coast of Mexico. About four weeks ago Isidra received a call to go to Vera Cruz immediately for a family emergency. She returned to Anapra last week with her daughter and granddaughter and she came to the clinic on Saturday. She had a list of anticonvulsant medications that had been prescribed when Brisa became ill while away. Isidra told us as best she could what she knew of Brisa’s condition. There was a viral infection and seizures and now Brisa was taking the medicines and was supposed to see the doctor again in three months. But she hadn’t been able to eat or sleep for several days. We asked her to bring her granddaughter so we could try to understand what had happened, thinking that perhaps she just had the common childhood problem of febrile seizures.



When Isidra came back with Brisa we were totally shocked at the change in the little one. Her bright little eyes were glazed and oscillated back and forth, seemingly unable to fixate on anything. Her arms and legs were in almost continuous movement, punctuated by generalized seizures. There was no smile and only a coarse little cry.

Our hearts broke as each of us saw what has become of Brisa- and Isidra’s face streaming with silent tears. We gathered all our forces of hope, compassion and strength to surround the grandmother and child. We started therapy and made plans for immediate medical evaluation with a pediatrician and neurologist in Juarez. We told Isidra- and we told ourselves- that the sooner we begin rehabilitation the greater the possibilities for improvement.

This was one of the most difficult experiences we have had at Santo Niño. Sister Peggy explained it well. “People often asked me, when I worked as a nurse in neuro rehab, how I could bear to work with such debilitated patients. I always said that it was because I never knew them any other way. I had no memory of them before their trauma so it was easier to manage the struggle to regain whatever function they could. But we all knew Brisa before and that makes it so much harder than it is with the other children we receive at Santo Niño.”

We challenge ourselves to hold in our minds and hearts the memory of how Brisa was- because that is the goal towards which we must work. In the meantime we ask you to pray with us for her recovery. Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, “May God break my heart so completely that the whole world falls in.” We ask for her intercession for Brisa and Isidra, certain that God’s heart is breaking too.