



Aldea Infantil SOS Puerto Varas



Swimming lesson

In the SOS Children's Village in Puerto Varas that you help support, there are 58 boys and girls. 58 children who need help with the continued betterment of their lives.

A Surprise for Mariela

Do you remember Mom Mariela? Over 25 years in the village, she has raised 35 children. A while ago, I told you about the unexpected visit from her daughter Carla who now lives in Canada. Though this was the most beautiful Christmas present she had ever received, the next surprise was even better: the invitation to see with her own eyes where Carla lives in Toronto.

"Carla always made well-thought-out and mature decisions. From the time she was a little girl, she wanted to run the world and visit as many countries as possible," said Mother Mariela with pride. She also smiled as she added, *"and she ended up staying in the first place she arrived and where she found her love."*

When you read this letter, Mariela will be across our continent. She will have already overcome her fear of getting on a plane for the first time, and she will be reunited with her daughter who she raised over the course of 17 years with a huge family in Puerto Varas.

Mariela's SOS family is much smaller today. She takes care of six boys and girls, many of whom require special attention and care. As a product of abandonment issues or lack of motivation, several have also exhibited learning and behavioural deficits. The Puerto Varas village is the only children's residence in the region that is able to take them in and not only give them a home, but also an incredible, loving mother. Mariela's eldest daughter now, Paula, put it nicely when she said, *"I hope that the magic our mom puts into our family life never ends."*

That magic is possible because of you. Thanks to you, the children are in an environment where they can grow every day, as they begin to feel safe and learn how to show affection again. This is not a miracle but rather a direct result of the support of people like you who believe that the children deserve to have happy endings to their stories.

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A loving home for every child



“Have you ever wanted a superpower?”

Mother Mariela’s children asked me when I would talk to all of them during my visit. After a short talk, they raced to dress up like their favourite superheroes with the toys and costumes that were in their homes. Though they probably don’t look like their idols, they could convince you otherwise with their enthusiasm. The majority wanted to be Batman, Flash or Catwoman, but there were also several who wanted to be like the newer heroes they’ve seen in the Avengers.

“I don’t want to be a superhero; I’d rather be a swimming champion”

The words of 11-year-old Alexis. Together, he and twelve other friends are learning how to swim. Would you believe that in a country with about 4,000 kilometres of coast and many lakes, the majority of the population doesn’t know how to swim? In Puerto Varas, there is not a single public swimming pool, and the season for swimming in Lake Llanquihue is very short, only eight weeks. Thus, the children travel to the nearby city of Puerto Montt two times a week and take classes. Alexis is increasingly confident with his strokes, and with every lesson gets closer to his dream. This all makes me think about the Walt Disney quote, *“If you can dream it, you can do it”*.



I made this puppet!

These swimming lessons are only one example of the many experiences the Puerto Varas village children have to cultivate their skills. Others include crafts with recycled materials, painting, and puppet making.

The Angry Volcano

Maybe you saw it on television. In April, Calbuco volcano exploded around 50 kilometres from the village. It threatened to destroy everything in its fury, and covered the skies and all below it with ash for days, including a school in the rural areas that many of the village children attend. Fortunately, no one in the village was harmed, and several SOS families even took in some of the children’s classmates who could not return home.

We greatly appreciate your continued help and financial support, without which none of this would be possible.

Yours sincerely,

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