

My Nuñoa Experience by Sara Ku

When I was offered the chance to return to Peru and visit Nuñoa for the second time, I jumped at the idea and was thrilled to go. My first trip to the small town was one that I will never forget. The people I met on that first trip were amazing and the experiences I had were life changing. I thought about the little boy named Oskar that I had met in 2008 and I couldn't wait to see him again. I also couldn't wait to see all the changes that had happened to the small town and I was thrilled that I could actually visit the piece of property that the Nuñoa Project had purchased.

Gearing up for the trip I knew what to expect. I knew to expect pretty poor living conditions, extremely limited food, and to expect some shocking cultural differences. The way the people of Nuñoa live is still astonishing to me. After this second trip I got a closer glimpse of the poverty that these people live in day in and day out. When I think of an infant I think of a bright, bubbly baby wrapped up in clean clothes and with a big smile on their face. The infants I saw in the town center during the weekly market was disillusioning. The babies I saw were covered head to toe in grit and grim and were not joyful at all. They looked lethargic and in desperate need of some intense cleaning. I was able to get to know an infant like this on a more personal basis.

There was a three year old infant staying at the orphanage with his four brothers. These siblings were not actually orphans, in fact they had parents and five other siblings. Their parents could no longer take care of these five children and made the responsible decision to place them in this better environment. The only problem was that the orphanage closed five days after these boys arrived. It made me angry that these boys were taken out of their depressing home and placed in this happier place only to be placed back into their past home. Instead of never knowing what they were missing out on (electricity, running water, food, etc.) they now knew and had to somehow continue living in their poor conditions. This enrages me because these boys were being cared for and were being given an opportunity to learn and be healthy, but who knows how they are being cared for now.

Seeing Oskar was a highlight of my trip. When I first met him on my first visit, he was living in the orphanage with his older brother and was a highly intelligent young boy. His mother lived in the town but could not care for him because she is blind and severely handicapped. Oskar no longer lives in the orphanage because of its closure, but it was good to see that he was doing very well. I saw Oskar at the town market working very hard and extremely happy. Oskar's smile can just light up anyone's heart and he did just that when he saw me. It was amazing when he saw me and came running up to me and gave me a hug. It melted away all of the angry that I had built up about the orphanage and just made me happy to see that he was doing alright.

After the trip to the market, myself and the rest of the group visited the newly purchased piece of land and it was breathtaking. The property is right next to the river and behind the river are the beautiful mountains of the altiplano. The little boys from the orphanage came and investigated the land with us. When we explained to them that we were going to be building them a new home the look on their faces was priceless. They were so

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thrilled that they were going to have a place to go that could provide them with hot showers and hot meals. They were just so thankful for everything that we were doing for them and what we are going to do for them in the future that it made the long trip to Nuñoa well worth it.