

FABamigos Sponsor Perspective

By Katherine Allgood

When I first read of the FABamigos sponsorship program Laurie Reasons was starting, I knew in my heart that I was supposed to be part of it. I was working the weekend of the introduction event, so I called her and asked to be included. She asked me about age and gender preference. I knew I wanted to sponsor a little girl, since I used to be one, but age didn't matter. I was at work when she emailed me two pictures of girls at Remar. I had an idea in my head about what my little girl would look like. I could only get one of the pictures to open, and she looked exactly like the picture in my head. That was the first time I had tears in my eyes. My work friends were all excited to see her picture, too. When I got home, I opened the other picture—but by that point, my heart belonged to Samanta.

We've had some funny times along the way. When the pictures were taken, the kids held up signs with their names on them. Turns out they were spelled phonetically, and they don't always go by first names as most do here. For the first few months, my letters were to Yoseling, only to find out it was spelled Joselin, and her name is actually Samanta. Who knew?

I loved writing to her and shopping for her. I don't have any kids, so it was such a treat to devote an afternoon looking for exactly the right thing to make her smile. It brought me closer to my mother when she started sponsoring a little girl as well. We would get together and spend a few wonderful hours combing through racks of clothes, trying to guess sizes and favorite colors.

The high point of each month was when Laurie would come back from a trip with letters from the kids. I couldn't wait to get my hands on Samanta's most

recent drawing (she's quite an artist) that would accompany her letters.

My goal has always been for her to feel loved. I wanted her to know that, even though far away and far apart, I thought of her every day and prayed for her every night. I carried her picture around with me, showing it proudly to anyone who would stand still long enough, and talked about her constantly. I was eagerly awaiting our first meeting.

Six months into it, I learned her story. When Laurie told me, I didn't just cry; I sobbed. I hadn't really stopped to think about why she was at Remar. On some level, I knew it wasn't because she had a wonderful and fulfilling family life, but that's as far as my brain took me. The end result is that Samanta was painfully shy and withdrawn and didn't interact much with the other kids. Smiles were definitely a rarity.

During the September FABamigos dinner, Allen Reasons commented on what an amazing thing it is to truly love someone you've never met. That is the case with Samanta and me. I knew we were going to Skype with the kids at that dinner, but I never expected to turn around and see Samanta on the screen like that. I was completely overwhelmed! Her letters had been fairly reserved, so I had a ton of questions for her, things to say to her, but everything rational flew out of my head when I saw her. There she was! In person! My sister had come to the dinner that evening to help us prepare the food. There were a few new kids who needed sponsors. There is now a little boy eagerly awaiting her letters.

I got incredibly lucky with my work schedule and had the privilege of going on the December mission trip. Saturday was a long day of travel, and we arrived very late. We were going to church Sunday morning, and all I could think about was Samanta. She would be there! We arrived first. I kept my eyes on the entrance. Soon, I saw a line of children coming in. She was third into the building. I went up to her and hugged her. After nearly a year of thinking about her,

writing to her, and praying for her, she was right in front of me. Being her shy self, she hesitantly hugged me back. During the service, she turned around numerous times to look at me. Pam Mitchell had taken a picture of Samanta and her brother, so I had taken copies with me to give to them. Samanta showed it around to all the kids, then tucked it into her Bible. I could go on for pages to describe the trip and the 438 pictures I took. When Eddie Chamberlin told us at the FABamigos dinner that the kids talk to each other about their sponsors by asking “Who’s your mom?” and “Who’s your dad?”, I didn’t really believe it—not because I thought he was lying, but because it is so far outside of my own experience I couldn’t even imagine it. But it’s true. The kids would ask about their moms and dads—their sponsors. More than the gifts and material things, they crave the contact with people who love them. The lines in front of the translators to have letters read were impressive.

Samanta and I went from exchanging hesitant (on her part!) hugs on Sunday to her running up the path to jump into the van for our third goodbye on Thursday night. We have only been back in the U.S. a month, and I feel like it’s been forever since I’ve seen her. I’ve been particularly blessed in that my mother and sister went on this trip as well. There’s a wonderful picture of us, our kids, and their siblings that we all proudly display in our Nicaragua frames. This sponsorship program was God’s way of bringing me home to FAB, deepening my relationship with my family, and making me see what is truly important in the world. I have a new “mission trip family” whom I still miss at breakfast and dinner. I miss the sounds of Spanish all around me. The words haven’t been invented to describe my experience with the kids.

Sponsors, they really love each and every one of you. If there’s any way you can get down there, make it happen. I promise that your world will never be the same.