

Kids' Kingdom Story

Kids' Kingdom Imuris

20 years ago Arturo and Lilia Jimenez Barrales felt called to serve the children of Mexico. Leaving their jobs in the U.S. they moved to Imuris to begin Kid's Kingdom orphanage. Lilia's father donated a parcel of land on the north side of Imuris and a donor recognized their commitment to sharing the Gospel and caring for children and underwrote the construction of the orphanage in Imuris. The orphanage is structured as a non-profit Mexican corporation and Lilia and Arturo do not take a salary, although their food, housing and vehicles are provided.



Over the years hundreds of children have experienced the love of Christ expressed in a family environment at Kid's Kingdom. One of the blessings of frequent trips to the orphanage is the chance to see how the power of Christian love can impact the lives of children, many of whom have experienced either abuse or neglect. It's nothing short of miraculous to see how God heals these children physically, mentally and spiritually through the love showered on them by Lilia, Arturo and the rest of the staff at Kid's Kingdom.

But the Christian environment of the orphanage is only part of the story. Another part of their ministry is sharing the Gospel with the community of Imuris. The heart of Kid's Kingdom is the church and all that they do centers around sharing the Gospel and love of Christ in all of their interactions. On Tuesday mornings they host a woman's Bible study, Wednesdays they have an evening prayer service or Bible study and on Sundays a worship service. After worship they host a luncheon for the congregation.



The orphanage is seen as a refuge not only for children, but single moms, widows and families in crisis. Often they will offer temporary housing for women with children who are escaping an abusive situation or an environment filled with either alcohol or drug issues. If someone needs food, emotional or spiritual support, Arturo and Lilia are there to help in any way they can. The orphanage is also seen as a safe haven for neighborhood children. On any given day, there can be a dozen or more kids from the community gathering at the orphanage playing and often getting a meal or two.

As a private orphanage the majority of the funding comes from individuals and organizations. The state of Sonora at times has had financial support programs for private orphanages, but they don't always send the funds. The requirements to receive funding are not clear, the process to apply for funding is very time

consuming and involves a lot of paperwork, and there is no guarantee you will actually receive funding even if you submit a request. On top of it all, the amount of money you qualify for is only a couple hundred dollars per month, which does not make it worth the 15-20 hours of time and record keeping needed to receive the funding.

In 2021, we helped fund the start-up of a small business enterprise to create a consistent cash flow to help pay for some of the fixed expenses of the orphanage, expenses like propane, electricity, water and to provide a source of funding for the medical and dental expenses of the children. Thus, Kids' Donuts was born! They make a variety of donuts that they sell wholesale to stores in Imuris, as well as retail out of the shop, which is located on the campus in Imuris.



Also in 2021, Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Anthem, AZ started a monthly sponsorship program for the children at Kids' Kingdom. This sponsorship program has now been taken over by Lutherans Engaged in Mission, an outreach arm of Zion Lutheran Church, Bismarck, ND and Messiah Lutheran Church, Mandan, ND. This has been a big help to the directors, Arturo and Lilia in having another source of dependable income to help care for the children.

Kids' Kingdom, Benjamin Hill



The church, director's house and dormitories

In 2016, we were asked if we would consider being part of the construction of a second Kids' Kingdom in the neighboring town of Benjamin Hill (about an hour south of Imuris). After prayerful consideration we decided to move forward with this opportunity to continue the mission and ministry of Kids' Kingdom in Benjamin Hill as well.

The orphanage was on an acre of land that Arturo and Lilia had purchased years ago and had started the construction of a church. Our first order of business was to complete the church and then begin to build out the rest of the campus. Over the last 7 years, we have purchased 3 additional parcels of land with homes on them bringing the size of the orphanage to 2 ½ acres.

To date the church has been completed; the director's home, a boy's and girl's dormitory, the dining room and kitchen are finished; one of the additional homes has been completely remodeled; the second home is almost done, and the third is being expanded with additions to create a guest house for teams coming to Benjamin Hill.



Dining Hall



Interior of the dining hall

One of the blessings of having extra land is that we have been able to plant a sizable orchard. We currently have over 45 trees that have already started producing fruit. We have apple, pear, peach, orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, fig, banana, mandarin orange, pecan and mango trees. We also have plenty of room for a garden, producing potatoes, carrots, onions, peppers, cucumbers, watermelons, and tomatoes.



Pears



Peaches



Mandarin Oranges



Bananas



Figs



Potatoes

Having the opportunity to help create some happy childhood memories is one of the greatest joys of our mission trips! In addition to the events we host, sometimes just sitting with a youngster and coloring, or playing a little basketball, soccer, or skipping rope are, in short, ways in which we are blessed to provide a ministry of presence. We show the love of Christ by just being there.



Hamburgers after church



Swim party



Pizza party for the kids & staff

On the mission trips, part of our outreach to the community consists of assembling food baskets and delivering them to single mothers, widows and families in crisis. We also give a Spanish Bible that includes Luther's Small Catechism!



Shopping



Assembling



Delivering



And of course part of the mission experience is work projects! There is no lack of things to build, fix, repair and paint.

We thank all those who have supported our work at Kids' Kingdom. What a blessing it has been for so many to partner with Arturo, Lilia and the staff at Kids' Kingdom in their mission and ministry to the children in their care as well as the communities of Imuris and Benjamin Hill. Good Lord willing, we will be able to continue to support and share in their ministry for years to come.