

Tres Islas Orphanage Fund
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U.S. IRS Federal Identification Number: 84 -1408725

The History of the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund

The Tres Islas Orphanage Fund is solely dedicated to helping orphaned children and children in orphanages in Old Mexico.

It is a non-profit, charitable organization registered with the Internal Revenue Service in the United States.

The Tres Islas Orphanage Fund began in the mid-1980s as a one-person effort to help children in Mazatlan, Mexico's orphanages when one of the founders of the Fund, who is a newspaper reporter by trade, was sent to Mazatlan with a bag-full of film and an assignment to "photograph the children of Mexico."

Little did the reporter know at the time how that one assignment would forever change her life.

She photographed children everywhere: on the beach, in the plazas, in the church, on the streets. Then one day she sought out an orphanage after learning that there are numerous orphanages located throughout Mexico. Of course, the children in the orphanage had to be represented in her photographs as well. And on that day, the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund began.

The name of the orphanage she went to is Orfanatorio Mazatlan. Located in downtown Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico at 227 Zaragoza, Orfanatorio Mazatlan is the oldest orphanage in Mazatlan. It was founded in 1902 when an epidemic of the bubonic plague left many children without parents.

Primarily, it is a girls' orphanage although little boys also stay there when they have sisters who are living there - thus maintaining a sense of family.

While the good people of Mexico give all they can to support orphanages, due to their own family needs and an economy, they often cannot help as much as they would like.

The conditions at the orphanage that day back in the 1980s were sad. While there was some food at the orphanage - eggs, some tortillas and beans - there was not a substantial amount of food on hand, nor was enough nourishing food to feed the 25 children there on a long-term basis. Many windows were broken and did not have screens. Drainage ran across the courtyard. The children's shoes and clothes were well worn and many were tattered.

So, she immediately went out and, with the help of the lady who today buys food for the orphanages through the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund, she bought \$250.00 U.S. dollars worth of food for the children.

Back home in Cheyenne, Wyoming, she held photo/poetic art shows where she sold her photography and poetry with all proceeds going to buy food for the children. She shared the children's plight with family and friends.

She began treks to Mazatlan four times a year to buy food for the orphanage.

One day, she decided that perhaps others would want to help the children in the orphanage on a regular basis. But this Fund would need to be different because so much money donated in the name of "charity" actually goes for administration and not solely for helping others - who are truly in need.

So, the Tres Islas Orphanage Fund was founded on the premise that 100 percent of all money donated to the Fund would help children in orphanages in Old Mexico - first to buy nourishing food for the children each week, second, educational needs, including, school supplies, shoes, uniforms, clothes and making upgrades to their homes, the orphanages and medical needs.

In return for each and every donation, each fall (after school purchases) every donor would receive a copy of each store receipt - signed by the director of the orphanage or the principal care giver who is at the orphanage at the time of delivery - to verify their donations were spent exactly as they wanted to help the needy children in orphanages.

In addition, the name, address and telephone number of the orphanage would be provided to each donor as well as a list of the children in each orphanage and donors would always be welcome to visit the orphanage and participate in the children's lives.

Also included in each annual report is the name and location of the banking institution, how much money is in the account and what interest accrued on the money earned is also provided to the donors.

The Fund has an open-door policy with all contributors. And, it is believed that because of this, that donors will genuinely feel good about making contributions to the Fund because of the way the Fund is conducted: with 100 percent of every donation going toward orphaned children in Old Mexico, because of the verification for each donation and lastly, because of the detailed accounting provided to donors.

In October 2007, the Fund reached a milestone. First, the Fund reached its 20th year anniversary helping not just one - but four Mazatlan, Mexico orphanages full time! To date, over \$264,500.00 U.S. dollars has been spent on helping children in orphanages in Old Mexico by the purchase of nourishing food for them, each and every week, their school supplies, shoes, uniforms and backpacks and necessary orphanage upgrades to ensure the children live in a safe, sanitary and healthy environment.

There are approximately 100 children (total) in the four orphanages.

The orphanages the Fund serves are:

1. Orfanatorio Mazatlan
2. Salvation Army Children's Home
3. Father Tovar's Home for Boys. . .Hogar San Pablo
4. Ciudad de los Ninos

Today the Fund purchases \$150.00 U.S. dollars, or \$600.00 per week, to feed the children in each of the four orphanages, to feed the children in the four orphanages.

A typical week's worth of food includes: fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, low-fat, high-protein meat – fish, chicken, pork and beef, whole-grain bread, pancake mix, pasta, cereal and eggs.

Additionally, the Fund buys the children their school supplies, school shoes and school uniforms as well as pays for prescribed medicines.

The Fund also sponsors children to attend English classes and trade-school classes in the areas of their interest so that when the children leave the orphanages, they leave with good skills so they may take care of themselves and be productive members of society.

The Fund also upgrades the orphanages pertaining to health, safety and welfare improvements as required. From sealing roofs against the monsoon rains, to painting, to upgrading bathrooms and kitchens, and sewage systems, to creating playgrounds at the orphanages, the Fund helps ensure the children live in a sanitary and safe environment.

Donors gather in Mazatlan twice each year, each spring and December, to participate in the children's lives and to make the necessary upgrades.

Working together (alongside the children who love to help!), getting to know the other donors and improving the children's living conditions, is a wonderful experience that forever changes each person who participates.

Many people ask about buying items in the U.S. and Canada and either taking them down themselves or shipping them down.

The reason it is best to buy items for the orphanages in Mexico is because:

1. In order for anything to be legitimately claimed as a tax-deductible donation for the contributor, the money must be deposited into the Tres Islas banking account that is recognized by the IRS as a not-for-profit, charitable organization. Then, the item(s) can be purchased with that money and a copy of the receipt for the item(s), always signed by the orphanage director for verification, is sent to the contributor.
2. It is extremely difficult to take supplies for between 25 and 30 children in a car or on a plane.

3. Anything taken to or mailed to Mexico is subject to tariffs. Even for an orphanage. And, the cost of tariff to bring anything in or mail it in costs as much, if not more than purchasing the item in Mazatlan would cost.

4. Mazatlan offers for sale almost everything that is for sale in the U.S. or Canada, and certainly what the children will need.

Often, because the purchase is for an orphanage, it is possible to negotiate a discount.

5. Buying locally, even in a foreign country, creates friends.

Last, and surely most important, buying what the orphanage needs in Mexico helps shopkeepers who, themselves, have families and children who are also very much in need.

Please feel welcome to contact the Fund:

- ✓ Via phone in the U.S. at 1-888-459-8463
- ✓ Outside the U.S. phone 1-541-459-7535
- ✓ Email the Fund at email@orphanagefunds.org
- ✓ Visit the Fund's webpage at www.orphanagefunds.org

To learn more how you can make the difference of a lifetime for a child in need!

Thank you and may God bless you as you bless the children with your help!