

Fall 2008

To the many who have cared:

“I am only one. But still I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.”

Edward Everett Hale

Long before I began to work with children living in the streets of Guatemala, I came to believe that each of us was responsible for creating a world that filled our days and shaped our lives. We all decided, consciously or otherwise, to go forward and be with others in ways that ultimately did or did not foster love and generate good will.

After spending many years seeing life through the eyes of a culture steeped in suffering, I am now more certain than ever that every bit of kindness that we put out into the world is never wasted. The true and lasting beauty of simple acts of kindness can be easily overlooked in the midst of these hectic times; their value easily underestimated in a highly ambitious, profit-driven society. But I've come to see first hand that when ordinary tasks are carried out with extraordinary care, they have the power to transform the world, one life at a time. Only A Child's own youngsters are my shining example.

At fifty-one years of age, I am comfortably settled into middle age. A good number of my peers have confided in me that they struggle to find purpose for their lives. They also say that they imagine that I must not suffer from such doubt, and they are correct in that assumption. Working with Only A Child, I never wonder at the end of the day if my life has meaning. I could list the reasons why, but I prefer to let one of our young men speak on my behalf. I share with you a letter written by Marvin. He handed it to me several years ago after we had gone through a difficult time when it seemed we butted heads at every turn. We often found ourselves in situations not easily resolved, but both Marvin and I were determined to work through them together, which eventually we did. I feel the time is right to share with you Marvin's letter.

Dear George,

It is a pleasure to write to you and thank you for all that you have done for me. You have given me wise advice for my life and have helped me to continue to struggle against all of life's obstacles. Thanks to your advice, I am where I am today. You have always been by my side through the good times and the bad and for that I am grateful. I have learned much from you and you are my great example, teaching me to never give up in the middle of life's difficult moments. You have taught me to be a good worker, sincere and honest with myself, honorable and above all, humble and thankful for those who are by my side. I will delay no longer in saying thank you very much for helping me to become a good person within society.

Your dear son,

Marvin

Watching over young lives that have previously lacked the attention of a caring adult, advising them, reassuring them, helping each of them to become a good person - with work such as this, how could my life possibly lack purpose?

In his letter, Marvin twice referred to the importance of having someone by his side to help see him through life's heartbreaks and share with him its joys as well. We all need to know that we are not alone in this world, that someone cares about what happens to us. Marvin thanks me personally for remaining loyal to him, but as I have affirmed from the beginning, I could not continue to do this work without knowing that you support not just Only A Child, but me also. Therefore, the feeling of satisfaction that comes from knowing that not only Marvin, but also all of our youngsters trust that they are not alone is ours to share together. Thank you for all of the kindness that you have put out into the world by offering a helping hand to Marvin and his companions.

September is upon us, which means that it is time for our Friends of Only A Child pledge drive. It has been many years since we last saw such difficult times. As in the United States, the price of life's most basic necessities has recently soared in Guatemala, straining our budget. Stories have begun to circulate of working families managing to feed their children only twice daily. Hunger has once again become a force to contend with in our world. We in the U.S. continue to enjoy relative prosperity. We remain blessed and are still in the position to be able to do something to alleviate the world's ever increasing distress.

It is true that none of us can do everything. When I first traveled to Central America, I understood that I was not going to change the world. But I trusted that I could make a contribution in some way. Not everyone is in a position to alter their lives so dramatically, but that is not to say that you still cannot do something that will have a significant and lasting impact on our youngsters' lives. If you are not already a Friend of Only A Child, please give serious thought to become a monthly sponsor. Given the current state of affairs, you may need to sacrifice to make this possible. Doing so will only make your contribution that much more meaningful, for never more than we are tested do we come to see who we are and what we stand for.

There are countless ways to show kindness. We are handed the chance to give of our humanity most every moment of every day. It is for us to decide if and how we will respond to the great need that is always before us. It matters little where we are or whom we are with. The questions and choices we face are always the same. Will we ultimately decide to care? Will we care enough to act?

Sincerely,

George

How to Pledge

For those of you who have not yet made an annual pledge, please join us by becoming a Friend of Only A Child for as little as \$5.00 per month or an annual pledge of \$60.00. A little goes a long way, for example:

- \$10.00 a month or \$120 per year will provide one month's food for one resident
- \$25.00 per month or \$300.00 per year will provide tuition for one youngster for an entire school year
- \$50.00 per month or \$600.00 per year will provide salary for one of our carpentry shop workers for six months

For many of you, becoming a Friend simply formalizes the generous and steadfast commitment that you have already sustained over the years. These recurring donations help us provide uninterrupted services to our "jovenes" (young people) and to plan our services for several months at a time.

As a Friend of Only A Child, you will receive an acknowledgment and annual statements that you can use for tax deduction purposes.

In addition to filling out the enclosed form and returning it with your donation, you may contribute by setting up an automatic monthly withdrawal from your checking or savings account at your bank. You may also contribute online using Pay Pal or a credit card. Instructions for contributing online may be found on our website, www.onlyachild.org. If you have any questions, you may call us at our toll free number: 1-888-593-0083.