

BAJA FAMILY STORY

When my boys were growing up my husband and I always asked our kids, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Their answers changed all the time. Some of their answers were funny and some of their answers were profound. But the constant thing I took for granted; they always had an answer.

Today, I was fortunate enough to have a day to hang out in the Colonia of Antorchista with Baja Cheryl (Cheryl Walker). We went to the home of Erica, Manuel and their two sons. Erica and Manuel have been selected by Baja Christian Ministries to receive a new home. Manuel is a taxi driver. He works twelve hours a day; seven days a week. Erica is a maid. She rides the bus to Otay three days a week to clean houses. The first thing I noticed about Erica is her amazing smile. She brings joy to the small structure with dirt floors that she has called home for the past four years. Erica and Manuel are what Americans call "Squatters." Because they have been willing to live on this piece of dirt for four years, the Mexican government has deeded them the property.

Erica gave us the grand tour. In their 10 x 10 room, there is a full size bed where she and Manuel sleep, a small chest of drawers, a two-burner stove and a mini refrigerator. She keeps her set of dishes and a couple of very old pans in a Tupperware box. Their two boys do not have a bed. She has a few neatly folded blankets in the corner. The boys use those blankets to sleep on the hard dirt floor next to their parents. Erica is extremely excited to be receiving a home. She said it is a "huge blessing." Only when I inquired did Erica say they also have a need for food and school backpacks for the boys. It became clear daily survival is a struggle.

Erica beamed when she told us how much her boys love school. She said they look forward to it every day. That's when I asked her the question, "What do your boys want to be when they grow up." She was quiet for a while. Then she said, I don't know. We don't talk about it.

There it was... it just hung in the room for me as I looked at the dirt floor and the water stained wood walls. The family is so entrenched in survival, they do not have the ability to dream of the future God has instore for them. This family does not have the time, resources or luxury to dream, "What do you want to be when you grow up."

But this weekend that is all going to change. Erica and Manuel are going to have a new home. A home with no leaks and a level concrete floor. A Baja Christian Ministries group is going to bless them with a new house and for the first time in their lives, two boys are going to have their own bed. But even more important, a group is going to share Christ's love. Someone is going to write on the walls underneath the drywall, a bible verse. It will read, "For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, "plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11.

My prayer is that Erica and Manuel's children will soon have an answer when someone asks, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

By Melissa Daly