

## Winter Juarez Mission Trip Update:

My name is Jessie Helton. And I love cinderblocks. Seriously.



In 1996, Reverend Jose Luis Portillo arrived at a house in Juarez, Mexico made from cardboard and trash bags to baptize a baby—where he learned that the family had lost a child the winter before. The child froze to death due to inadequate housing. Jose Luis founded Proyecto Abrigo, or “project shelter” in English: an organization that provides a 12’x24’ cinderblock home for families in the Juarez area. Since 1996, over a thousand homes have been built. I had the incredible privilege of working with Jose Luis and Proyecto Abrigo over my Christmas break.

Eight individuals from various Methodist churches all across the DFW area gathered together two days after Christmas to travel to Juarez. Upon arriving at the home of the Hernandez family—a tiny cardboard structure no bigger than my bathroom with no floor that housed six individuals—we all got to work on building their new house. After three days of hard work, the eight of us, along with three maestros and eleven year-old Heraldo Hernandez had mixed enough cement and mortar and laid enough cinderblocks to complete the house. We blessed the new home and took communion with the Hernandez family, then said our goodbyes. After a lovely meal out with Jose Luis and his family, our wonderfully productive trip had come to an end.



There was a time when driving the streets of outer Juarez, one could see dozens of white vans bearing missionaries for Proyecto Abrigo. There were years where over 250 houses were built. In 2010, that number has dwindled to under a dozen. The need is greater than ever as hundreds of families evacuated Juarez to the rumored less violent south of Mexico—only to find that Juarez is safer than the south. These families must start completely from scratch...with cardboard and trash bags.



Hear my plea: these people need help. They need housing; \$3,500 provides a house without a mission team to build it, \$2,800 if a team of volunteers can go (my mother and I will be joining Pastor Dana Coker and several others over spring break). Any monetary donation helps tremendously. Their low income means cheap food: food with little nutritional value. Vitamins are desperately needed—along with medicine of any sort. The clinic always needs empty pill bottles and pregnancy tests. Clothing (shoes, socks, underwear) is another must have, as well as school supplies for the children: crayons, notebooks, pens and pencils. And soccer balls. If I could

only begin to describe to you the look of pure joy on a child’s face when he receives a soccer ball. Lastly, prayer. If you aren’t interested in going in person, please consider going in spirit.

Many may not really understand my love for those heavy, ugly cinderblocks. But trust me. Those beautiful things save lives.

Amor por Juarez y Dios te bendiga,  
Jessie Helton

Please send monetary donations to:  
Jose Luis Portillo  
Proyecto Abrigo  
P.O. BOX 17838  
El Paso, TX 79907

Volunteers may contact me at (903) 456-8090 or contact the church office.

