



FRIENDS OF ALALAY (SANTA CRUZ)

Registered charity no. 1123425

AUTUMN 2020 NEWSLETTER

As much as I try, once more I can't fit my newsletter onto one page, so for the time being I may have to admit defeat and go on to a second sheet!

Unfortunately, COVID-19 is still rampant in Bolivia and consequently these have been very difficult times for many of our staff, some of whom have lost family members, and others have been ill but recovered. The Santa Cruz region continues to have the highest number of confirmed cases in the country, and [12 people died from the virus in the region on 22 October](#) (although with such limited testing capabilities it is likely these figures are in reality much higher). However, I'm relieved to say that the introduction of numerous precautions in Santa Cruz have meant that none of our children have contacted the virus thus far.



Children showing off their masks – though they are actually in a family “bubble” in the photo

Claudia Gonzales (Founder/Director of Alalay), who lost her husband to the virus earlier in the year, continues to [campaign tirelessly for the provision of more ventilators in hospitals throughout the country](#), alongside her inspirational work with the Alalay children.

Peaceful general elections were held on 18 October in Bolivia (compared with the [widespread protests after the November 2019 elections](#)). However, Alalay staff tell us that even with the landslide victory of the socialist candidate, the country remains under considerable stress and uncertainty - clearly made worse by the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. This is very sad in such a beautiful country, so full of potential and talent.

Despite this, there is always something positive to report. We continue to provide as normal a life as possible for our children, especially through our substantial investment in “distance-schooling”. We are thrilled to announce that not only have some of our oldest children successfully completed their vocational training courses (in accounting, catering and beauty/hairdressing) but a further three have been selected to participate in the highly prestigious national “Banco Mercantil Santa Cruz” scholarship programme, financing them through relevant University courses (with the possibility of future employment with this well-respected bank).

And we have even more exciting news: we recently found out that two members of our “Alalay family” got married last month. Marisol and Wilber met at Alalay as children – they now each have secure bank jobs and are buying a house together. There’s simply not enough space in this newsletter to write lots about their lives and many successes, but after a good “virtual” catch up with both of them, we hope to share more soon!



These are not just stories, but real children and young people who could so easily have led such different lives. They are a true testament to Alalay and the hard work of its staff, but even more so, a credit to themselves. We are so unbelievably proud of each of them.



We remain very grateful to world-famous cellist Michael Jones, who first played to the Alalay kids in 2012, then performed a [magical fundraising concert](#) in Bristol, and decided to do something different for his birthday this year. He undertook a sponsored cycle ride from Madrid to Chinchón in Spain, raising more than £900 for the Bolivian street children. Big thanks also to Bryony who set up a birthday “fundraiser” for us on Facebook. As our usual fundraising concerts and other indoor events dry up, we need to be ever creative in finding ways to promote our work and help the kids through this time. Do get in touch with us if you have any ideas.

As always we are very encouraged by those many supporters who have given so generously during this time of great need. Many have given anonymously, so I cannot thank you individually, but I want you to know that your help is greatly appreciated.

For any supporters who are interested in the lives of street-connected children more broadly, and want to find out more about how COVID-19 has changed everything, please do take a look at our recent [website post](#). It shares a [UN World Data Forum video on why vulnerable children \(like street children\) are ever more invisible from data](#) and why this matters; and also advertises the [Consortium for Street Children’s Annual Conference next week \(2-4 November\)](#) (with numerous sessions linked to the pandemic, covering: innovative approaches to children’s learning, mental health and wellbeing, discrimination, and government’s human rights obligations). All are free – simply register via the links. I hope to “see” you there!

In September, the Alalay Foundation celebrated their 30th anniversary and released a “memory album” of beautiful images and testimonial videos of their work. Read more [HERE](#). We are honoured to have been a part of their journey for the last 14 years.

For the most up-to-date information please do look at our [website](#) and [Facebook](#) pages.

We hope that you and your loved ones stay safe and well.

Annie Syrett-Jones, Bristol – October 2020
www.alalay.co.uk