



FRIENDS OF ALALAY (SANTA CRUZ)

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SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER

Past newsletters have concentrated largely either on the achievements of the children at Alalay, or on our many self-financing projects. For a change, this newsletter will deal with some vitally important members of the Alalay team – the house mothers and fathers. They are normally referred to as “educadores/as” (educators) and, though traditionally many have come to Alalay as experienced mothers and fathers who have brought up their own children, here are stories of two who have come via university.

Firstly Carmen Rosas, aged 37. Carmen graduated in Educational Sciences and first joined Alalay in 2010. Initially she was a relief house parent for girls between thirteen and fifteen years of age, before moving into a permanent post. She remained in this role for two years, then left for personal reasons and worked for a while in a nursery school.



Carmen

On her return to Alalay in 2014, she became a house mother to a number of the boys. She feels it to be especially important to help the children to establish their own rights as individuals, after perhaps years when they had few rights and even these were frequently violated by society.

Carmen greatly enjoys getting to know the children as individuals and building up their trust – “I soon realised that if you educate with love you get good results. It is a slow process because each child has different problems, as in any family, and there are good weeks and not so good”.



Jhonny

The other house parent we want to mention is Jhonny Álvarez, who has a rather different story. Jhonny is 25 years old and graduated in Humanities, first working as a volunteer at a residential care home for older adults in Santa Cruz, before volunteering at Alalay.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought an abrupt end to his time volunteering, but later on in 2021 he was offered a full-time job as a house father. Here’s what Jhonny says: “I knew this would be a big challenge – no longer just a few hours with the children, but really being a father or brother figure to them. This is enormously gratifying as I am now a member of a team that supports and helps them develop more satisfying lives and become secure and capable adults – the most important role that anyone could fulfil!”

Supporters who have followed the Friends of Alalay story from the beginning may well remember that when I first volunteered in Bolivia in 2006, there was not enough money to fund the salaries of all the necessary house parents in Alalay. Therefore I was asked to be house mother to the oldest girls (at the time aged 13 – 19 years), living in a small separate room in a cabin with them and helping them with school work, emotional wellbeing and self-esteem, ensuring their bedrooms were cleaned and even teaching them about personal hygiene. My six months were very hard, but I learnt so much about both them and myself. It was one of “my” girls who told me as I was leaving Bolivia that “all volunteers say that they will return, and never do” – little did I know at the time that my desire and motivation to continue to support them would run strong 16 years later! I am still in contact with many of “my” girls, and unbelievably proud of all they have achieved. They are happy, healthy, strong, independent women – with their own homes and jobs, children, university degrees and numerous other qualifications between them. They are a shining example of just what can be achieved with the right support, motivation, hard work and love.

In other news, this year we are planning to double the number of adolescents who we will support through their vocational training and I hope to tell you more about their progress in later newsletters.



Annie and some of her girls, 2006

Annie Syrett-Jones, Bristol – August 2022

www.alalay.co.uk