



FRIENDS OF ALALAY (SANTA CRUZ)

Registered charity no. 1123425

SUMMER 2026 NEWSLETTER

For those who have followed and supported our work for many years, you may recall how 36 years ago 19-year old Bolivian student Claudia Gonzales was walking to her university course when she saw some street children being chased by law enforcement officers. The smallest boy couldn't run fast enough and was left behind by the others. Claudia stopped and spoke to the child, named Joaquin, and thus started her life's work – offering street-connected children hope for a better future.

Edwin was another of the first children to be supported by Claudia. He had a passion for cooking and his skills were quickly noticed at Alalay, where he enjoyed cooking for the other children at the welcome centre. Alalay encouraged him to pursue a culinary vocational training course, from which he began working in the restaurants of some of the top hotels in La Paz, then Sao Paulo and London. Fluent in three languages, he became part of the team of chefs who helped redevelop the Savoy Hotel during its £220m refurbishment and met the Prince of Wales, now King Charles III, at its reopening in 2010. Edwin is still based in the UK, and after many years of hearing about each other, we were finally able to meet in person a few weeks ago. It felt deeply emotional and special to spend time together - sharing stories of his time pre- and post-Alalay and his hopes for himself, his family and Alalay. I especially enjoyed his stories about the children and adults he had met on his life journey.



Edwin



Edwin in the front row at the Savoy

Edwin has a unique, deep and spiritual way of thinking and being, and it is clear that this has been shaped by his story. He continues to be heavily involved in supporting Alalay, and last year developed and cooked a special collection of canapés for Alalay's 35th anniversary celebrations at the Spanish Embassy in La Paz. Edwin was invited to speak at the event, and told me how he'd been thrilled to spot Joaquin (the first Alalay child) in the audience from the stage – they shared a moment of joint recognition despite the fact that they hadn't seen each other since childhood! Hear Edwin and Claudia speaking more about his story [HERE](#) (English subtitles).

In other news, alongside supporting all our eldest children through vocational training and funding Darleny, one of our wonderful house parents, we have a vital refurbishment project which you, our amazing supporters, are also enabling

us to undertake. Alalay's work divides into Protection and Prevention programmes. Protection begins with street work, building relationships with street-connected children and inviting them into the Alalay family, giving them a home, education, food and love. The Prevention programme works with children "at risk" of turning to the streets, offering educational support if they are struggling at school and crucially offering them and their families training in effective communication, parenting and other life skills.



The Prevention House

In 2012 we refurbished the Prevention House and it hasn't had much investment since then! The Santa Cruz weather (very humid and tropical, followed by an intense rainy season) has not helped. Understandably, the house is currently in a very bad state and unusable. We are funding its full refurbishment, from repairing roofs to replacing broken windows. It will then house two teaching rooms for educational support and training, a library, and a room for group and individual therapy sessions to support more children and their families.

Annie Syrett-Jones, Bristol – August 2026

www.alalay.co.uk