

SNAP-SHOTS

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When having hope takes a special kind of courage...

Every year thousands of people are reported missing in Mexico. According to stats, roughly 120,000 people have been “forcibly disappeared” and never found again since records began in 1962. Many others go unreported. Over the years in ministry, we’ve had numerous encounters with families who’ve experienced, and are still experiencing, the ongoing trauma of losing a loved one to “disappearance.” It is said, the trauma of this kind of loss is unlike any other. Without closure and answers to questions, it leaves a person with prolonged unresolved grief, and takes an emotional toll beyond words. This week as we were working at our bodega, a familiar face entered through the door. Leti Bretado, a small, unassuming, but strong, courageous and (in our opinion), heroic lady, stopped by as she often does, on her way to sell candy at the local market. Over the years, we’ve watched Leti face some of the most challenging and heartbreaking trials in life, none the least of which was the “disappearance” of her 21 year old son Miguel, almost 5 years ago to the day now. Throughout the varying stages of ongoing grief, and the many unanswered questions, as well as her own battle with cancer, Leti’s hope, faith, and trust in God has always remained firmly steadfast, carrying her through the darkest days and bringing her to the point where she was eventually able to smile and laugh again. However, this week as she sat down at our table, it was obvious something was weighing heavily on her mind. Earlier she had received a phone call. The remains of several



A distraught mother searching for her daughter speaks with Hortencia in barrio Pedregal.

bodies had been discovered near the vicinity of Miguel’s disappearance. She would need to wait for an appointment in order to check the DNA samples. The news is bittersweet. On the one hand, it could finally mean closure for Leti and her family, enabling them to give Miguel a proper burial and move forward in their grief process. On the other hand, it would of course mean the end of any hope that he may still be alive.



Leti & Hortencia

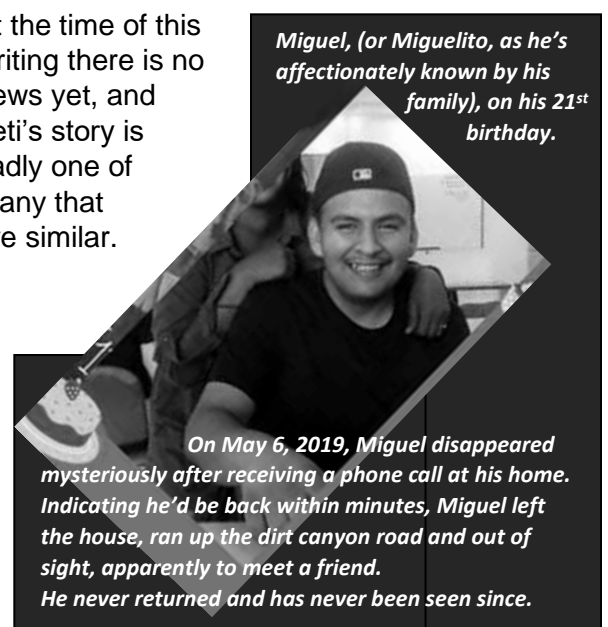
Above: Last year at a birthday celebration in our bodega. Leti and Hortencia share a close bond. Each have lost a young adult son.

Right: Leti (with her grandson), sharing with Hortencia this week.



At the time of this writing there is no news yet, and Leti’s story is sadly one of many that are similar.

Miguel, (or Miguelito, as he’s affectionately known by his family), on his 21st birthday.



On May 6, 2019, Miguel disappeared mysteriously after receiving a phone call at his home. Indicating he’d be back within minutes, Miguel left the house, ran up the dirt canyon road and out of sight, apparently to meet a friend. He never returned and has never been seen since.

We’re thankful to know Leti and ask that you please pray for her and all the families she represents. Whatever their situations, that they too would courageously reach out in their grief, to find strength in God’s love, comfort, hope, and His “peace that passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7) *Thank you!*

Find rest O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress; I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Psalm 62:5-7

"HIGHS AND LOWS" from this month.

STREET MINISTRY.... Twice this month V&O partnered with a group from a local church, (along with Hortencia's son David, who works full time in street ministry), to minister to the homeless in downtown Tijuana. Responses were very positive resulting in at least 8 people taking steps to make major changes in their spiritual and physical lives and admitting themselves into Aprovechando la Oportunidad (Seizing the Opportunity) Rehab Center. Please keep this ministry in your prayers!



David (who spent years living on the streets himself), reunites with a friend who afterwards admitted himself into the rehab.



David (center) talks with a homeless man.



Preparing to serve food.



GRACIAS!

David, (left) and Erik (right) taking two men to the rehab center.

SAD LOSSES... This month has been a tough one for our team, especially Noe, (V&O helper), who lost a second older brother to the insidious grip of the drug world, shot execution style, (as was his mother last year also). Hard to comprehend Noe's loss and that of his two younger brothers, (8 & 10). Please pray for them all and our team who are helping them.

Also another sad loss, resulting from a house fire. Three young kids left without their mom, Jessica (one of our V&O sewing ladies). Jessica died last week after 3 weeks in hospital. It's unsure where the kids will go yet. Please pray for them too.



Erik conducts the funeral service for Noe's brother Aron.



Left: Erik writes on Aron's headstone.

Below: Remains of Jessica's house.

Left: Hortencia with Noe & his grandma at Aron's grave.



Hortencia with 2 of Jessica's 3 children.

PRECIOUS KIDS! Kids are almost always the highlight of our ministry each month! Often dealing with difficult and tragic situations can take a physical and emotional toll. There is nothing like the joy, laughter and innocence of kids that can lighten our spirits!

As much as the kids we serve look forward to our ministry visits, we believe we look forward to them even more! We at V&O are blessed with the privilege of spending time with these precious kids who God often uses to minister to US!



THANK YOU for your important part in this ministry! Joyce, Philip, Hortencia, & Erik, on behalf of the V&O team & the people we serve together with you.

These awesome kids at Las Memorias (AIDS/HIV Hospice) entertained us with music and hamster tricks!