

# SNAP-SHOTS

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## REUNITED WITH ROBERTO

Roberto (21), was less than a year old when his mother Maria died of AIDS, leaving himself and big sister Diana, orphaned. Their father had died the year before, (AIDS also).

As Maria grew too sick to care for her children, a neighbor had called Hortencia asking for help. At the time, she, along with friend and co-worker Heather, (Spectrum ministries), and Pastor Von went to investigate the situation. Entering the small, disheveled shack, they saw little Roberto sitting on the floor while Maria lay on her bed looking down at her baby son. It was clear she was close to death.

With the help of a neighbor, Maria was bundled into Heather's car, accompanied by Hortencia with Roberto. It was a long drive across town for the four of them to an AIDS Hospice which had only just opened up in Tijuana at the time. Maria died there 4 days later.

Diana was taken into care by a relative, but Roberto who was HIV positive, was not so easily placed. Hortencia, who had promised Maria she would find a good home for him, was literally left "holding the baby."

Attempts to place Roberto in orphanages were unsuccessful, as places like Eunime, (orphanage for HIV positive kids), didn't exist back then, so Hortencia took Roberto home with her and prayed that God would provide a solution.

Roberto continued to live with Hortencia and her 4 sons for the next 4 years. Gradually he began to spend more time with Hortencia's babysitter Kuka, a kind lady who took care of him while Hortencia went to work, until eventually he lived with Kuka permanently, until her death in 2017.

Since then, Roberto has been somewhat on his own. Ostracized from a young age, (due to the stigma of HIV), he spent much time out of school and alone growing up. In fact, it seemed he began to prefer it that way. After Kuka's death he wanted to be independent and found odd jobs to support himself. He would rely on friends

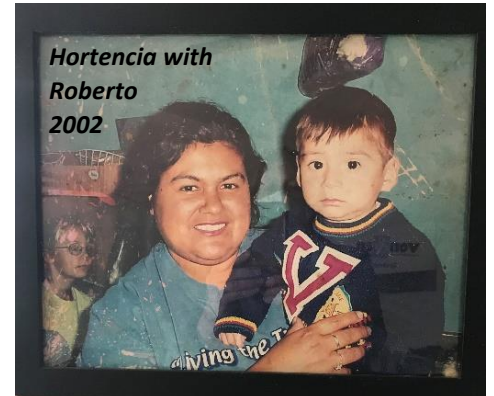
and acquaintances, (unfortunately, some who were not the best influence), for places to stay. It had been a while since Hortencia had heard from him when she received his phone call a few weeks ago.

Assuring her he was ok, but that he been injured and in hospital, Roberto told Hortencia where he was staying. The address he gave her brought her to the home and church of Pastor Carlos Castro and his wife Sharlene who had taken him in, a couple of months earlier.

Previous to that, Roberto had been coming along to one of their community outreaches, where he was also able to collect a food pack to take home each week. Although he had been working at a local taco stand, his earnings were minimal, not enough to pay rent, so he had been living in a makeshift hut on the edge of a property occupied by 'friends'.

When a police raid occurred at the house one night, it was assumed Roberto was also involved in the drug cartel activity that had been going on there. Despite his pleas of innocence, he was badly beaten and left for dead outside.

The next morning, he dragged himself to the taco stand where



Pastor Carlos, Sharlene, Hortencia and Roberto

he worked, and his employers called an ambulance. His injuries were severe, including a punctured lung, head wounds and internal damage requiring his hospitalization for 30 days.

Upon his release, Roberto returned to Pastor Carlos and Sharlene asking them for help again with food. Relieved to see him, (they had been concerned about his disappearance), but seeing the bad shape he was in, they offered him a temporary place to live in their Migrant Shelter, (which they opened up last year in their church). Through their loving care, teaching and encouragement, Roberto recently came to know and accept Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. Hallelujah!

Pastor Carlos and Sharlene have also been helping him to obtain his official ID and to gain access once again to medication he needs to keep his HIV under control. (He has been without it for the last 2 years).

A contact of Pastor Carlos has also offered him a job in a factory once he has his ID and doctor's clearance.

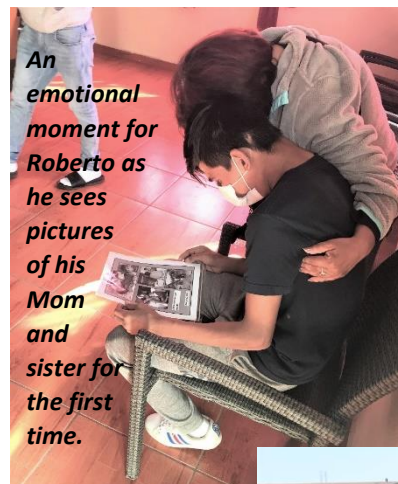
Below are some photos taken by Pastor Von 20 years ago. Some of you may remember them, as he shared Maria, Diana and Roberto's story back then. We know that people sent funds to help and that many prayed and continued to pray for Roberto as Pastor Von gave updates.

Given the loss, difficulties, rejection, hardships, and temptations Roberto has faced in his life, we know he could easily be in a very different place right now, or perhaps not even be here at all.

We want to thank each of you that may have prayed for him all those years ago and all of you who continue to pray for the many like him. We're most grateful to God for the great work Pastor Carlos, Sharlene and their church are doing to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the many God brings into their path.

Please keep them in your prayers also. May we all be encouraged by Roberto's story and as in the words of Pastor Von... May we never underestimate the power of prayer!

On behalf of us all working across the border, *Joyce, Philip and Hortencia.*



**Side note...**  
Pastor Carlos is also instrumental in a powerful prison ministry in TJ and beyond, (along with 4 other MX pastors). For more info you can visit their FB page... Siloh AC Sirviendo A Los Ppl.

We hope to be able to find Roberto's sister Diana and take him to the cemetery where his parents were buried soon.

**Right:**  
Roberto recited Psalms 1:1-6 before we left.



*...the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. James 5:16*