



FUNDACION RUACH

Fundacion Cristiana Comunitaria para Personas con Discapacidad

Ruach Newsletter 6: February 2019

The main theme of this Newsletter is the welfare of the 6 core members of the Ruach Community. At the end of November we welcomed Maria Helena (26) and Manuel (30), and this means that the Ruach Home is now a full house! Maria and Manuel are settling down well. The other four core members (Jonathan, Miguel, Daniel and Loyda) also keep making progress in their development.

The story of Maria Helena and Manuel's arrival

Meet Maria Helena and Manuel, pictured below with their father Napoleon in their family home before they joined the Ruach home, less than a fortnight after Astrid met with them for the first time.



Napoleon, Manuel and Maria Helena at the old home

This expansion of our family happened after an unusual 'quick delivery'. We had to skip the usual period of gradually getting to know each other, because Manuel and Maria's family lives in a hamlet in the deep interior of Rio San Juan. It took Astrid a full day to get there by bus, boat, bus again and finally the last leg for several hours on horseback. The first contact between the family and Ruach had taken place nearly a year earlier through aunt Anita, a sister of father Napoleon. But then a long period of silence followed, followed by a flurry of communication which resulted in a visit from aunt Anita and Napoleon only two months ago. As arranged they brought with them letters of recommendation from the local pastor and of the doctor. On the strength of these Astrid set off on her long and adventurous journey.

The visit went well, the family was very supportive and welcoming, so soon after Astrid's visit the Ruach Board decided to go ahead with accepting Manuel and Helena into the Ruach Home. Ruach had been searching for a while to fill the two remaining places in our home. And now we had met a sincere situation of real need. After the death of his wife, Napoleon found it hard to give his children the care they needed. So why would we not go ahead?

One week later Maria Helena and Manuel accompanied by their father arrived in our community home, welcomed by all of us and a festive meal of pizza and ice cream. Of course it is a challenge for every community member to get used to others in a way that does not disturb the peace and routines of the other core members. The first signs of their staying with us are very positive.

After two months...

After new residents arrive we observe them for a period of 6 weeks: What do they do? How do they do it? After a week we offer them small jobs and activities to see how they do these and what motivates them. This helps us to get to know them better. We maintain a detailed observation list which tells us more about their current level of development and the potential for improvement. We quote from the observation reports:

Manuel:

Relationship with the assistants: is good, he knows their names, albeit with problems of pronunciation; he is helpful in opening doors, carrying bags, sweeping the garden. He is affectionate both in giving and receiving; he expresses gratitude ("many many thanks"), enjoys singing, sometimes accompanying himself on the guitar; he enjoys a chat, although we do not always understand him,

and we hear him laughing at times. He enjoys the peace of being at the back of our garden, as he is not yet used to town noises which seems to bother him.

Relationship with other core members:

He helps his sister to dress and make her bed as he used to in his old home. He does not seek physical contact, but is affectionate when others approach him. He shakes their hand, calls them by their name. He is aware of others and is eager to help. For example: if the front door opens and Daniel wants to get out, he will grab Daniel's hand to stop him. He also checks that no one starts eating ahead of the signalled time. He enjoys shared times like e.g. singing together, eating at the table, and praying in the evening. He notices it when someone is absent and seems to miss the person.

What we need to work on with Manuel:

- Poor eye sight needs investigation
- His speech is often hard to understand
- He feels, by force of habit, too responsible for his sister

Maria Helena:

She is intellectually disabled and has a fairly strong visual impairment that affects her functioning. She finds it difficult to orientate herself if she does not know her surroundings. She is friendly, gentle and laughs a lot, but is passive and does not take initiative or initiate social contact, yet is happy if someone approaches her. She is aware of what's going on around her and she trusts other people and is open to receiving help. She expresses herself with a limited vocabulary, but not always in a clear way. She is slow in whatever she does, but has some learning ability. When we try out a new activity (drawing, a jigsaw, working with clay) she will concentrate on it for more than 30 minutes. After the death of her mother, her father left the daily care for her to her brother Manuel.

What we need to work on with Maria Helena:

- Poor eye sight needs investigation
- She arrived with an infection (sorted out!)
- Underweight, so we give her nutritious snacks. She gained weight after a month, but needs to gain more.

Progress of the other core members

In December Ruach's work over the past two years was externally assessed. The report praised the atmosphere and the quality of work in the Home. There is a sense of connectedness and security, and the good care for and stimulation of the core members has resulted in individual progress in their

functioning. In our stimulation work we are not afraid to try out different things to find out what works for each person. Our philosophy is that it's always wrong not to have tried.



Full house: the six core members, Astrid and the living-in home-care assistant are the the eight residents of the Ruach Home

Jonathan:

Jonathan (23) is Astrid's son, so he grew up in an environment in which he received ample stimulation. So it is no wonder that he is active, and is looking for things to do. His autism affects his social contacts and communication skills, and benefits from routine and clear structure that 'tells him' where he belongs. Frequent turnover in staff in the past two years has been difficult for him. Jonathan is very sensitive to the atmosphere around him and picks up signals of what is going on. New staff will rarely have experience with autism which makes getting to know Jonathan an intensive process of learning for them. But Jonathan is a good teacher! Staff working with him soon realize that they must stay calm and be creative. Adapting to change of environment, e.g. travelling to his former home in the Netherlands, can upset Jonathan's balance. After the Dutch trip he needed several months to find his equilibrium again. On the other hand, he has coped well with longer periods at Ruach on his own when his mother Astrid was away for several weeks. Jonathan seems to have found his place in the home, is appreciated by staff and he enjoys spending time with Daniel.

Daniel and Loyda:

Siblings Daniel and Loyda have been with us from the beginning of the community home, and have

since then done well. Before they joined us, they were malnourished, were used to sitting on the floor trapped in their own world, and gobbling up their food. We have been intensively working with them to make contact with others. They now respond to adapted and simple stimuli we provide. They are now toilet-trained, barring the odd accident. They do not express themselves verbally. We have to closely watch them to know what they need and to respond to that. We try to increase their understanding of language and to widen their limited vocabulary.

Loyda:

- has stopped putting most of her ring finger up her nose and does not lick her arms anymore the way a cat licks its paws.

- found it difficult to get from the curb onto the road, but now she can even get up and down the stairs using the banister.

- Her stamina is improving by the week, and she has learned to get in and out of a car.

- Her responses to others are still minimal, but she will look at people she knows if they appear in her field of vision.

- she is suffering from bladder infections.

Fortunately one of Ruach's well-wishers (god mother) is a doctor who is 'on her case' and has ordered further investigations



Intensive work to make contact with Daniel (foreground) and Loyda (back ground)

Daniel:

- In October Daniel had a period of talking loudly in his sleep, which kept his house mates awake. He got medication through a psychiatrist who also ordered an EEG to be taken, which required a trip to the capital Managua.

- He can walk up to us and give someone a caress, or put his arm around someone

- he is quite focused on what is happening around him.

Miguel:

- visits his mother every month for a weekend. It benefits him, although for a short period afterwards he can display difficult behaviour.

- enjoys going to the Activites Centre

- gets help with learning how to take a shower by himself

- has started to help staff hanging clothes on the line by holding up bag with clothes pegs

NEWSFLASHES

+ Ruach Foundation's new website:

Currently we are working on improving the content of our Spanish-English website

www.Fundacionruach.org. Have a look and let us know your ideas. Together we will make it into an appealing site.

+ Eric's 2nd Ruach run a PR success

Eric Jager, unofficial Ruach ambassador in the UK, ran his 32 km race for Ruach on 10th November around his home in Sherborne, UK. The event served the purpose of being a eye-catcher for the Global Giving fundraising campaign. But the event also got local attention from the Hidden Needs Trust which works for children with special education needs.

+ Astrid's visit to Sherborne, UK

Astrid will be travelling to the Netherlands in March. She will also hop across the Channel to visit Eric and his wife Rosaleen in the UK, and to give a slide-show talk for the Anglican Parish that has been supporting Ruach for the past three years. Her slide-show talk "*Improving the plight of intellectually disabled adults in Nicaragua; the remarkable story of establishing a community home for IDAs*" will centre around the three meanings of Ruach: spirit, breath and wind, and will take place on 19 March, 6:30–8pm; Upper Room, Digby Memorial Church Hall, Digby Road, Sherborne.

Donating is possible via:

1. Global Giving (in £, \$):

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/fundacionruach>, or:

2. Vivir Juntos (in €): www.vivirjuntos.nl

More information? Write an email to ruachjuigalpa@gmail.com

Your involvement means the world to us