



I can sing Weesy-Weesy Araña

By Hanna Stonelake | May 14, 2009

I have learned so much in the short time that I have been volunteering with Casa de Los Angeles. For example, I now know how to say, “don’t bite her” and sing ‘The Itsy-Bitsy Spider’ in Spanish. I came to Mexico hoping to learn little things like that, but also to get a better understanding of what it takes to make a community service organization work in a foreign country. I have been pleasantly surprised to find that I will be taking so much more than that away from my time here in San Miguel de Allende.

It’s easy to improve your Spanish speaking abilities when everyone is yelling, singing, and speaking it in front of you everyday. The kids are always teaching me new words, and I have to say that it’s humbling to have your pronunciation corrected by a two-year old, but even that in and of itself is a lesson in humility. Their teachers are patient enough to try to answer all of my questions, and kind enough not to laugh as I constantly say the wrong word or phrase.



In the five weeks that I have been with the daycare I have also managed to gain the trust of those that I work with everyday. I can see this in small ways, like how the kids will now seek me out to help them tie their shoes, or how their mothers have asked the teachers for my name and now make an effort to say hello and goodbye to me everyday. I wasn’t expecting it to be so difficult to feel like a member of the group, but the first few weeks of working directly with the kids were a huge wakeup call. I realized that trust really is earned rather than given, and that’s exactly as it should be.

What I really love about the daycare is that the best life lessons come in the smallest moments. The most important thing that I’ve learned while volunteering took place between two of the girls in my class and it really sums up what the daycare is all about. When one of the girls in my class was crying about a particularly nasty spill that she had just taken, her little friend walked over and silently sat down next to her. The two just sat there like that for a while like, and then the silent one pulled her sleeve over her hand and started to clean up the crying one’s tears. I was totally in awe of this display of nurturing from a two-year old, but not at all surprised, because they were doing a great job of illustrating what Casa de Los Angeles is all about. What these kids are learning here is not only how to take care of themselves, but also how to take care of each other. I am impressed day after day by how the daycare manages to stay running because of its community of dedicated people who are working together to make better lives for themselves.