

## Mission Trip Impact **Dispensas** by Bobbi Kinne

Rice, dry beans, noodles, oil, salt, sugar, coffee, tomato paste & flour - a package/bottle/can of each went into a plastic grocery bag and became a *dispensa* which more or less means "something you hand out". On Monday morning we packaged up 20 *dispensas* for the week's home visits. We had three work projects on our mission trip: building a roof, painting a house and home visits. Most of us rotated through the tasks but I speak some Spanish - which the elderly ladies really like - so I got to go on home visits every day.

As soon as the morning visitors to **The Door** were taken care of, we picked up 3 or 4 *dispensas* and walked down the dusty streets to some of the poorest homes in General Cepeda. First we visited Dona Marciannita, who was 90 years old and suffering from many painful ailments. Her youngest daughter lived with her and cared for her. When we first arrived there was quite a fuss. The two women were upset because they did not have seven nice chairs for their visitors to sit on (nice = won't tip over). We didn't care, but they did. Eventually we were all seated in her tiny kitchen and she told stories of caring for her family. Her husband had been an alcoholic so the burden of raising the family was mostly on her. Her gnarled hands bore witness to her life of hard work. She also told us about her childhood, of washing clothes in the river and running from the snakes. She said that her family had never had much as far as possessions, but they had always had food even though at times they caught and ate mice. Her mother cooked them with oregano and lime. The matter-of-fact way she said it had quite an impact on us. She wasn't telling us this to surprise or shock us or to get sympathy, it was just part of her story.

6 months ago her son left to look for work in one of the bigger towns and she hasn't heard from him since. She cried, because she was worried about him and missed him yet at the same time wondered if he had just abandoned her. She felt disloyal for doubting him, but it had happened to some of her friends. She hopes to see her son again before she dies.

Dona Marciannita was so pleased that we had come to visit, and so grateful for the *dispensa*. The food in it would feed her and her daughter for a long time. They needed the *dispensa*, yet as they went through the contents of the bag, they talked about which of the items they would share with their neighbor. We sang together, prayed together, then left, hugs, handshakes and kisses all around.

And on to the next one....

*Dispensa*

