



April 7, 2021 Report from Oblate Youth Ministry in Tijuana.

Each year the Oblates are able to provide roofs for many houses thanks to grants like the ones we receive from Serving Hands International. This year our engineer and previous youth group leader, Luis Zapeda, has been administering the program, lining up a crew and keeping the work site supplied with materials. Luis uses his own truck without charge. Last week he had to put in a clutch at his expense.



The roofs can help more than you may think. In addition to providing work for people that need some temporary employment a new roof can affect life stories. Here are a few examples.

Mrs. Elva Vargas is 35 years old and has 2 children. One child was about to enter university in December, but the whole family got COVID, so he was not able to. Elva was the most affected and was in bed for a whole month. Even now, she has lingering effects in her lungs and is easily fatigued. Her husband was not able to work for 3 weeks, which was another hardship. He works in a factory making only \$60 a week including overtime. Even during normal times this is not enough to support their family. Now they have the additional expense of internet and online classes so that the children can attend school remotely.



We met Elva and her family through the roofing project funded by Serving Hands International. With tears Elva explained why they are very grateful to receive a roof. First, because they have some help from Infonavit, other organizations have not been willing to help them. Infonavit is a program that employers pay for that in turn provides housing to their workers. The house only had one bedroom, however. When the family added a second room so the parents could sleep separately from the children, that roof leaked. The parents took the leaky room so the children would stay dry. She thinks the dampness in their bedroom has contributed to her extended illness. Maybe with a new roof the family can get back to health, and in July the son can try again to go to university.

Patricia is a wife and mother of three. One child, Kevin, is 11 and has autism. Before relocating



to Tijuana for better financial opportunities, Kevin was in a school and getting good treatment. The relocation has not gone well for them in part due to COVID; job opportunities are not good, programs for special needs children have been closed, and the air has not been healthy for their 9-year-old daughter, Esmeralda, who has sinusitis.

Esmeralda has had the sinus condition since she was a baby, and it sometimes even causes nose bleeds. However, since getting a new roof through the roofing program, they have

been able to control the dust and damp better and that has helped Esmeralda.

The husband works in a factory and gets only \$75 a week. They must pay for medicine for Kevin's epilepsy and land payments on top of the usual household expenses. The whole ordeal has caused family problems, and the husband has turned to alcohol. They live in neighborhood where his bad friends are also a problem. The wife is understanding, saying that he never misses work and gives her most of the money he earns. But money is not enough. She wishes he would help with the family because having a special needs child is very draining.



Our contact with them through the roofing project has led to offering them psychology services provided through the Oblates, and they have accepted. And given they have a dirt floor, keeping the floor and ceiling dry just helps everyone stay healthy and in a better mental state.



Angelica is part of the Oblate parish's Teachers Program, which focuses on training catechists how to be effective teachers. Angelica was given the opportunity to be the first presenter of the group, and it was her first time in front of a large group. She did such an amazing job that they want her to be part of a podcast on social media. Her major in college is Educational Psychology and her sponsors are Andy & Laurie Skippers. She explains that she was not able to get into a public university on her first attempt and cost of private schools was out of range. So, she had to wait a year and try again. She says persistence paid off.

