

Cochabamba, August 20, 2009

Dear Friends from Christ Church Cathedral,

My name is Neysa Guzmán, and I am part of the Kantuta House family in Villa Amistad. I am writing this letter to you with some help from my mama, and I hope that it finds you well. I want to use this opportunity to thank you who have decided to help me and my brothers and sisters.

I have lived in Villa Amistad since I was three-years-old, and have always been happy growing up here. Since I first arrived as a young girl, Kantuta House has been a beautiful place. My mama said that she was waiting for us and was overjoyed when we arrived. First came Diego, Marcelo, and Santiago. Then, I came with my sister, Maribel, Roly, María Antonieta, and Evelyn from Salomon Klein. A few days later, Noemí arrived alone, but we welcomed her into our family and took good care of her. Two months later, Alicia came to Kantuta House, crying all the time. But we were nice to her, and soon she began to like the house.

I lived with nine brothers and sisters and grew from how my mama taught us to be a family and form a loving house. The first thing she taught us was how to give thanks to God, because we were chosen from among many children to have the opportunity to live in Villa Amistad. We also prayed for the children who were not as lucky as us. And through Good Shepherd classes, we have learned that Jesus loves us and recognizes each one of us by name.

So, I entered pre-kindergarten classes at age four in the school "City of the Children" that is next to Villa Amistad. The director was an old man named Father Berta, and he looked like Moses with his big, long, white beard. I remember that I was so anxious to learn to read and write, because I would see how much fun my sister, Maribel, had with her books. All the while, we were growing up in Kantuta House, and what made me happiest was that our mama was different from those in other houses. She would spend time playing with us and helping us with our problems. And when we needed to talk, she would listen.

It was also a blessing to grow up in Kantuta House, because of Papa Ken and the many, many friends who cared about us. They fed and strengthened our faith in God with their prayers and visits. I remember how marvelous a moment it was when the first group arrived to our house. It was a group of about 10 youth who planted beautiful flowers with us, and we created a garden for the house. From that group, many came to be our prayer friends, and I am very grateful to have the friendship they have given me.

Most of my brothers and sisters have grown up and gone on to live in other places. Noemí, María Antonieta, and Evelyn live in San Miguel House with other teenage girls in the Villa. Marcelo and Santiago live in the boys' youth house. Maribel and Alicia are in the girls' youth house, and Diego is living independently. Although I do not have them in the House anymore, they always come back to visit us, and I like to have them around and listen to stories from their lives.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to address all of you who are important parts of my life, I thank you for your friendship and love toward the children,

adolescents, and young adults of the Amistad Mission. Thank you for sharing your lives with us and reflecting the love of Jesus.

Allow me also to send a warm greeting to the friends who have come to know Villa Amistad and Kantuta House: Walker, Woo, Trey, Sam, Lara, Gary and his son, Matthew, and daughter, Leslie, Devon, Jon, Eleanor and her group of friends, and so many, many more whose names I cannot remember right now but whose faces and kindness toward us I will never forget.

For my part, I continue to enjoy life in Kantuta House. New members have arrived, and we are showing them how God is the center of our lives (and at the center of our hearts). Although it can be difficult at times to teach them all the things that I have learned in Kantuta House, I am the oldest and try to help them grow just as I did.

With love and respect for all of the dear members of Christ Church Cathedral,

Neysa Guzmán Chávez

