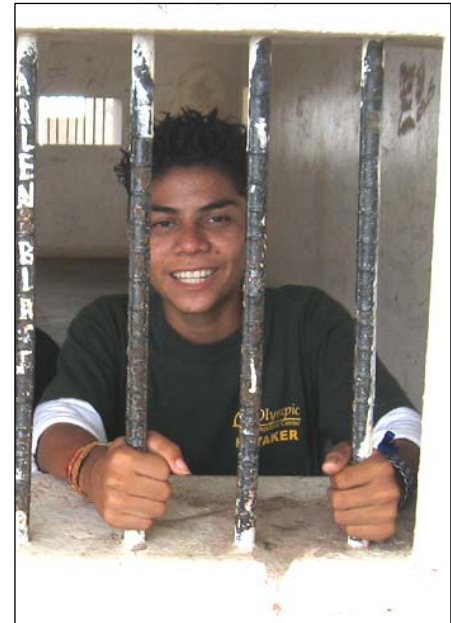


News from the Nicaraguan Street Kids Project – Managua & Ometepe Island – Fall 2007



Many faces, many lives



Here are just a few of the boys and young men who are part of *Sí a la Vida*. Over the past year, more than 70 youth have benefited from the project, either at the *Casa Nuevo Amanecer* center in Managua or at *Casa José María* on Ometepe Island, where they go for the second phase. Above, (clockwise from upper left), Luis and Erick celebrate finishing a friendship bracelet, a happy group poses for the camera, Ariel gets behind bars on a field trip to an old fortress, and the kids review their photos on the computer.

Read on for an update on the project and the impact of your donations on many young lives.

## Marvin Joel receives high school diploma, university scholarship



Marvin Joel Molina received his high school diploma in November, and in February will begin his university career in Managua where he will study accounting. Marvin is the second graduate of *Sí a la Vida* to make it to university and we awarded him a scholarship, made possible by our donors, to help make his dream a reality.

Marvin and his older brother ran away from home in the northern town of Estelí in 1999 and ended up in the streets of Managua. What began as a lark soon turned into a nightmare – so the boys, then 10 and 12 years old, were easily persuaded to enter *Sí a la Vida*. During a two-year stay they attended fourth and fifth grades, and were serious and well behaved. They returned to their family in late 2001, and Marvin continued his schooling. In 2006 he returned to Ometepe to serve for a year as *promotor*, or junior staff member,

at *Casa José María* – an honor and valuable experience for outstanding graduates of *Sí a la Vida* – and completed his junior year at the local *instituto* (high school). He returned to Estelí for his senior year of high school. We are proud of Marvin and his success in turning his life around. ¡Felicidades, Marvin!

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## Number of graduates grows

Since the founding of *Sí a la Vida* in 1994, more than 1,000 boys and young men have benefited from the program, including more than 200 who “graduated” from the program, either returning to their families or otherwise establishing a life off the streets. At right, some who graduated from *Sí a la Vida* in 2001 – 2005 gathered in September at a monthly meeting with other *reintegrados* in Managua. Half of them are still in school.



## Mariano remembered



The death of Ometepe staff member Mariano Lorío last April was a sad event for everyone at *Sí a la Vida*. Mariano began working at the project in 2000 as a laborer on construction of the first residential center, *Casa José María*. He advanced to the job of electrician and installed the electrical system in the new building.

Then, because he was highly dependable, he became night monitor and a substitute tutor, showing excellent skills and judgment in his work with the kids. In 2002 he became a full-time tutor, and in 2003 was promoted to assistant coordinator.

In September 2005 Mariano took over Jonathan Roise’s position as coordinator of *Casa José María*. Sadly, six weeks later he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. He underwent surgery and treatment, but never recovered. Hundreds of people attended

his burial, including all of the staff and kids of *Casa José María*. By unanimous decision of the *Sí a la Vida* Board of Directors, the new residence planned on Ometepe will be named *Casa Mariano*.

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## Highlights

### **Three more residents of *Casa José María* receive grade-school diplomas**

Justo Pastor Boza García, Roberto José Aviles and Ariel de Jesús Alemán received their diplomas in November in Altagracia. All were illiterate when they came to *Sí a la Vida*, and are beneficiaries of *Extra Edad*, the very successful accelerated primary education program in the Rubén Darío School.



### **2007 marks first time we have regular residents attending high school**

Four are finishing their *primer año* (freshman year), impressed by how tough it is compared to grade school. They were beneficiaries of *Extra Edad* in 2006, and their presence in the high school is testimony to the importance that *Sí a la Vida* places on education.



### **New building at the Managua center completed and occupied this year**

The two-story structure includes a multipurpose room for meetings, handicrafts and other activities. Upstairs are new offices for the coordinator and psychologist, a small medical clinic, and a bathroom for staff members. Three volunteers from the U.S. – Hal Seifert, assisted by Roy Randles and John Riess – built the offices and put the finishing touches on the long-delayed project. Financing came from the Austrian government and from the calendar project of Alice Mendoza's third grade class at Wilkes Elementary School on Bainbridge Island, Washington.



### **Ometepe center's resident *reggaeton* dance group much in demand**

The group performed at various cultural events on Ometepe during this past year, as well as for visiting parents and for delegations of visitors from around the world.



### **Have a friendship bracelet that is wearing out? Please support SALV kids**

Consider buying some new friendship bracelets, for yourself as well as your friends, kids and grandkids. Production of *pulseras* by the *Sí a la Vida* kids continues to grow, and designs are getting more intricate by the minute – and we now have a backlog. Aside from providing a great boost to the self-esteem and artistic talents of kids at *Sí a la Vida*, the friendship bracelets are their primary source of pocket money. Sales of the bracelets in the U.S. and other developed countries also make possible the purchase of all the school supplies and uniforms for residents and graduates of the program, as well as special field trips and recreational equipment. Please get in touch with Bob and Millie Royce if you want *pulseras*. Their contact information is listed near the end of the newsletter.



### **Long-term volunteers (six months or more) welcome at *Sí a la Vida***

Both the Managua and Ometepe centers welcome candidates who are at least 21 years old, fluent in Spanish and emotionally mature. Volunteers skilled in carpentry, gardening, animal husbandry, theatre and/or computers are especially valuable. A key current need is for a volunteer to organize and coordinate construction of a new residential center on the *Sí a la Vida* property on Ometepe Island. For more information, go to [www.asalv.org](http://www.asalv.org).

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## Reflections from Jonathan Roise, *Sí a la Vida* co-founder

and coordinator of *Casa José María*, the project's center on Ometepe Island



*Sí a la Vida* has chosen to work with the high risk and hard to serve. Donors frequently ask about how successful is the program in working with such a challenging population and whether any of the boys drop out. Following are some thoughts and responses to those questions about successes and failures.

*Sí a la Vida* generates many success stories, and it's rewarding to see this project make a difference in many young lives. However, not every story is a success. Given the population we work with – street kids from the poorest and least educated sectors of Nicaraguan society – the work of *Sí a la Vida* can also be frustrating. Despite our best efforts, there are times that a child does not want to leave the street, or goes back to the street, either soon after entering the program or after many months.

Why wouldn't a child living on the streets welcome this program, and stay with it?

For some, hopelessness is so pervasive that there is no motivation to change. For some the attraction of the streets is drugs. For others, it's freedom – on the streets, nobody tells you what to do or when to do it. Many kids adapt to street life. They learn how to snag a meal and which niche offers the most secure place to sleep. They enjoy public events (sneaking in if needed), roam the city (traveling “free” on the buses), and bond with other kids.

In *Casa Nuevo Amanecer*, our Managua center for *chavalos* recently arrived from the streets, some of these yet undisciplined and unstable children go back to the streets after a few days or a few weeks, although many return to try again, sometimes many times. One of our most successful kids at *Casa José María*, our Ometepe center for advanced youth, now finishing his first year of high school, spent two years bouncing back and forth between the streets and the center before finally deciding to stick it out. The problem is delicate: how to instill self-discipline and stability in kids who don't even know the meaning of the words, without infringing on their fragile sense of freedom and independence.

We save many but we can't save everyone. We have learned how to reach kids and offer them their first ray of hope. But there are kids who, in spite of our best efforts, are unreachable. . We are constantly seeking innovations and new techniques, and in the process learn as much from the kids and they learn from us. Over the years we have come to focus on kids who demonstrate motivation and readily respond to our efforts, but we remain conscious that the decision to change is the kid's, not ours. Our work is to strive to offer every kid the opportunity to change his life – and to support and celebrate those who do.

Approximately 75 percent of the boys stable enough to transfer from Managua to Ometepe “graduate” from *Sí a la Vida*, return to society and their families, and move forward with their lives, equipped with a new consciousness and an education.

Thank you for making this possible.

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# About *Sí a la Vida*

*Sí a la Vida* was founded in 1994 to rescue kids living on the streets of Managua. Many are runaways from very poor and troubled homes. Many are addicted to sniffing glue, which banishes hunger pangs.

The project strives to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate kids into their communities. *Sí a la Vida* has two centers: At *Casa Nuevo Amanecer* in Managua, about 30 boys receive care each year, with about 12 in residence at any time. After they unlearn the habits of street life, the boys go to our center on Ometepe Island, *Casa José María*, where the focus is on public schooling.

*Sí a la Vida* also provides the basics for survival (shelter, food, clothes, health care),

teaches responsibility, and offers opportunities to earn money.

The kids range in age from 8 to 16. The average stay is about 2.5 years. Each of our two centers has about six staff members as well as long-term volunteers. Annual expenses for *Sí a la Vida* total about \$85,000.

## Contacts for *Sí a la Vida*:

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***Sí a la Vida* – PFH PO Box 30191 Seattle, WA 98103-0191**

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

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My check -- payable to *Sí a la Vida* -- is enclosed for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Bill my credit card for \$\_\_\_\_\_. Visa MC

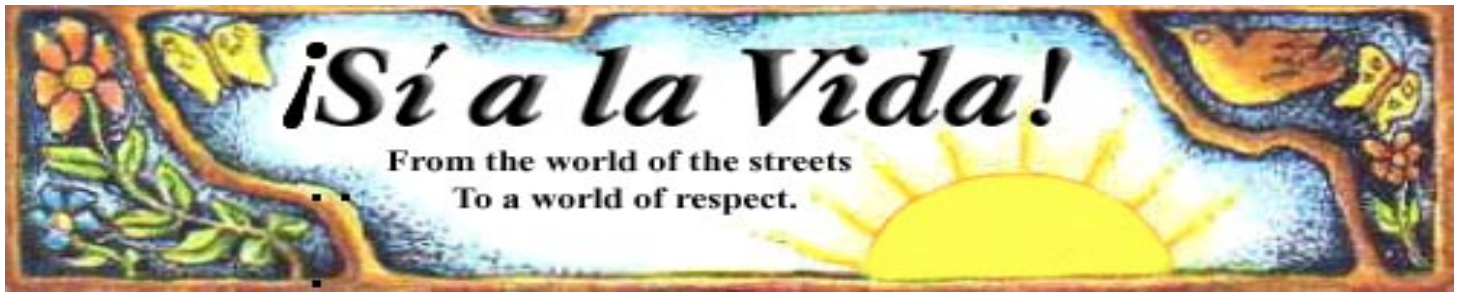
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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My employer/company matches my gift. Form enclosed (if applicable).

Contact me about a donation of stock. (Call John Riess, treasurer, 206-282-3858, for information).

All contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.



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- **About *Sí a la Vida*** — how a grass-roots project is giving many kids a brighter future

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