



# NEIGHBORHOOD MINISTRIES

June 2003



## Work In Progress Update

Dear Friends,

It is summer at The Neighborhood Center, my favorite time of year. Interns and summer staff are everywhere, prepping programs, scouring neighborhoods looking for kids, who have moved and are waiting to be found, to register for our programs. I Can Do It! incentive trips are leaving weekly – New York City, Washington, D.C., the mountains of Colorado, and the beach in San Diego. Junior High Kids Club is in full swing (our inaugural year). Following that will be the 17<sup>th</sup> year for regular Kids Club where we will welcome 600 kids. And that is just June....

The stories of interns, kids clubbers, and I Can Do It trip earners are miracles. They are the never finished work of building lives. A work in progress, like you and me. I want to introduce you to two “works in progress”. I know you will never forget meeting them.

### TONY NAVARETTE – Age 17 – Summer Intern

Tony is tall, good looking, and winsome. He comes to leadership naturally, bearing the load of others instinctively. Everyone remembers him, wants his help and seems to think we must be pretty special because we have him on board.

Tony started coming to “church” at the age of four. Now, he is “giving back” by serving as a summer intern. This is the way he tells it:

“This past school year was my first year being a leader at Kids Life and at Jr. High nights, the programs I was a part of growing up. A lot happened this year. I realized I could be used by the Lord to make an impact on someone else’s life. I was able to bond with my group of guys during the fall. The cool thing was, wherever my eleven kids and I went, we would always pray.



There was a particular kid who I got attached to. When I first saw him I knew God was going to use him. He has many distractions in his life, but if he puts God first he could become a strong leader in this group and ministry. When I first met his mom, she was troubled and wanted help. She is a single mother... who is raising three teenage boys. This was a defining moment for me and it made me realize God has me here for a reason. I told his mom I would do my best to work with her son. He and I would often go to the mountains and go hiking. When we reached the top, we had long conversations. We talked about our problems, and I gave him the best advice I had. We each share many similar life experiences, so it is easier for me to both relate to, and help him overcome the obstacles in his life.

For the first time I actually felt like I was making a difference in this world. One thing I was able to realize is that all my kids face many of the same struggles as I do. I don’t want any of my kids to go through what I went through, or what my close friends went through. This summer I am serving the Lord as an intern here. I will be learning more than I can imagine!”

--Tony

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## BLANCA CHAVEZ – Age 18 – I CAN DO IT Graduate

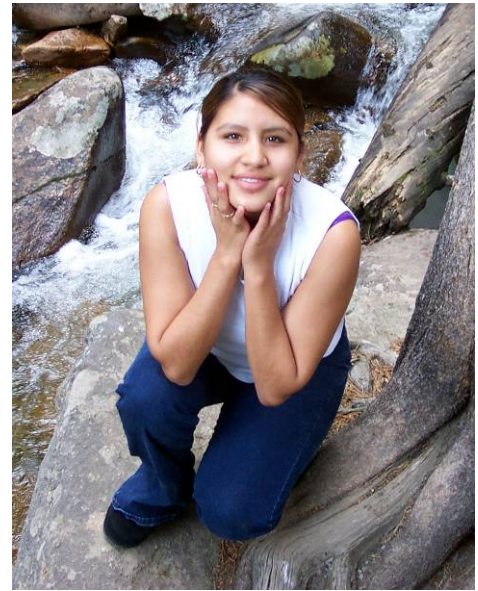
In a few days, Blanca will be the first I CAN DO IT kid to graduate from high school. Blanca has been a part of Neighborhood Ministries for most of her life, beginning around 3 years old. This beautiful teenager has seen more life already than most live in a lifetime. Her story is one of courage, stamina, and determination; one where the love of God continues to intervene.

“When I was young, my mom worked a lot and so I had to take care of my brothers and sisters. She wasn’t home very much and my dad was always drinking. My dad was abusive and because of that I grew up scared and hurt. I could never tell people what was going on. It was in Jr. High when I realized the abuse that had happened in my house affected more than just me. I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I began to use drugs, but luckily I realized that I was only hurting myself.

Though my life was crazy, church was always there. In high school I made the choice that I wanted a future, and so I tried hard and made good grades. I also had to deal with the sadness of losing a baby girl to premature death. No matter what choices I made, the people at church never gave up on me. One of the things that I have learned is that God forgives me and loves me even though I have made some of the choices I have. And I also learned that God wants me to forgive the same way he does.

I want to pay the church back one day and the people who have loved and supported me. They never left me even when I made bad choices. I am thankful they knew this – that no one is perfect and that they would be there to help me make right choices and to support me with the ones I made. When I learned of my graduation I couldn’t believe it. I should have been one to drop out. I didn’t have parents, I grew myself up, and I made my own choices to go to school with the strength God gave me. Now I am going to college, I want to be a nurse. I want all my friends to come to my graduation to see that they can do it – anybody can!”

– Blanca



Thank you all for the many ways your prayers, service, and financial giving continue to make God’s work in progress possible in lives like this.

Your financial support is needed during these critical summer months. We anticipate investing \$90,000 in our summer programs serving 900 opportunities for children. Enclosed is a return envelope for your convenience.

Watching miracles,

Kit

