

## GIHN Updates/Guest Reflection by

Andrea Yoder



Meet **Noemy and Miguel, and their three children, Maria, Miki and Adolfo**. This family moved into Interfaith last Fall (2008) and soon after Miguel found a job. In February of this year, they were able to move out of Interfaith and into a place of their own.

I remember very well the day they moved in, and the day they moved out. In between these two events, there are many, many memories of times spent with this family during their stay with us. There were some language issues although, for the most part, we got along very well. I tried to learn more Spanish by sitting with Noemy and Miguel and for fifteen minutes only speaking Spanish. I usually ran out of things I could say after two minutes!

I remember Noemy watching me knit and her asking if I could teach her to knit. Acknowledging that there was probably a better technique for knitting, I taught her my way. She picked it up very quickly. In the meantime, I had a friend try to teach me the “correct” way of knitting, but I couldn’t seem to wrap my brain around this technique. Then, several weeks later, Noemy came back from the host church one morning and said “look Andrea, look what I learned last night”, and just like that, she had learned to knit using a proper technique...the way I had struggled to learn and couldn’t. She found that very amusing!

I remember listening to Noemy’s life stories from Mexico, some funny, some sad. I remember Adolfo learning to crawl...poor thing. He really didn’t have a choice. When he began to show faint signs of being ready for this next step in his development, there were many people encouraging him and telling him to crawl while prompting him with many different techniques. Eventually, it appeared that he just decided to quickly learn to crawl so that people would leave him alone.

Then there was Noemy’s cooking...Oh my! She would start cooking and the house would fill with wonderful smells of Mexican food. I love Mexican food and Noemy would often share generously of the foods she was preparing. Everything she made was from “scratch” and we had many interesting conversations about making food from “scratch” versus buying food already prepared. It was quite interesting to hear her tell stories of when she first came to the United States and went grocery shopping.

I vividly recall when this family was getting ready to leave Interfaith and move into their own house. One day Noemy said to me that she was so happy and excited to be moving, but she felt uncertain about being too expressive because she was afraid I would feel bad thinking she didn’t want to be here anymore. I assured her that we all, in a good way, were thrilled they were moving out! She then talked about how deeply thankful and grateful they were for all that the host churches had done for them, and asked if she could write a letter to all the churches and put it in the next newsletter.

**Here is Noemy’s letter.**

**Para: Todas las iglesias y voluntarios**

**To: All the GIHN Host Churches and Volunteers**

“I just want to say ‘thank-you very much’ for all the help that you gave to me and my family. Being homeless is one of the hardest situations I have ever had in my whole life. Having to live with different people who come from different places and having to understand that we are all different but we still need to get along and live together, that was so hard.

As a mother, it’s so hard to explain how glad and blessed I felt that my kids had a safe place to stay and a hot meal every day. Thank you very much to all the churches and to all the volunteers that helped me, my family, and other families get back on our feet and recover hope. Thanks for helping me believe that this world still has good people, people who help at this time when even family and friends don’t want to help.

I learned many good and different things from many of the families I got to know during this time. It was really hard, the day to day, but now I can tell I am different and a new person for all the good and bad experiences I had during all the time I stayed here. My life has changed so much since then. Now, I find a nice place to live, my husband is working, and we have learned some money management skills to work better with our money so hopefully we don’t have this situation again. Being homeless was one of the hardest situations I ever had in my whole life, but I learned a lot of good things.

Thanks, everybody, for giving me and my family a place to lay our heads every night. Thanks for helping me to keep my family together and for all the delicious meals. God bless all the churches and volunteers. I will never forget all of you. **A todos ustedes nunca las olvidare.**

**Dios los bendiga.”**

Noemy and Adolfo stop by occasionally to visit as well as Miki and Maria if it’s after school. They are all doing very well, and enjoying being in their own house again. Miguel continues to work, the kids are doing well in school, Noemy and Miguel continue with their English classes and are now also enrolled in GED classes, and Noemy just reported that Miki wants to join Cub Scouts.

## **Our Host Churches**

**Assembly Mennonite**  
**Berkey Ave. Menn. Fellowship**  
**College Mennonite**  
**Clinton Frame Mennonite**  
**East Goshen Mennonite Church**  
**Faith Mennonite**  
**First United Methodist Church**  
**Goshen City Church of the Brethren**  
**North Goshen Mennonite**  
**Siloam Fellowship**  
**Silverwood Mennonite**  
**St. John the Evangelist Church**  
**St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox**  
**Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**Walnut Hill Mennonite**  
**Waterford Mennonite Church**  
**Yellow Creek Mennonite**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Street Mennonite**

again this fall and think about ways we could collaboratively work together. A couple of concrete ideas being discussed are future board education and fund raising methods.

The retreat was graciously funded from a Community Development Block Grant with some matching money from the Lilly Foundation.

## **Board Activities** by Steve Garboden

On March 7, the Goshen Interfaith Hospitality Network board joined directors from three other local boards for a joint retreat. The other boards were: The Center for Healing and Hope, The Goshen Housing Authority, and The Window. In total, 25 people participated in the retreat. The main purpose of the event was to interact with Kimberly Johnson of the Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network on the topic of becoming better at our jobs as board directors.

The GIHN Board took initiative to organize the education, since we have had a lot of new board members in the last few years. Having scheduled the event, we thought it would be good to invite some other boards to join us. A very positive side benefit for having multiple organizations together was that three of the boards have agreed to meet

## **GIHN Staff Members**

Tim Thorne, Executive Director  
Andrea Yoder, Site Supervisor  
Heather Miller, Case Manager

## **GIHN Board Members**

Gordon Dyck	Steve Garboden
Chris Gill	Leonard Harms
Greg Hartzler	Marcy Kisseberth
Kim Kurtz	Ken Mullet
Peter Salvesson	Sandra Schneider
Rose Shetler	Sheldon Swartz
Evelyn zumFelde	