

# Light and Life for María

**ICCM sponsorship** has truly brought *light* and *life* to 14 year old María in Paraguay! Today her beautiful smile and outgoing spirit give testimony to the marvelous ministry of our Free Methodist Light and Life Children's Home and Light and Life Christian School in the city of Encarnación.

Abandoned by their father at an early age, María and her three siblings found themselves in a desperate downward spiral. Their mother, who was suffering from lung cancer, had made the difficult decision to move to Argentina to find better work in order to support the family. María and her three siblings (2 brothers, 1 sister) were left in the care of their grandmother, who found it impossible to provide for their needs. Light and Life Children's Home opened their doors and hearts to the children, forever changing the course of their childhood and future.

The Lord, in His loving care for this dear family, quickly provided sponsors and the children were immediately enrolled in nearby Free Methodist Light and Life Christian School. They began to enjoy and deeply appreciate all that sponsorship offers. The physical, cognitive, emotional/social, and spiritual well-being of each child became priority.

Many positive influences helped each one move from darkness to light and from despair to life. Character building classes at school, a loving Christ-centered environment in their new home and caring Sunday school teachers at church, who

took a personal interest in their growth and development, all helped lead María and her siblings to faith in Jesus, which has made all the difference.

María's transformation is remarkable! No longer painfully shy, fearful or insecure, she is now a confident, happy, active 6<sup>th</sup> grader. A good student, she has a knack for sports and enjoys music. María's thankful heart for what God has done, and is doing, in her life leads her to enthusiastically bring friends to church so they too, can meet Jesus.



In October 2016, María's 32 year old mother succumbed to lung cancer in Argentina. The news of her death deeply affected María, who is the eldest. Through it all, María's testimony is a beautiful one: "God gives me the strength I need each day to move forward. He has great plans for my life!

Jeremiah 29:11 tells me so!"

Recently, Pastor Luz, Director of Light and Life Children's Home, took María to visit some of her relatives. Upon seeing the changes in María, the whole family decided to follow Jesus as well and experience His transformation for themselves.

The small seed of sponsorship is bearing great fruit in the lives of María, her siblings, and many other children in Paraguay and around the world.

## Light and Life Children's Home

- The home began with 10 children on January 6, 2003. It quickly grew to a group of 30, including some mothers.
- Currently, there are 17 children living at the children's home, the maximum number allowed according to current government regulations for the size of the building.
- Four of the 17 are orphans whose parents have died.
- The father of 4 siblings (a different group of siblings) is in jail for murdering their mother.
- They have begun adding a second floor for more bedrooms. They lack \$8,000 to finish remodeling to government standards so more children can be added. They feel a sense of urgency, having to now turn away children.



Gifts to help complete the expansion that would allow Light and Life Children's Home to accommodate more children may be sent to ICCM, or give to this need on the ICCM website. (Write **Light and Life PA** in the comments section or memo line.)

## Light and Life Christian School

- God gave school director Jonathan Da Cunha a vision for the city of Encarnación. There was only one Christian school in town at the time. Jonathan felt led of God to start Light and Life Free Methodist School with the vision of reaching families for Christ and providing the opportunity for academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment. The school opened in 2002, offering Pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Other grades were quickly added and 2011 marked the first high school graduation class. These graduates, many of whom go on to university, are finding marvelous ways to give back to the program that gave them a good start.
- Encarnación is a border town, central to commerce. In recent years, a major financial crisis drove away families in search of work. God has been faithful to sustain the school through hardships and challenges.



- The school ministers to many students from humble, single parent homes where it is difficult to make ends meet.
- Light and Life Christian School beautifully ministers to parents as well as students. Throughout the year, parenting classes, workshops and retreats are offered. Focus is on strengthening the parent-child bond, helping family members connect and relate well with each other, and assisting in their spiritual growth.
- The school seeks to be a light and bring life to the children and families of Encarnación.

This school is eligible to be a **Connected Community**. This new additional sponsorship model allows a church in the U.S. to come alongside as a partner to impact the lives of ICCM children. Contact ICCM Church Relations Director, Jen Finley, 1-800-342-5531 ext. 228, for information on connecting with them.