

Mission UpReach Newsletter

A story of hope: Damaris Ramirez

Damaris was nine when she was first sexually assaulted by her step-father. This detestable abuse continued until she finally left home at age 15. If you knew the now 24-year-old confident, expressive, and cheerful psychology student, it'd be hard to believe the years of abuse she suffered at the hands of a supposed trusted adult. She hasn't always been this way however. Her story involves years of pain, questions, and embarrassment during her road to recovery.

When asked how she has been able to overcome this trauma she wrote, "The truth is it's something I'm still working on. For a long time, I was angry with God trying to understand why he would allow this to happen to me. There are still days



when I'll have memories flood my brain and it can change my whole day. Thankfully, I've had a lot of professional help. Donna Waldron has been there in my most difficult days. Ever since I arrived at Dulce Refugio Donna has taught me that

there is hope and purpose and that I have value. Thanks to her, I'm the woman I am today."

Damaris always enjoyed attending church. As a little girl, Damaris can remember the excitement of getting ready for Sunday Mass with her then Catholic mother. When she left her house at 15, she stayed with a variety of neighbors, aunts, and uncles. Damaris was still interested in finding a church and began attending the Church of Christ with one of her uncles. A few years later, she decided to be baptized during one of the evangelistic campaigns and started becoming more involved in the church. Damaris credits her conversion as one of the many stepping stones that has helped her overcome her past. "Becoming a Christian has shown me the love that God has for me and the whole world. God wants us to love, help,



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and give hope to those who need it. I now view my past as an opportunity to be like Jesus and to help others who have gone through similar situations,” said Damaris.

Damaris was offered a spot in the “Dulce Refugio” house for young women when she was 18. The next year she was offered a job with Mission UpReach. Since 2013, Damaris has been an integral part of the DESEO team, teaching morals and values to thousands of kids across Western Honduras. She has been the Director of the DESEO tutoring program for the past two years and has also helped out with the basketball league. Damaris was even enrolled in a psychology

program at a local university.

With God opening a new door in her life, Damaris will be moving to the US with her North American fiancé Dakota Nowell. Damaris and Dakota started dating in 2017 after he completed his time in Adventures in Missions. They were engaged in 2018 and have been waiting for a K1 Visa so that they can be married in the US. This past week, the US Embassy approved their Visa petition after almost a year of waiting. February is our last month with both Dakota and Damaris and while we hate to see them go, we’re so excited for the plans that God has for them in the USA.

Damaris hopes to continue her education in psychology with plans to return to the mission field better



equipped to serve the children and adults affected by abuse. “I think that each one of us goes through different situations and difficulties but I want to say, God does not abandon us and he manifests himself in many ways. God may put us in a difficult situation for a purpose that we often do not understand, but we must always be persistent; if you fall, you get up and try again.”





MUR hosts annual Bible camp for children

Since 2014, Mission UpReach has offered children starting at age 8, the opportunity to experience Bible camp. With the initial help and direction of Ty Ford, director of Camp Deer Run in East Texas, and a handful of trained Deer Run Staff, MUR has successfully served hundreds of children over the past five years. This year was the first time that we decided to tackle this undertaking using only in-country direction and staff. Identifying and training Honduran staff, none of whom have ever experienced camp themselves, has been one of the biggest challenges. Understanding the importance of relationship building while instilling the love of Christ into the hearts of these children is vital to a successful program.

The year Caleb Gossett and Carlos Umaña co-directed the camp. 25 staff members worked with them to serve a total of 136 children over the two-week period. Many of these

children have never been away from home overnight, much less a full week away. A select few who are part of the first generation of campers, are now participating for their 5th year in a row. As the time grows near each year, the eagerness to sign up for and participate in camp grows. Now that the older children are 13 and 14 years old, the impact of the teachings is even greater. A desire to please God and serve him emerges in

the lives of these children.

We here at MUR consider it an honor and a privilege to offer Bible camp each year. Our dream is that it will continue to grow both in numbers of kids participating, as well as the numbers of weeks we can offer the camp. Our dream is to one day in the near future have our own facility and offer Bible camps and retreats year-round.





A note from Donna



In 2019, our plan is to highlight stories like Damaris's. We want you to experience a taste of what we get

to experience as we see God transform lives. When we get to be a small part of that story, we are humbled and reminded that although at times we feel discouraged and question our impact on others, God's power to use us is exponential.

On the family front, we are happy to announce that our son Harrison has been accepted for a tentative start date of March 11th in the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab in Chicago, IL. His initial acceptance is for 3 weeks of inpatient therapy and medication adjustments. Having been able to be with him for his evaluation there in November, we

feel so hopeful about the equipment and therapeutic approaches they offer. One example is the eye gaze technology that may open a whole new door of communication for Harrison. It thrills us and moves us to think that he can possibly more freely express himself. Being at Shirley Ryan will give him to opportunity to be tested to see if he qualifies for that technology as well as experience unique, state of the art equipment that will hopefully move him towards better mobility.

We ask that you continue to pray for all of us as we patiently wait on the Lord. He has been so good to us on this journey. Your support and prayers over the past 3.5 years have been so vital to our ability to continue to hope. Thank you!

2019 Brigade Season

January 5-12	VCOM	Medical
February 9-16	Surgical.....	General and ENT
February 16-19	Pine Tree	School sponsorship
February 23-March 2	Tusculum Church of Christ (TN)	Medical
March 9-16	Belton Church of Christ (TX)	Youth-VBS
March 16-23	Lipscomb University (TN)	Medical
May 18-25.....	Oklahoma State (OK)	Construction
June 1-8.....	Snellville Church of Christ	VBS
June 8-15	Pine Tree Church of Christ	Medical/VBS/Construction
June 15-22	University Church of Christ.....	Medical
June 22-29.....	Burnt Hickory Church of Christ	Medical/VBS/Construction
July 6-13.....	Lexington Church of Christ	Medical
July 20-27	University CofC Youth	VBS
July 20-27	Disciple Trips.....	VBS
July 27-August 3.....	Southside CofC (TX)	Medical
Sept. 28-Oct.5.....	Surgical.....	Orthopedic

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Other Giving

Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.

Please contact us:

Our mailing address is as follows:

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Please send all checks, donations and correspondence to this address.

You can correspond directly with Phil and Donna at:

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