

Yassaira's Hope

From the moment we met Yassaira in April of 2006, we knew that there was something special about her. As we heard more about her past we knew that God had great plans for her – although hearing that we thought she was someone special was not easy for her to accept.

Yassaira grew up in a very poor area near an old mining town named Siuna in the department of RAAN on the north-eastern side of Nicaragua. She had spent her life with various family members, without ever actually settling in. When we met Yassaira at the age of 13, she only had a small bag of personal belongings; however the emotional baggage that she carried with her was almost unbearable.

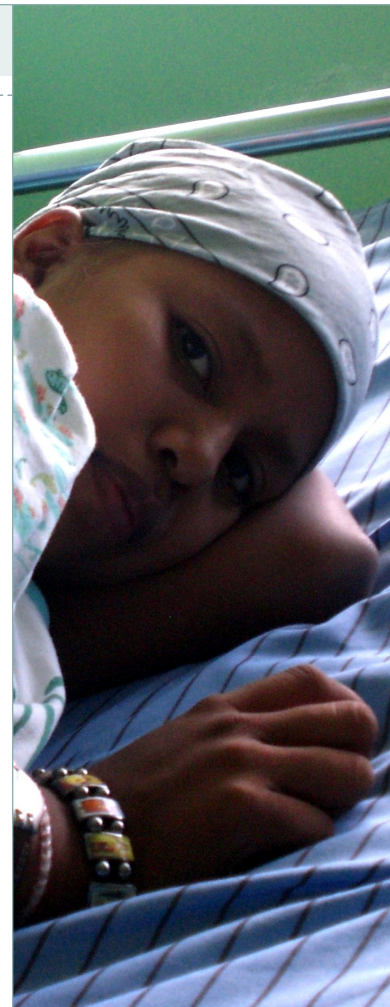
Whenever Yassaira spoke about her father there was a sparkle in her eyes. She loved him dearly and knew that he took care of her to the best of his abilities. Her father was murdered over a political matter when Yassaira was just seven years old. She had sat at her kitchen table with these men, not knowing what they were about to do, as they waited for her father to arrive home. Yassaira mourned this tragic loss throughout the rest of her life.

Shortly after her husband's death, Yassaira's mother married again, this time to a man who would cause even more tragedy in their lives. He abused Yassaira's mother and took control over her life. Sadly, Yassaira was also mistreated by this man, and she soon found herself without a home and nowhere to go. In the time that followed, Yassaira was sent from one family member's home to another. It is hard for us to imagine what Yassaira was going through as she continued to suffer through mistreatment and abuse. The only person who Yassaira felt truly cared about her was murdered, her mother chose her abusive husband instead of her own daughter, and as she moved from home to home, she only found more family members who didn't want her.

When Yassaira arrived at La Mascota Children's Hospital by ambulance in December 2005, she was alone and considered herself to be abandoned. At the age of 13 she had never attended school, had just been diagnosed with leukemia, and felt like she could not be more alone at the time that she needed someone the most.

From December to April, social workers in the hospital were able to set Yassaira up with sponsors who would allow Yassaira to stay in their homes between hospital stays and provide her with food and transportation to appointments – again she was moved from home to home without ever really settling in.

We were two missionaries from Canada, volunteering with PAN Missions, when we stopped to say good-bye to a friend who was visiting in her room. Within hours we were sharing a cot on the floor beside Yassaira's hospital bed.



We ended up staying in the hospital to care for Yassaira during the two weeks that she was admitted for an infection in her nose. It was a long and challenging two weeks. At first we wondered if Yassaira even wanted us there, but those two weeks ended up being the beginning of relationships that would continue to grow for another five years.

Later in 2006, Yassaira was placed in an orphanage that would become a more permanent home for her and she was finally able to settle in. Yassaira was able to attend – and excel – in school for the first time in her life; she made friends with the other girls who had experienced similar life situations, and for the first time since her father passed, Yassaira had positive role models to look up to.

Over the next few years Yassaira's faith grew rapidly and she herself was able to become a positive role model as she changed people's lives with her story. In Canada, as we received letters from Yassaira, we were ecstatic to see that she was able write these letters by herself. We couldn't stop sharing about the ways we were touched by this precious teenager. Her story was shared at a couple of different churches and Yassaira was even able to connect and become pen pals with a Canadian girl who was also inspired by her.

No matter where Yassaira moved to, we always kept in touch. For us, every visit to Nicaragua was a visit with Yassaira. When we weren't in Nicaragua, we were able to stay in touch with her over the phone and keep each other posted on what was happening in our lives. Throughout the years, Yassaira was in and out of the hospital; she contracted Hepatitis C from a contaminated blood transfusion and came close to death in October of 2007. Miraculously, Yassaira made it through and again we were amazed by her strength.

Unfortunately, Yassaira's health took a sudden turn for the worst in the beginning of September 2011. She was in and out of the hospital several times before she was admitted for one last time. Yassaira passed away on her 19th birthday, October 4th, 2011. Though we could not be there in person, we know that she was surrounded by the people who came to love her throughout her years in Managua. Yassaira's last day at La Mascota Hospital could not have been any more different from that day in December 2005 when she arrived at the hospital for the first time completely alone. We know and trust that she was at peace in the end, that she loved the Lord, and that she went to be with Him.

Looking back, we were able to see that Yassaira was blessed to be able to receive the treatment she needed right until the very end. Yassaira loved to help and always looked for ways to help those who were less fortunate. Her hope and our hope is that every child has the opportunity to get to their treatment and find the strength to get through their hardships.

We pray that Yassaira's Hope also becomes your hope. We pray that it will be the hope of the children and families receiving help through this program. Yassaira arrived at La Mascota Hospital with nobody by her side, and left this Earth with the most fulfilling love and wholeness that can ever be imagined. We want these children and their families to know that they are not alone. Yassaira gave us inspiration and strength. May your sponsored child bring you the very same.

*For more information on Yassaira's Hope, please contact Sally:
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