

Love Letter

A Newsletter for Friends of Arms of Love

Autumn 2017

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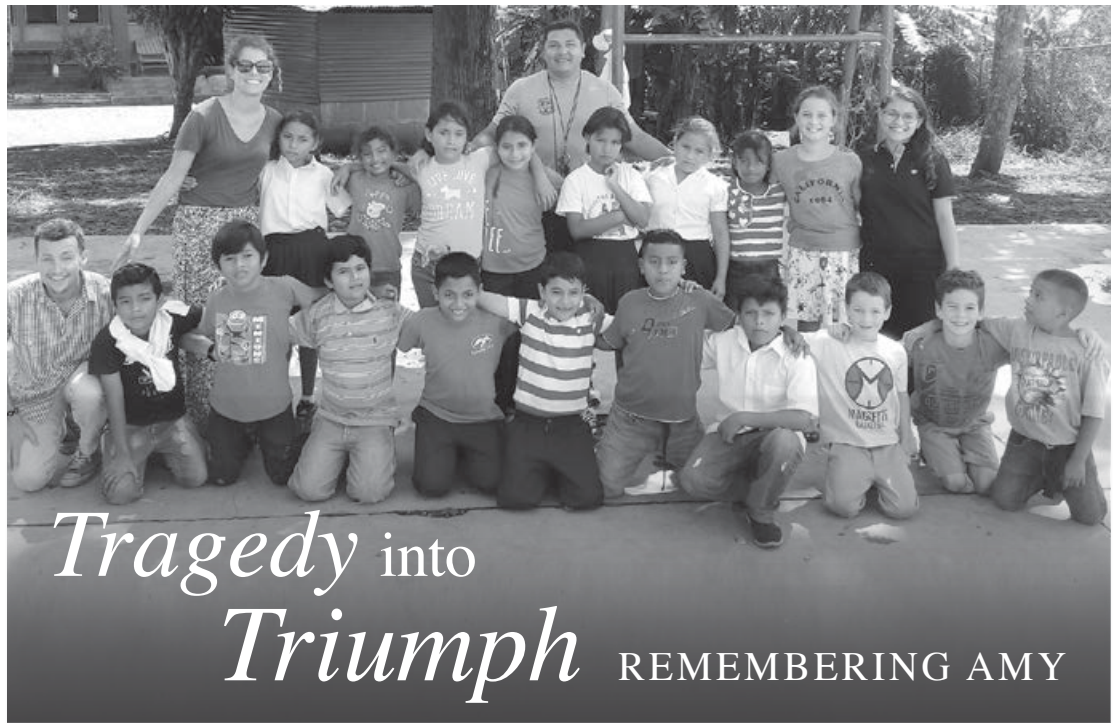
*I came that
they may have
life and have it
abundantly.*

— John 10:10



**Arms of Love
International**

2973 Harbor Blvd., #535, Costa Mesa CA 92626
(phone) 877.ARMSOFLOVE
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Tragedy into Triumph

REMEMBERING AMY



***God's redemption
is always
awe-inspiring.***

In 2001 sisters Kelly and Amy Christeson visited Nicaragua with their college youth group. Two years later, Amy returned with her college team including her boyfriend Tyson, who would later become her husband. For the sisters and Tyson, Arms of Love enthralled them, revealing “a place where God’s Kingdom was on the move, as orphans and children were loved and nourished.”

Ten years ago Amy’s life ended too soon in a car accident. The outpouring

of love for her husband and family overflowed to honor a beloved friend, mentor and role model. **Tyson stewarded those gifts to Arms of Love as a tribute to the woman who sacrificed her time and money to better the loves of those society pushes aside.**

This summer, Kelly, along with her husband Ryan and their four children, returned to Arms of Love. It wasn’t the Callaghan family’s original plan, but God’s threads of redemption were spinning away.

“An article in the travel section of the LA Times got us thinking about adventuring in Central America,” she

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tells. Arms of Love wasn't on the radar until, "it came into my mind in the middle of the night. I didn't remember the connection to my sister, only that I'd loved it there decades ago, and wanted to return with my family."

She reached out to Arms of Love, and the plans to go back to Nicaragua were set in motion. When she told her mom of their plans, her mom reminded her that Tyson had been sponsoring an Arms of Love child in her sister's honor for the past decade.

On the day that would have been Amy's 36th birthday, Kelly and family were again in Nicaragua, a place that captured Amy's heart. In fact, the boy Tyson sponsored so many years ago, Ronny, is now 21 years old and served as the family's translator during their trip.

"My children didn't know my sister well enough," Kelly laments. **"But by being with the children at Arms of Love my children got to know their aunt. Her heart pulsed for the vulnerable, especially children, and those in Central America. But I never dreamed God would bring us back here in such a tangible connection to my sister."**

Kelly and Ryan, along with Mary,



Kelly and her family were part of another chapter in Amy's redemptive story.

Aubrey, James and Declan, connected to our Nicaraguan family in special ways. Hosting family dinners with small groups of children from Arms of Love was a favorite way. The Callaghan children helped to address, color, and deliver personal invitations. Then each evening, a different group would join them for dinner, games, and more!

The journey to Nicaragua was full of adventure, and all the beauty and challenge that comes with it. Getting clothes off the clothesline before the afternoon thundershowers and sleeping to the sounds of geckos are etched into their memories. The hardest part, Kelly recalls, was saying goodbye to the community and resident children of Arms of Love, each of whom revealed God's love to the Callaghans.

Back in California, the

stark contrast of home life and rural Nicaragua reminds them of what's important in life. And the Callaghan children especially will carry a special deposit wherever life takes them.

Amy's loved ones said goodbye too soon, but redemption continues as friends and family honor her in ways only God can weave together. Unbeknownst to Kelly and family, Amy's college friends created an amazing Facebook fundraiser in her memory to support the Arms of Love children. Amy's family learned of these plans only as final preparations were being made for Kelly and Ryan's trip . . . and the college friends had no idea that the trip was even happening! Fittingly, there was a special surprise for everyone.

The ripple of Amy's life, like a perfect stone skipped into an unending lake, never quite ends. ♥



Arms of Love would like to share our extreme gratitude with Amy's family and friends. We are honored beyond words to be a part of her incredible legacy.

A Family Effort — *Together We Can Do More*

Sometimes we all need someone to lean on. Our family loves to answer that call whenever and however we can. In 2015, Nicaraguan Social Services placed a boy named Ishmael with us. He lived with us for about a year. We even found a child sponsor for him. But when the government finished its investigation Ishmael was returned to his father, Edmundo. Luckily, there was a neighborhood program that helped provide food and schooling.

In the spring of 2016 staff began seeing Ishmael frequently selling peanuts in the streets and grew concerned. While searching the streets for him our staff came upon a boy named Melqui, who just happened to be Ishmael's brother. Melqui took our staff to his father, who quickly shared that he desperately needed help. It turned out that Ishmael was actually doing well, but Melqui had many health issues and was unable to attend

school. By that evening, Melqui was enrolled in our Community Development Program.

Arms of Love designed this neighborhood program to come alongside families that need support. Often we find very caring and committed parents that are just overwhelmed by their circumstances. This father fit that description. Edmundo loved his boys, but he is elderly and in poor health. He was doing the best he could, but poverty was suffocating his family and his kids were suffering.

Things have improved and both Ishmael, 10, and Melqui, 14, are doing well. Melqui is finally in school and taking supplemental training in welding. We were also able to provide the medical treatment he needed, and along with stable nourishment from our program, Melqui is on an entirely

Our Community Development Program has constructed walls, latrines, bathrooms, and homes transforming the lives of 88 neighbors to-date. Thank you church partners and program donors!



We are so thankful for our 2017 service teams and partners! The projects and activities blessed the Arms of Love family immensely.

- Vogel Family Team
- Reach Church: Rockwall
- Colorado State University
- Merkey Minnesota Pharmacy Team
- Church by the Glades
- The Rock Church
- Lake Charles Vineyard
- Palo Alto Vineyard
- Friendship Church
- Global Orphan Foundation
- Callaghan Family
- World Race
- Arms of Love Philippines Team
- Extreme Response

Thank You!

WON'T YOU JOIN THE FUN?

You're invited to visit us in Nicaragua and the Philippines in 2018.

volunteer@armsoflove.org

A Family Effort — *Together We Can Do More*

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

different life path. Additionally, we have been able to offer employment opportunities to Edmundo, even further stabilizing the family.

Unfortunately, after nearly a year, there was still a big problem. Their home was not safe or healthy. It was made of tree trunks, rusted zinc, and a dirt floor. There was no shower, and the outhouse hole was almost full. Through our program's formal process, the family was selected to receive a new home. This project was completed through our generous partner Church by the Glades in June 2017. Today the family has a solid home with cement floors, a shower, and even a new outhouse.

This was the 7th home built through our Community Development Program in partnership with visiting church service teams.

It's a beautiful picture of a comprehensive model of care.



Edmundo, and his sons Ishmael and Melqui, are grateful for the home your generous support provided.

Arms of Love wants to break the cycle of poverty in sustainable ways, protecting children and empowering new opportunities however we can. Sometimes a parent needs someone to lean on. Every situation looks different, but if we can help a child reach his or her God-given potential . . . we're all in. And as long as the need persists, we will too.

Thank you for partnering with us to change lives!

We Miss You Randy!

Randy Pepito, Executive Director in the Philippines, went to be with our heavenly Father after experiencing cardiac arrest. He was compassionate, creative, generous, fun, kind-hearted, and most of all, **LOVING** to all. Randy served as a father, grandfather, leader, mentor, and spiritual director to the children and staff of Arms of Love. He will be greatly missed.



GIVE BY MAIL. SEND YOUR GIFT TO:

 2973 Harbor Blvd., #535,
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

GIVE SECURELY ONLINE:

 Visit us at www.ArmsOfLove.org
to put your gift to work right away!

GET INVOLVED AND VOLUNTEER:

 Learn about serving on our website or
email us: volunteer@armsoflove.org

DETACH AND RETURN WITH YOUR GIFT

My gift to help *bless the lives of children* today!

Yes! I want to help protect, feed, educate, and empower children through the life-changing programs at Arms of Love.

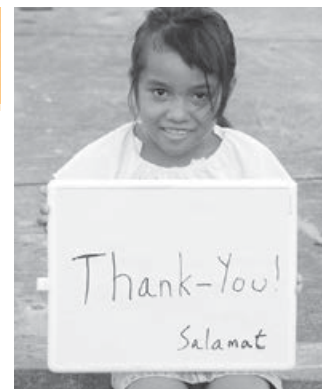
- \$35 to support a child** in need of a sponsor for 1 month
- \$350 to care for 10 children** in need of sponsors for 1 month
- \$_____ Community Development & Sustainability Efforts
- \$_____ Crisis Response / Where Needed Most
- Yes!** Please increase my monthly donation by this much \$_____

- I would like to make a monthly commitment of \$_____ to sponsor a child.
- Nicaragua Philippines

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____



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