

# HEART TO HEART

The latest news from *Connecting Hearts Ministry*, a ministry of Chapel Hill Christian School

## A Life Transformed: An Interview With Alvaro Cano

**How old were you when you first learned that you had a sponsorship?**  
I was six years old and I was in Kindergarten at the Amigos School.

**What did the sponsorship mean to you at that time?**

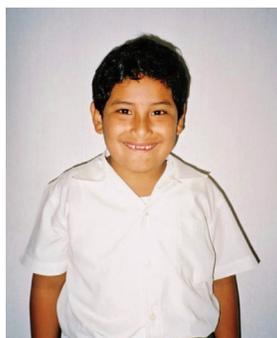
The first thing I thought of when Danna told me I was going to be sponsored was the gifts that I would receive from my sponsor. I was excited about that. I still remember my first gift. It was a yellow Chapel Hill Christian School t-shirt and a set of hot wheel cars.

**When did you realize that your sponsorship was more than just receiving gifts?**

I realized this when I was ten years old. I can remember my parents struggling with their finances. That is when I knew how important it was to have a sponsorship.

**I know that you faced many challenges growing up. Can you share what some of those were?**

As a child, I had issues in elementary school because I was chubby. My classmates would make fun of me and tease me. It was really hard. When I was 13 years-old and in seventh grade, my problems got worse. My parents were struggling in their marriage and my dad decided to leave the house. It was a hard time in my life, because I didn't understand.



Alvaro in Kindergarten

**What did that mean for your family?**

When my dad left the house, he stopped giving money to our family. My mom was left to provide for my little sister and me.

**When did you get your first job?**

When I was 13, I worked selling women's clothing on the street to help provide for my family. Then I got a job in the mornings because I studied in junior high in the afternoons. I would get up at 5:00 a.m. to leave for work and get home at noon. I started school at 1:00 p.m. God has been really faithful and He has always brought great people into my life. My boss

would allow me to only work mornings because he knew that I studied. He would even pay for my transportation to get to work.

**So, how did your life change with this new responsibility to be the man of the house and help your family?**

I became more responsible and was always looking for ways to work to provide for my family. It made me grow and mature faster.

**Tell me about your ninth grade year.**

I wasn't doing well at the Amigos School in ninth grade. It was the hardest time in my life. I had a lot of hate because of the things that happened to me when my dad left. I remember starting school in ninth grade and everyone was talking about what they did for their vacations. I was mad because my family was struggling, and I had to work during vacations. I started to get bad grades and at the end of the year, my sponsorship was taken away. But, Danna called me in January as my tenth grade year was starting and told me that she wanted to give me a second chance.

**How did God help you during this time?**

God showed me the importance of forgiveness. I needed to forgive my dad. God also showed me that everything that has happened to me is part of a bigger plan. It has made me into the man that I am today. I don't believe that I would be the same person if those things didn't happen.

**What did you study in high school?**

Elementary school teaching. My first teaching job was at the Amigos School as a third grade teacher. Later, I taught sixth grade, and in the afternoons I worked part time as a math and physics teacher.

**What moment in high school impacted your life the most?**

It was in my last year of high school, during my first trip to La Tinta. Connecting Hearts Ministry takes the high school students on a missions trip to La Tinta. I remember the first day there; I was walking around feeling like I had no purpose. I was there, but not really there. On the second day, God touched my heart and I remember feeling that I belonged in La Tinta. It was the most important moment in my life. To be there and see the kids walking around the school made me feel that I discovered my call in life. I wanted to help others. By the time that I returned home, I was in love with La Tinta.



Alvaro's first trip to La Tinta

**What are you currently studying in college?**  
Civil Engineering

**Why did you choose this profession?**

I discovered my ministry and what I wanted to do while in La Tinta. I prayed and asked God what my purpose was. God put in my mind and heart that one day my ministry would be to build houses for people. Coming home, I said, "I know what I am going to study. One day I am going to help people and build houses in my country."

**What does it mean to have a sponsorship now that you are older?**

Now I see it from a different point of view. When I look at it from an education point, it is a huge opportunity that many people here don't have. It is an opportunity to be able to go to the schools where I have studied, to grow and become a professional, to have a good job, and to provide for my family.

But for me, it's much more than that. It is a life change, because you don't get just an education, you get so much more. The sponsorship really changes the perspective you have on life. Sponsorship has been the best because it has taught

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Alvaro serving in La Tinta

# Redefining Our Everyday Words by Kelly Eckard

As I reflect on my recent return from Guatemala, I can't help but be overwhelmed by the deep impact this trip can make in such a short time. This was my second trip to Guatemala, five years apart from each other. The first trip, I was accompanied by my two older daughters and the second, by my current sixth-grade daughter. Deep from a momma's heart, there are no words to reflect the genuine transformation Guatemala can make on you and your family.

In each of these experiences my take-away remains the same; the Lord clearly redefined some of my common, everyday words. The word JOY took on new meaning when I consistently looked down to find countless new hands clasped in mine as we went about our day teaching, playing, or attempting to break the language barrier. Guatemalans are truly exceptional at expressing a deep sense of love, acceptance, and worth to those that they spend time with. You can't help but know that it was "God's immeasurable joy" each time you witnessed a precious smile, felt a warm embrace, or joined in on the constant laughter.



Kelly and McKenna visiting the home of their sponsored student, Alexandra

I re-evaluated the word GRATITUDE. American culture says "thanks" often, but I witnessed a deeper sense of commitment to this word from the Guatemalan people. Studies show that gratitude can improve our health and our relationships, to which I felt both beyond measure. A moment that shaped this word for me so clearly was when a woman that I had just given children's vitamins to shared that her husband had passed away four months ago. She was left to raise their seven children on her own, and one of those children was currently ill. Her gratitude was met with tears from all of us as we listened to the immediate need of those vitamins. I then found myself expressing my own gratitude to the Lord for allowing me to be a small part of that story. Each person showed such a deep appreciation, certainly for the gifts that were brought (school supplies, uniforms, vitamins, etc.), but more importantly, for dedicating our time and our love to them.



Kelly teaching English to the older students at the Amigos School while playing "Guess Who?"

Through these redefined words of joy and gratitude, the word RELATIONSHIP was changed for me as well. I'm in awe of how the Guatemalan culture makes each person feel valued as you walk into a room, as you converse with them, and then again as you leave a room. In all circumstances, there is a feeling of being treasured. Deep, meaningful, genuine relationships were forever formed.

I leaned into God's Word before, during, and after my trip. Verses that brought me peace as I walked through this experience were...

Before: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

During: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

After: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

I love how full my heart feels when I think back to the ways Connecting Hearts has provided each of us this priceless opportunity to be God's hands and feet in a different culture. I can't help but feel what I experienced is one step closer to what heaven will be like. My prayer is that if the seed has been planted in your heart to be a disciple in this manner, you may recognize God's calling. May you begin now to water and feed that seedling so that it may grow and blossom for you and your child and that you, too, may have an opportunity to redefine some of our everyday words.

## Alvaro Interview continued

me how to give. When I went to La Tinta, our t-shirts said, "We give by grace that which we have received by grace." I think that sums up what the ministry does. I have received help, and now I want to give this same opportunity to other kids.

**Why do you give back to Connecting Hearts Ministry and why is it important to go to La Tinta and help the ministry?**

Going to La Tinta is a reminder of what God has for me when I start to lose my path, my purpose in life, or when I forget where I came from and where I am going. My favorite parable in the Bible is that of the ten lepers. Jesus healed all ten, but only one of them came back to say "thank you." I believe that "thank you" is not just a word, but needs to be an action. An action that can show what God has done in my life; an action that can show the change that Connecting Hearts has made in my life. My desire is to live for others, share my testimony, and maybe, just maybe, I could change the life of someone else. God spoke to my heart with a worship song called, "So Will I." My favorite part of this song says, "If you gave your life to love them, so will I."

## DID YOU KNOW?

♥ Around 50 Spanish books were donated to Connecting Hearts Ministry through the CHCS Book Fair at both campuses. These books will bless and enrich the lives of many children in Guatemala.

♥ Delight Ministries, a women's ministry of Kent State University, joined with

Connecting Hearts Ministry in the fall to collect school supplies for our students at the San Marcos School. These are the only supplies the students will have for the entire school year.



The students in La Tinta love to receive their school supplies.

♥ God has continued His provision for the building project in La Tinta. Three sides of the protective wall around the San Marcos School are now completed. Twelve thousand dollars is needed to complete the final phase. The spring missions projects at CHCS will raise money to help finish this portion of the wall.



...From One Heart  
to Another

## CONNECTING HEARTS MINISTRY

A MINISTRY OF CHAPEL HILL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

1630 Killian Rd., Akron, OH 44312  
330-896-0852

chm@chapelhillchristianschool.org  
connectingheartsmintistry.net