

## Report No. 5 from Alto Cayma - 7 Apr 19

### Alejandrina

I've recently come across one of those stories that inspire me so, stories that come from some truly extraordinary people that I occasionally encounter even here in Alto Cayma. This is Alejandrina. She looks like any average



teenager, but she's actually 22 years old, and her mere presence, standing here at my side, is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

Alejandrina was born in Cusco, and was one of 7 siblings, 3 older and 3 younger than she. **Major Blow No. 1** in Alejandrina's life came when her father pulled up stakes, abandoned his wife and 7 children, and severed all contact with the family. Shortly after that came **Major Blow No. 2**. When Alejandrina was just 7 years old, her mother died. Not only was Alejandrina then left to grow up without a mother, but losing her at such an early age, she doesn't even have many memories of her mother.

Having lost both parents, the kids continued growing up under the care of their oldest siblings. Then came **Major Blow No. 3**. 5 years ago,

when Alejandrina was 17 years old, her oldest brother, Luis, was killed in an accident. Just 2 years later came **Major Blow No. 4**, when her oldest sister, Yanet, also died. And on top of that, Alejandrina's last older sibling, her sister, Ilaria, got married and moved away, leaving Alejandrina in charge of her 3 younger siblings. The only good part of all this is that this series of tragedies has served to unite the surviving siblings even more, and they support each other unconditionally.

So, what was Alejandrina's childhood like, growing up under these circumstances? To begin with, her early childhood was spent in a village in Cusco province, in a pristine natural environment. Her people were simple farmers, who planted and harvested crops and kept animals. When their mother died, all the kids were still young, and felt completely abandoned. But before she died, their mother had talked to her older brothers about her children. After she died, her friends looked after the children for the first few days, until their Uncle Pablo could arrange to move them to Arequipa to live. At first, they felt strange, living in the city, when they were used to living alone in the country. Also, the kids spoke only Quechua, and it took them a year and 4 months to master Spanish well enough to be able to go to school.

Alejandrina and her younger sister, Dina, started 1st grade when Alejandrina was already 9 years old (3 years behind). She applied herself to her studies, and by the first and second years of high school, she was occupying 2nd place in her class. By her third year in high school, she was in charge of all her younger siblings, and she had to work Saturdays and Sundays to bring money home to support the family. By her fourth year (of 5) in high school, she realized that she was 19 years old, and that her contemporaries were already studying for their careers in the university or in institutes, but she had her responsibilities to attend to, so she just buckled down and concentrated on working and finishing high school. When she finished her fifth and final year, she was pleased to graduate in 3rd place in her class. All through high school, she worked weekends in a restaurant, and since they also didn't have any money for family outings, her only recreation was to play soccer in the park by her house. She had no time for social life outside the family.

Despite all that she has had to endure, Alejandrina describes herself today as intelligent, cheerful, charitable, sensitive and down-to-earth, with



good values. She loves to help the elderly, and her siblings are her life. They see in her an example to follow.

In 2018, right after finishing high school, Alejandrina took a short (1 year) course in sewing, and that's what she's working at now, but it's not what she wants to do with the rest of her life. She took this lowest of all educational options in order to allow her younger sister, Dina, to study to enter the National University, which she has just accomplished. Raising her own sights, this year Alejandrina started a 3-year technical course in the Instituto del Sur (one of the best in Arequipa) to become an official tourguide. In a desperate attempt to seek support for her studies, she traveled to Cusco and tracked down her father, whom she hadn't seen or heard from since he abandoned the family those many years ago. She found him living with a woman with whom he has fathered another 7 kids, and he refused to give Alejandrina any help whatsoever. This was a bitter disappointment for her, but as we've seen, Alejandrina isn't one to be stopped.

Alejandrina has a dream for the future. She's passed through some very hard times, but she's determined to finish her studies so she can have a career that she enjoys. She loves to speak English, French and Portuguese, and ever since she was a child, she's enjoyed learning about new places, with their different histories, climates, etc. She would someday like to have her own small travel agency. But first, she has to complete her studies.

It's expensive to study in a private institute, but if she can get help with the tuition and fees, she'll gladly work to pay for her own support, for her transportation to and from the institute, for the field trips her course requires, and for all the other miscellaneous costs she might incur. The support she needs for her tuition and fees amounts to \$170 a month. Is there anyone out there who would like to take this opportunity to completely change the direction of Alejandrina's life over the course of 3 years? If so, please write to me (hintzes3@aol.com) and we'll discuss how to proceed.

## **Kaizen**

On Saturday morning, our ASAC Directors had another training session with Kaizen. Alfonso, their lead consultant, led us through an



interesting exercise to determine the diversity of personality types we have within our Directors' group. I turned out to be the only one identifying strongly with the rational (blue) quadrant, trying to balance the biggest cluster, which was the emotional (red) quadrant diagonally across from me. Victor had sole possession of the organized and action-oriented (green) quadrant, balancing the second-greatest cluster in the creative (yellow) quadrant. This photo shows who falls in the red and yellow quadrants. You



could say that either Victor and I have our work cut out for us, or all those ladies do, depending on your point of view.

We in the ASAC pride ourselves on our hospitality, and whenever Kaizen comes to our location for training, we always invite them to lunch.



They have become like family.

Kaizen continues proposing additional efforts, and most of them are things I've wanted to do for a long time, but never could find the time. With their help, we can get these things done. Fortunately, they have bought into the work we do to serve Alto Cayma, and offer us their services at around 20% the price they charge their large commercial clients. Otherwise we wouldn't be able to afford to do these things.

### **Acercádonos Children's Meetings**

On Saturday afternoon, we had 2 sessions to meet with all the children and their parents in Acercádonos. We now hold separate sessions for those age 11 and below and those age 12 and up.

We were lead in prayer by Father George, one of the Maltese priests



who has replaced Padre Pedro as parish priest, and in whose Pastoral Center we now hold our meetings.

We had a talk on Dental Health given by final-year dental students



from the Catholic University, after which Briza waded in and asked a lot of



questions, to reinforce the points which were made in the presentation.

## **The Guardería (Child Care Center)**

We learned this week that the Charlotte Rotary Club has given us a second grant this year to cover half the cost of the things we need to provide equipment for the kitchen/dining room of the Guardería. They had earlier



approved a grant to purchase the equipment needed for the Child Care Center itself. We are very grateful for all their generous support.

## **Mujeres con Esperanza**

We're busy cleaning up all the details we can in our new building, and getting ready for the grand Inauguration event, with the naming sponsors present, next Saturday, April 13. Full details will be included in next week's report.

## **Luxury, Alto Cayma Style**

And finally, here's another sure sign that "civilization" is reaching Alto Cayma. Nowadays, if you and your buddies have hot dates lined up for Saturday night, you can impress the girls by hiring the Bug Limo to take you



wherever you want to go. As the old saying goes, "It just doesn't get any better than this!"

"Love God, Serve Neighbor/Serving Alto Cayma",

Jim