



The children are excited as they return to school. I caught up with them at various schools last week and inspected each cafeteria. As usual, my visit was unannounced and as I inspected the cafeterias, food and worker there were no disappointments (as usual). Food was safely stored. The food preparation areas and the dining halls were clean and the meals were great. One of the great pleasures in my life is sitting down at a table of hungry children and

sampling their meal.

The weekly menu was posted and there was plenty of egg, juice, milk, vegetable, chicken and tortillas. Many of the poor children only have beans, rice and tortilla at home. The variety and quality of these meals make the children anxious to go to school.

For those not familiar with this program, let me fill you in. Paper Houses Across the Border and Giving Hope Worldwide partner with the parents and teachers to provide free meals to thousands of school children in the colonias of Mexico. We've built cafeterias and provided stoves, refrigerators, pots, pans and everything that you might imagine that is needed for a school cafeteria. The parents of the children are trained and certified by the state of Coahuila, Mexico as cooks. Their training included the safe handling and storage of food, proper cleaning techniques and meal preparation. The state of Coahuila sells us the ingredients at a subsidized cost and delivers fresh ingredients every two weeks. The end result is that children no longer arrive at school 'too hungry to concentrate' and test scores are up.



This is a true partnership with the people in the colonias. The volunteer cooks arrive at 5 AM to begin cooking. Teachers bring the students in groups to the cafeteria and supervise the children. (Teachers also rearranged their class schedules so we could feed the children. Prior to this meal program, the entire school received a 20 -minute recess). The volunteers clean the cafeteria, wash the dishes and leave the place sparkling.