

Life Link Children's Homes

Alfredo's Story

Orphaned, alone, living on the streets, begging for food. Alfredo was looking for a place to perhaps obtain a meal and a safe place to sleep for the night. Too many near misses with the street gangs had him anxious and sleep deprived. He was after all, only 9 years old. He had been living on the streets for 3 long years. Lonely, afraid. Too frightened to even cry. He could not show any weakness, not in this neighborhood! It could be fatal.

Turning down a dusty alley, Alfredo saw a boy playing a game with a soccer ball and joined him. When his new friend was called into the house for dinner, Alfredo was left outside, again. Having nowhere to go, Alfredo decided to sleep by his new friend's gate. Somehow, it just felt safe to be there. About midnight, his friend's mother, Jane, had come out to check the security gate. There she saw Alfredo sleeping on the cold concrete stoop.

"Go home." Jane ordered, shaking him awake. "I don't have a home. I will just sleep here for tonight and leave tomorrow," Alfredo answered. Moved with compassion, Jane invited Alfredo to spend the night in her home. She put a plate of food in front of him. As Alfredo ravenously devoured the food, Jane began to question Alfredo so that he poured out the story of his miserable plight.

A loving mother, Jane began to look for a solution. A friend told her about Pastor, Rully Taculod, and his wife, Ome. They took children into their home. Appropriately named Peacemaker's Home, year after year, child after child; the Taculod's heart for children continually stretched to take in "just one more." Alfredo was taken into that large and happy home. The other children readily accepted this new "brother." Having never been to school, Alfredo plunged in to his classes with joy and turned out to be quite bright with a future that might even include college.

For five years, Alfredo made his home with his new Mama and Papa and his brothers and sisters, some natural Taculod's and some adopted as he. Life was good. The nightmares of having lived on the streets were all but gone. Alfredo felt safe, loved.

One afternoon Alfredo was going to a new neighborhood to a school friend's party. One of the young men at the party told Alfredo, "Your real mother is not dead! I know her and I can take you to her. It is not far from here." Foolishly, Alfredo believed him and got into his car.

That one mistake was all the kidnapper needed. After riding for several hours, Alfredo was put in a boat and taken to what seemed like an island off the mainland. There he was unbound and pushed into a small room. "Welcome to your new home," he was told with a harsh laugh. And so his nightmare began.



Alfredo was in a fishing village where abducted children were used as deep divers. On one breath of air, they were required to dive deep down the reef to bring up oysters, clams or whatever sea sponges or creatures they could grab. If they drown, no one cared. Other children could be captured to take their place.

Three years, three tortuous years of near drowning, little food, no education. Alfredo was still praying every day. "Please God! Help me escape!" " Help me get home to my family!" And then one day the unbelievable happened! A way of escape! Alfredo found out he was actually on the end of a peninsula! He did not need a boat to escape! Miraculously he was able to get on a bus, then a jeepney to Peacemaker's Home.

As he stood outside the door, he hesitated. It had been three years with no contact. He had only the clothes on his back. Would they take him back? Had the family moved on and forgotten about him? Had he escaped to only find that he would once more be forced to live on the streets? Alone and forsaken?

As Omee opened the door and saw Alfredo, she began to weep! Here in front of her eyes was the answer to their prayers! Alfredo was home! Daily, the family had been praying for Alfredo's return! They had never stopped loving him or longing for him! The "child of their hearts" was received with hugs and kisses and a great celebration! The lamb that was lost had been returned!

Alfredo, now 17, is back at school. He has many years of study to make up. He needs healing from the abuse he suffered at the fishing village. He is making a new start in life.

Pastors Omee and Rully have taken in other children while Alfredo was gone. They are also in school. When their house was destroyed in a flood, they moved all the kids and themselves into 4 rooms at their church. Rully and Omee sleep in a portion of the attic that they have converted into a bedroom by putting plywood on the joists to make a floor.

They are also still pastoring a church and overseeing other churches around the Philippines. Helping with afterschool feeding programs. Continually reaching out to help the helpless and unwanted. For \$10,000, we can build a second story onto the portion of the church where they live and create a home for them and the children. Bedrooms, a living room, a dining area, all places we take for granted are luxuries for which they pray.

A fund has been started by a Life Link partner in Angola, NY to accomplish this goal. So far, she has raised \$1500 by selling gold jewelry, having a garage sale and just asking for donations. **What can you do?** **100%** of anything you designate towards the Peacemaker's Home will be sent to this cause. Just indicate on the enclosed envelope "Peacemakers" and I will know it is for the home.

Do it for Alfredo, do it for the many children who are currently living with the Taculod's and for the children who will yet be given a home, hope and the happiness of a loving family.

Thank you!
God bless!

Together for the Children, *Connie*



Photo includes past and present residents.