

Sponsorship: A Dream Come True

Five-year-old Evelin Perez loves to sing. When she has free time, she likes to play with dolls or join her friends in hide and seek. In short, Evelin likes to do the kind of things most five-year-olds enjoy. But her life is extremely different than the lives of the five-year-olds you likely know.

Evelin lives with her parents and younger brother in a poor community near the city of Sonsonate, El Salvador. The family originally lived in a small adobe house but, like so many Salvadoran families, their home was destroyed in the earthquakes that devastated much of the country in 2001.

On the site where their house stood, they now dwell in a makeshift structure of wood, tin, cardboard and other materials they were able to obtain at little or no cost. Since Evelin's mother, Martha, stays home with her young children, the family's only source of income is the small salary her husband, Oscar, makes as an automotive mechanic's apprentice.

Martha explains the challenges of the family's living situation: "When it rains, we usually get wet," she says, "and we have problems with getting drinking water here." These circumstances leave the family vulnerable to sickness and disease.

Evelin's situation is challenging. But fortunately she is registered at Compassion El Salvador's Heraldos del Rey Child Development Center (ES-743). And thanks to a young woman named Amy who lives in Florida, Evelin's

circumstances are not hopeless. Amy is a Compassion sponsor. Evelin's presence at the center is possible because Amy in Florida sends a monthly sponsorship contribution especially for the little girl.

At Heraldos del Rey, Evelin — along with close to 200 other impoverished children — receives life-changing care and opportunities. Offering instruction, guidance and the love of God to the children who attend the center, the dedicated staff is making every effort to release them from the spiritual, economic, social and physical poverty that plagues their lives. These workers are the hands and feet for people like Amy who want to make it possible for children in need to break free from poverty's vicious cycle and dream of the future. Martha Perez talks about how she felt when Evelin was registered into Compassion's program and received Amy as her sponsor. "I thanked God," she says. "I felt very happy when I realized that someone was interested in helping and loving my daughter."

Because of the health concerns she has for her family, Martha is especially grateful that Evelin's sponsorship provides her with an affordable way to receive medical care. She is also hopeful as she considers all the possibilities for her daughter's future. "When she grows up, there are a number of things I envision

for Evelin. Number one, I want her to be a good Christian and I would love to see her doing ministry somewhere. I also hope she might have a professional career. But most of all, I want her to still be following God when she's grown."

Evelin is just one child out of more than 13,500 children Compassion serves in El Salvador and there are over 500,000 others around the world — not to mention millions more that Compassion has not reached yet. Watching Evelin play outside the structure she calls home, you can see she is an important reminder of the incredible need for Compassion's ministry to children. But her mother believes she is also a reason to not lose faith and to anticipate the future. "I know that God certainly will help us through Compassion," Martha says. "This is a dream come true for our lives."

