Division 8's Silvestre Flores Spreads Holiday Cheer in Mexico

By LISA HUYNH

(Nov. 26, 2002) Metro Bus Operator Silvestre Flores of West Valley Division 8 is not only a father and a church leader, he is a volunteer who feeds the homeless as well.

Flores and his family visit homeless shelters in Mexico once a month to donate food and other necessities.

"There are five homeless shelters all over Mexico, but my family and I visit the shelter in Tijuana more often," says Flores.

West Valley Division 8 Operator Silvestre Flores helps provide for the homeless of Mexico.

That particular shelter serves about 200 men from Mexico, Cuba, South America, the Caribbean Islands, Indonesia and Iraq.

Flores and his family started donating necessities to homeless shelters in Mexico in 1998.

Idea for volunteers

A year later, he and his friend Hector Nari, who died in September, came up with an idea to get people from their church to become volunteers.

Flores asked the priest at his church, Holy Rosary Church, if they would help donate money and food to the homeless shelter.

Soon after that, Flores formed a group from his church called "Friends of the Migrants." The group raises money by selling authentic Mexican food – tamales, enchiladas and nachos – once a month at the church.

This month, they raised more than $1,300.

"This wasn't much for us because we usually raise between $1,600 to $2,000," says Flores.

Necessities of life

With the money, they buy canned goods, pastas, grains, fruits, vegetables and other necessities like toilet paper, toothpaste, clothes, sheets and blankets.

Once Flores and his family buy all the supplies, they drive to the homeless shelter in Tijuana and drop off the food. They also stay for the weekend and cook for the migrants.

They plan to visit the shelter this weekend, just in time for Thanksgiving.

"It makes me feel great doing this," says Flores. "Every time I see a person smile, it brings tears to my eyes knowing that I was able to make them happy."

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