

CHILD of the month

By Rich Petersen

Juan Antonio Galaviz Vaca



Bright and smiling, this is two-year old Juan Antonio Galaviz Vaca who lives in San Antonio with his parents and one older brother. Mom María Guadalupe has to stay at home with her younger son; dad Gonzalo is a gardener.

Our child this month was born with West Syndrome, a fairly rare epileptic disorder that presents itself in the first year of a child's life. Sometimes known as "infantile spasms," the syndrome has no known cure (yet but hopefully in future) but can be controlled with anti-seizure medications.

Little Juan Antonio also has tuberous sclerosis (a side effect if you will of West Syndrome), another fairly rare genetic disorder that causes non-malignant tumors to grow in the brain and on other vital organs such as the kidneys, heart, eyes, lungs and skin.

Now while all of the above may seem a little depressing, when this little guy and his mother were present at the last monthly meeting of Niños Incapacitados, his demeanor and attention were remarkable. One of our members who is a pediatrician remarked that Juan Antonio will in all likelihood have a better outcome due to the love and care of his family. They have been diligent in taking him to neurology consults at the Hospital Civil in Guadalajara, and he has undergone several CT scans. He is due for an EKG and EEG within the next month in order to monitor his progress. Niños Incapacitados is pleased to be able to help the family with these expenses as well as with his monthly medications.

Juan Antonio cannot yet walk but he is learning to crawl and can now pull himself up into his bed and onto chairs in the living room. With his condition, speech has been slow to develop but he can say “Mamá” and Papá” and interacts well with his brother and his cousins. Mom says he likes to listen to music and moves to the beat—a good sign. He’s also very fond of cartoons on television, but his favorite pastime is playing with a toy ambulance he got for Christmas. He has learned to open and close the doors for a “patient” and to play with the stethoscope and other toy equipment. Mom and Dad read stories to him, but so far his attention span is very short and he won’t sit still for long.

If you would like to meet other children being helped by Niños Incapacitados, please attend our regular monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month in one of the meeting rooms at the Hotel Real de Chapala in La Floresta. Coffee and cookies at 10:00, meeting at 10:30. You will learn how you can volunteer in many different ways and how your monetary support helps so much to assist needy families whose children suffer from a chronic and/or debilitating illness or condition.