



**Name:** Sharon Wilcox

**Location:** Ecuador

**My call:** To show God’s love in action to people with learning disabilities

**My role:** To teach life skills that enable people to become independent, valued members of their community

**Dear friends,**

I hope that you all had the chance to enjoy the summer. I was grateful to God for his provision of a flight to the UK on 24 August, giving me the opportunity to be home for four weeks. The weather was still warm and sunny although it soon got cooler. Apologies for not getting to visit people. It was a short trip to help a friend, and visit my mother who had been unwell. I also had the “pleasure” of donning a 70’s style outfit, for my godson’s 18th fancy dress birthday party! (I drew the line at a curly wig, but there is photographic evidence, somewhere, of bell bottomed trousers and platform shoes.)

We had managed to keep my visit a secret, so it was quite a surprise for him. A pleasant one I am glad to say. I also got to go conker picking with my nephew, although I don’t think he will have mentioned it to his friends – he is 18! I confess it was me who wanted the conkers, not him.

Since my last update we had a

visit in July from Bishop Henry Scriven, CMS mission director for Latin America. He came as part of his farewell tour of South America as he is retiring shortly. He was able to visit the projects he saw four years ago: the Orphaid’s Orphanage, LIAT school and Women’s Project (run by Blanca and Rodrigo), as well as be introduced to my new programme and to see where Lydia and Mark Tresize are going to set up their project.

I know people appreciated having the opportunity to say “goodbye”, and to thank Henry for his and CMS’s support. Lydia and Mark are still waiting to start their project, due to necessary reliance on Ecuadorian timing to get things done.

Just after this, we received a visit from a father and son who were told about what we are doing by a family member who attends the church where we are based.



*Top: Bishop Henry says “goodbye” (he is third from the right)*

*Above: The team*





*Top left: Paul teaching us how to make a fruit salad*

*Top right: Making strawberry milkshakes*

The son, Paul, is 25 and has mild learning difficulties. After about an hour, he decided that he would like to join us. So he started the following day. I really felt that this was confirmation from God that I am doing what he has planned for me. At 25, Paul is an adult and it would not have been possible to take him on the programme at the Life in Abundance Trust as he is too old. As the song goes, "God is good all the time...". Paul says that his ambition is to be a chef. He loves to cook and to talk about all things culinary all of the time. I believe that with the right amount of help and support he will achieve that goal so watch this space! He also says that he wishes his dad would have more confidence in him, and allow him to help him in his woodcarving workshop. Just after telling me that, however, he managed to cut his finger chopping a tomato!

As a child Paul appeared to be developing normally until he was five. His parents noticed that one of his feet was starting to turn on its side (something that was

never corrected). He went for tests, but nothing was diagnosed. He attended school until he was 15, but his parents noticed that he was slower than others. His teachers just accused him of being lazy. His parents decided to take him out of school and took him for tests in Quito where he was diagnosed as having hydrocephaly (water on the brain). Following successful treatment, he remained at home with his mum and I think that is where his love of cooking has come from, watching her every day and helping. Now he has the chance to continue learning and to follow his dream. He and Cristian have started to become friends and catch the bus home together after classes, as they live on the same bus route.

So from July we became a team of five. At Cristian's request, on 10 August we invited the teenagers from the LIAT life skills programme to join us for a sports day (football and basketball). We had been using a local park where there is a concreted area to play both. Just behind it is an enclosed football pitch with a synthetic all-weather surface. I enquired at a local shop as to who hold the keys, and was eventually directed to the right person. He agreed to open the pitch for us on the Thursday morning.



This was great, and especially appreciated by the aspiring footballers among us.

LIAT had two teams of five players, so we were able to have a three-way competition. I am grateful to Gloria for giving Cristian, Paul and Camila a pep talk about taking part being more important than winning – as we were well and truly beaten! Francisco, who was in my original pilot scheme three years ago, is a very determined footballer and it was no surprise to me that he was on the winning team. In the morning before it started, we were responsible for making refreshments for 20 people (sandwiches) which come with the customary cola. Each player received a small gift for taking part, and the winners have a trophy to keep for a year until the next time. It was such a popular event that we now have plans to invite them again – before Christmas – to cook with us as they have no cooker. I will leave it up to Paul, Gloria and Petita to decide what we make but I am guessing that it won't be particularly healthy!

Whilst I was in the UK, Gloria did a short cookery course, over four days, with Cristian and Paul (Camila was away). They learned to make a

## PRAISE AND PRAYER

### Please give thanks for:

- Paul joining the programme
- The success of Gloria's cookery classes
- The opportunity to be able to help my friend following a prolonged time in hospital
- Confirmation that I am where God wants me to be right now
- That doctors do not believe that my mother has dementia.

### Please pray:

- That I can support Petita, as she struggles to discover God's purpose for her life now
- That Paul, Camila and Cristian will continue to learn and enjoy doing so
- That we may be able to find another volunteer to help us, if and as the programme grows
- That God will continue to give me wisdom and strength to do the things he wants me to do
- For Gloria, as she has a problem with her kidneys and that the medicines will work.



Above: Battling it out with Francisco

basic breakfast, lunch, supper and dessert. They had my blessing to make whatever they wanted, as long as I could see the recipes on my return. That was so that I might be able to suggest healthier ways of doing them. I am still waiting for the recipes. After this, they all had two weeks holiday, which was longer than the schools were given, but the LIAT children were not given a holiday at all. Gloria is already planning to hold another cookery course during the end of year holiday in March.

In August also it was the 1st Baptist Church's 49th anniversary. This was held over four days and



Left: The church talent night

included an evening for couples (run by Luz Celly), a talent night (including Mark Trezise on piano), a family day out and a three-hour church service followed by the sharing of an enormous four-tier cake. I am not sure how we will beat that for the 50th

anniversary next year.

Just before I came back to the UK, we set about making greetings cards that I could bring back for people to see and offer donations for, if they wanted. That was so well supported that I was able to buy more supplies for the programme, as well as give the three youngsters a few dollars each for their work. I am sorry you didn't get to see the smiles on their faces. It was lovely and a real motivator. We are now busy making things to offer to people at an open day in December. The pastor, Gustavo, has said that he will make the Church musicians change their practice day to accommodate us as it will be on a Saturday.

Again, many thanks for all your prayers and support.

Thank you for all of your support,

*Sharon*

**You can give online to**

**Sharon at:**

[churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox](http://churchmissionsociety.org/wilcox)

**Contact details:**

[sharon.wilcox@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:sharon.wilcox@hotmail.co.uk)