Growing Self-Reliance

Jairo Morales is a happy, playful, and chatty ten-year-old boy. He likes to take care of his garden, his seedbed, and his dogs. But three years ago, Jairo’s situation was very uncertain. He had to stop going to school because his parents did not have the resources to pay for his schooling or to buy his uniform and school supplies.

Jairo’s father, Don Angel, worked transporting goods to the market in Otavalo, Ecuador, using a type of vehicle which he invented from his bicycle. When Don Angel had a good day of work, he earned four dollars, but not every day was good, and his monthly income was only $50.00 (USD). He had arable land, but corn and bean production was minimal, and theft of produce from his fields put further strain on the family. Their income was insufficient, and food was running short.

In May 2005, Renzo Macas of the Benson Institute met Brother and Sister Morales and Jairo for the first time. He was deeply touched by the Morales family. When Brother Macas visited the m, Jairo often sat close to him and in an old notebook, scribbled the alphabet and the numbers from 1 to 10—this was all he remembered from school.

Brother Macas and the team of agricultural technicians from the Benson Institute worked closely with the Morales family to teach them improved agricultural techniques to help increase their production of high-quality food.

They also asked Brother and Sister Morales to send Jairo to school during the next cycle, explaining that the Benson Institute Project required all children to attend school. Brother Macas assured them that this would be the best thing they could do for Jairo and that everything was going to improve for their family.

Brother Angel Morales and his wife, Carmen, worked very hard on the project. As they put into practice the techniques the Benson Institute taught them, corn and bean production soon increased fivefold. They added other crops, such as potatoes, fava beans, fruit trees, and a vegetable garden. The produce they obtained from their garden helped them to save an average of $60.00 per month.

The Morales family included guinea pigs as part of the animal component on their farm, consistently raising an average of thirty. When the weight of the guinea pigs reaches 1200 g, the family uses them for food. They also sell them at the market and use the additional income to pay other expenses.

The Morales family no longer relies on vegetables from the market, for they are able to produce enough for their own needs, as well as put some of the surplus into storage. They are now able to pay tithing in kind, even though thefts of their crops still occur when they are at church on Sunday.

Jairo continues with his education, and he will soon finish elementary school. The Morales family has been diligent in their efforts to become self-reliant, and they now look to the future with hope.
Jairo Morales

Brother Angel Morales and his wife Carmen in their field