

Questions

Are new sponsors only accepted during the summer before school starts?

No. Niños Adelante accepts new sponsors year-round. Students are often waiting for sponsorship, thereby enabling Niños Adelante to connect students with their sponsors throughout the school year.

How many students is a sponsor permitted to have?

The Organization has no policy limit on the number students any one sponsor is permitted to support. The only cautions to sponsors are that they are able to initiate and maintain a personal relationship with each student. At a minimum, sponsors should be prepared to sponsor each student through 12th grade, which is typically five years. It is also important to recognize that 80% of our high school graduates are continuing their education at the college level. Sponsors are encouraged to continue their sponsorship through this phase of their student's education.

How does one become a sponsor of a student?

The process is fairly informal. Simply complete the Sponsor Registration Form and follow the instructions on the form, including sending a copy of the completed form along with your contribution of \$540 US to the address shown on the form. Please remember that students benefit from the continuity of a single sponsor through grade 12.

Students are assigned throughout the calendar year with one exception. New sponsors who come onboard very late in the school year are normally assigned a student in August at beginning of the new school year.

Why is it necessary to pay someone in Zihuatanejo to administer the program?

Growth of the program and growth of the community have made a daunting task out of interviewing and maintaining contact with 200+ niños, many of whom are scattered throughout the hills surrounding Zihuatanejo where phones, mail service and even streets are close to nonexistent. To aid in this process, a native of the state of Guerrero and a long-time Zihuatanejo resident, José Bustos, has acted as General Coordinator for Niños Adelante on a part time basis for a number of years. José's familiarity with the community, contacts within the school systems and dedication to the Niños Adelante program are a perfect fit.

How are students selected to participate in the program ?

José Bustos, the Niños Adelante General Coordinator , works with the staff and teachers in all of the elementary schools and other resources in the Zihuatanejo area to identify students whose academic performance meets the program's standards and who can demonstrate the financial need consistent with the program's mission.

One of the program's objectives is to select students who will remain in school through 12th grade and graduation. Based on a strong belief that parental attitudes with respect to the importance of an education play a major role in a child's education, José Bustos personally visits each applicant in their homes to interview parents and as well as the student.

Is there any effort to include all 7-12th grade children in a family to avoid singling out one child for special treatment?

Children are accepted into the program based on their family economic situation and their academic excellence. Niños Adelante has cases where two or more siblings with grade point levels of 8 or above are in the program. By the same token, there are also many situations where siblings are not included due to lack of qualifying grade point levels. This program is designed to recognize and encourage academic achievement.

How do I send clothing and other items to my student and his or her family?

Due to the logistics involved, we cannot offer a service to receive and distribute physical gifts for the niños. Unfortunately, government mail service is sometimes unreliable and in many areas it is nonexistent. Although expensive, the international courier services are reliable, if arrangements are made in advance so the addressee knows of the shipment and the approximate date of arrival.

For many, hand delivery by Sponsors who attend the Breakfast Meetings in January and February remain as the preferred method of getting physical gifts to the niños.

What is the organization's goal with respect to number of students in the program?

While Niños Adelante would very much like to be able to serve every deserving student in Zihuatanejo, it has established a goal of approximately 200 students. This seems to be a manageable level for servicing the program in Zihuatanejo. Niños Adelante puts a premium on running a program that can be effectively managed. It periodically reconsiders the optimum number of students that can be effectively managed.

What is the level of local (Zihuatanejo area) involvement in either Friends of Niños Adelante or Niños Adelante ?

Niños Adelante has terrific involvement from their cherished principal local representative, José Bustos, a man who somehow finds time away from his responsibilities as a husband and father and waiter in Ixtapa to be their local representative. A concerted effort is currently underway to increase the visibility of the organization to local professional, business and political leaders. Niños Adelante also continues to look for local bilingual volunteers to provide the translation of e-mails, help draft notes to sponsors and generally support Niños Adelante's activities.

Are sponsors required to visit their students in Zihuatanejo annually?

Although we strongly encourage sponsors to visit Zihuatanejo annually, some sponsors have never visited Zihuatanejo, but correspond primarily via e-mail.

What if I become a sponsor for a child who goes on the college?

There is a growing percentage of program graduates enrolling in some form of higher education. More than three quarters of our recent graduates have gone on to further their formal education. During the early years of the college beca program, most students enrolled in local, vocationally-oriented colleges. We are now seeing an increasing number of students enrolling in wide range of degree programs at some of Mexico's finest universities throughout the country.

Obviously, this means that the chances of your student's going on to college is significant. We would hope our sponsors will continue their support through our college beca donation program. The current college beca is \$575. We understand, however, that not all sponsors will wish to remain engaged. If you chose not to continue your sponsorship, you can be assured that Niños Adelante will either find a replacement sponsor or Friends of Niños Adelante will fund becas from its general fund as long as the student remains qualified.

Does the program offer any medical assistance?

Friends of Niños Adelante annual budget includes a special needs fund which is used for students with emergency medical, vision or dental issues. José Bustos uses his discretion to disburse these funds. Sponsors also have the opportunity to make a supplemental donation for becados if they have the desire.

How are sponsors matched with students?

Although José Bustos, the Niños Adelante, General Coordinator, attempts to meet sponsor special requests such as gender and age of student, generally, assignments are made without any particular matching process.

How do sponsors know that the scholarship money is used to keep the participating students in school?

The scholarship is intended to help families with their day to day expenses as well as school expenses. The result of this is that families can keep their students in school and not put them to work. No attempt is made to control or track school-related expenditures to the scholarship payment. The only indirect control employed by Niños Adelante is spreading out the scholarship payment over the school year.

How can just \$540 US per year be enough to keep a student in school for a full school year?

Beginning in the 7th grade, parents are required to purchase supplies and school uniforms. Additionally, many students must ride a “colectivo” or public bus to and from school at a cost of several pesos each way every day. Additionally, some students purchase their lunch at school.

At the high school level there is a tuition that includes Social Security medical coverage. \$540 US covers only about half (less for high school students) of the out-of-pocket costs of keeping a child in school for the 7th – 12th grades, which requires parents to also have some “skin in the game”.

Is it mandatory that each student be given his or her sponsor’s name and address?

Yes. We strongly believe achieving the program's primary objective of keeping students in school through graduation requires both the scholarships and the encouragement, incentive and motivation of knowing that someone cares. Contact, whether in person or via a-mail or snail mail letters, provides the essential human component of this relationship. Therefore, all new sponsors are advised that it is their responsibility to correspond with their students. Many times, the benefits extend far beyond our expectations and sponsors become "extended family" of their students and create lifetime bonds.

What happens to a student whose sponsor discontinues his sponsorship before the student graduates?

Niños Adelante accepts students into the program with the understanding that it has a commitment to make scholarship awards to students who remain eligible through 12th grade. When a sponsor discontinues his sponsorship, we immediately look for a new sponsor. Scholarship payments to the student are continued as long as the student maintains his or her grades.

What happens to students whose sponsors do not make the scholarship payment or are late in making the payment

Niños Adelante strongly believes that when it accepts a student into the program, it has a commitment to sponsor the student through 12th grade, providing the student maintains his or her grades. Scholarship payments to students are made without regard to receipt of contributions from their sponsors. When sponsors fail to make annual scholarship contributions we contact them to determine their level of interest in continuing sponsorship, but their assigned student continues to receive scholarship payments.

Can sponsors make an additional scholarship gift if sponsors believe a family's need is greater than \$540 US per year?

The \$540 sponsorship includes a \$50 gift for each student at Christmas time.

Occasionally a student will experience special needs related to their scholarship, Friends of Niños Adelante makes periodic restricted contributions to Niños Adelante which, based on its sole discretion, are distributed to students with special needs.