

Sponsors Visit Their Child in Brazil

For four years, Christian and Kimberly Free had sponsored Daene. They couldn't pronounce her name, and so they had nicknamed her "Dino." But they felt close to her—so close that they'd been planning to visit her for two years. In that time, they started listening to Portuguese language tapes and watched videos about Brazil. Last February, they finally got the chance to meet her.

The visit, said Kimberly, "changed my life."

It started with a 14-hour flight from Los Angeles to Sao Paulo, then a commuter flight to Belo Horizonte. A Christian Children's Fund representative—along with Daene and her mother—met them at the airport. After years of letters and only a 2" x 3" photo of Daene to go by, "seeing her in person was just unbelievable," said Christian.

Eight-year-old Daene, described by the Frees as "a natural beauty," was shy at first. After just one day of exploring Sao Paulo with her sponsors, however,

she warmed up. With the Frees, Daene enjoyed many "firsts"—her first time to visit the zoo, to eat ice cream, to go to McDonald's.

After that came a lengthy and extremely bumpy ride down a dirt road to Daene's town, located in the impoverished Jequitinhonha Valley. Kimberly described the village as "poor but clean." But due to the droughts, she said, there was "no shade, no grass."

Christian, who, with his wife, has sponsored four children, saw the impact of the child's project on the town. "All the kids were in good health, they all had good teeth, none were too skinny, they were going to school," he said.

When the Frees first arrived, "everyone knew ahead of time that we were coming, and they were all lined up in front of Dino's house. They all sang a song," said Christian.

"In a spiritual way, it was the most moving week of my life," said Christian. While there, the Frees met another child they just began sponsoring, Leidane. And

they enjoyed sharing some gifts from home. They showed the family how to roast marshmallows and pop popcorn. They amazed the village children with candy and bubbles, and a dinner eaten with chopsticks. The local women, used to burning their fingers, were impressed with Kimberly's potholders. "Everything was so new to them," said Kimberly.

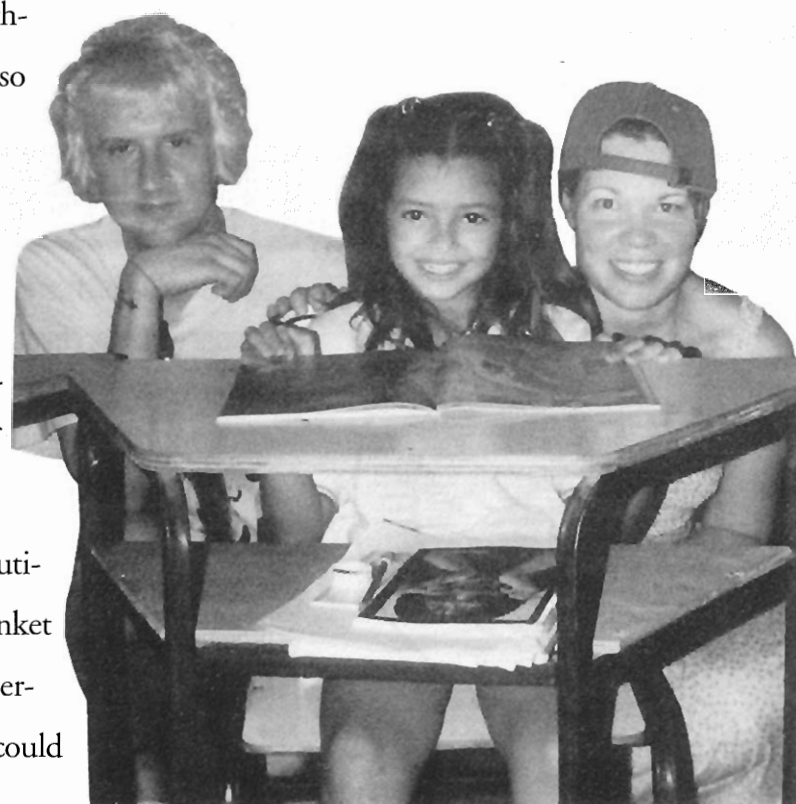
Both Frees observed the warmth and generosity of the villagers. "These people have nothing, but are so happy," said Kimberly.

The Frees took home a delicious loaf of homemade bread, a beautiful wool blanket and a new perspective. "I could

just sell everything and go," said Kimberly about Daene's town.

And everyone in town calls Daene "Dino" now.

"All the kids were in good health, they all had good teeth, none were too skinny, they were going to school," he said.



Sponsors, Christian (left), and his wife, Kimberly (right), visiting the child they assist.