Dear Supporters & Friends of Von&On

Firstly, my apologies for not communicating sooner to thank you all for your support during our merging of Pastor Von Ministries and the starting of our new non-profit Von&On Inc. We have now been fully functioning since January 2016 after getting everything in place. This newsletter will be longer than my planned periodic newsletter since we have so much to summarize and it’s my first newsletter. Firstly, a little about my role. My wife Joyce and I decided to form a non-profit corporation “Von&On” since Pastor Von had shared that Pastor Von Ministries was going through some changes. We had known of Pastor Von for several years before moving to San Diego from the Bay Area in 2012 and we have been working with Pastor Von regularly. We felt well aligned with his vision and ideas for serving in Tijuana therefore merging with him was natural for us. Pastor Von was definitely interested in the future hence the name. Pastor Von is the “Von” part and the rest of us are the “On” part i.e. we are charged with responsibility of taking the work into the future. Although I am the President of Von&On my role over the border is minimal compared to Pastor Von, Hortensia, Joyce, Lucas and the rest of the team. I work in sales for an engineering company covering US/Canada which means I am traveling 80% of the time. I am across the border 2-3 times per month either on weekends or at night helping with transfer of items for ministry. My role involves administration, purchasing vehicles, insurance, maintenance, organizing funding for people, driving Pastor Von to Mexico on Saturdays, assisting with shopping for supplies, building renovations, storage additions and general "Man Friday" to the actual team across the border.

Hortensia has remained as the right hand support person for Pastor Von in Tijuana spending many hours working with the local people and identifying the specific needs of the poor. We focus on four main barrios in the Tijuana area and
have regular contact with several hundred people. We support an old folk’s home which has around 130 patients. This home is not your typical old people’s home as almost all the people housed here have been simply been “dropped off” as they have no family members around and nobody with the means of taking care of them. I will not forget my first visit several years ago when Pastor Chuey (the Director) shared the story that two of his new patients were discovered one morning tied to a lamp post at the bottom of hill outside the home with a note attached asking that the home take care of them. This shows the desperate options the poor have to face regularly in Mexico.

Joyce drives Pastor Von every Wednesday as well as helping Saturdays, plus she does all the shopping for Von&On including food supplies, diapers, infant formula, adult diapers, blankets, tarps, Christmas Gifts, game and raffle prizes, and medicine, as well as sorting donations, shoes, sewing materials and just about anything else. This is in addition to her Sewing Ministry. Joyce crosses the border 4-8 times a week, sometimes 2-3 times a day if we have a lot to transfer.

The Von&On vehicles which are essential for taking the ministry to the people in Tijuana as well as moving our team around.

The Sewing Classes have not only been effective in teaching new skills but also building the self-esteem of students. This skill along with the machine they get at graduation allows them to make items to sell and put food on the table at home. Each 12 week series has produced different graduates who often come from difficult home situations. Joyce has been able to train Patti (a Mexican national) to lead our Sewing Classes. Patti herself travels a long way on the local transport system to get to this class. Patti’s (standing on right in left photo) involvement has allowed Joyce to also focus on other work and supporting other programs.

The Sewing Class also spawned the idea of a Bible Study designed for the ladies. We utilize Claudia Bainqualls who had taught this type of class to many women in the US. The class was a big hit with the women from the community and its impact really came through when tragically one of the students died suddenly (aged only 29). The class and the opportunities it provided to share with others had been changing this young lady’s attitude towards her past. After her death many of the family members came along to participate also.

Mailing Address: 1043 Emma Drive Cardiff, CA 92007
Corporate Address: Lake Adlon Drive 7829 San Diego, CA 92119
Contact details: web: www.vonandon.com email: vonandon@mail.com 1-(619) 602 5969
Contact Tijuana: 01152 1 (664) 217 7642
Claudia Leading Bible study class

Lucas Campos has been working with Pastor Von for many years and recently joined us full time and has started a boys youth group. Most of the boys have known or been around Pastor Von and Lucas for many years and are regular helpers each Saturday when we visit different barrios. Many of our boys have faced, and continue to face, their own tragedies and challenges in life so it's encouraging to see how they have bonded together as a group under Lucas's leadership and guidance from Pastor Von. As we all know leading a youth group has its challenges so remember us all here during this venture. We find keeping them well fed when we come together is a good reward and motivator. Many of these boys are the eldest male in the home so they have expectations placed on them and leadership on their shoulders that has come early in life. We encourage and support them since they too are from the poorer homes.

Ladies Bible Study

Lucas (center) with Youth Group

Cleaning up house site, ready for building

Youth team weather proofing a roof.

Tarps are needed at night sometimes...
Marisol (in the white top) has been working with Von&On cutting hair for the children on Wednesdays & Saturdays which has been a boost for our profile and our serving in the community. She has also recently started teaching a haircutting class to 5-6 ladies at the bodega (storage area). Again the focus is about helping the people to help themselves in a compassionate and serving environment.

Marisol teaching ladies to cut hair. Ladies supplied their own free models (sons and nephews). As you can see, not all our models had the same amount of enthusiasm as our trainees.

You may ask what our plans for the future are and how can you perhaps help or become involved:

Number 1 is to pray for Pastor Von. In the last 12 months he has had a lot going on. He temporarily lost his license but regained this through his own determination to prove he was still a road worthy candidate, he had a couple of bouts of pneumonia last winter, plus in the last month a stay in the hospital where he has been diagnosed with a congestive heart condition. With some medication and help with driving across the border he is back in the field maintaining a busy schedule. He regularly communicates via his posts on Facebook and via SNAPSHOT updates. We don't know how many miles Pastor Von has left in him but he is not taking a back seat in life and is out there with a prank and a smile for the kids of Tijuana as often as he can. Our long term goal is to carry on building the “On” part of the team while focusing on areas that ultimately benefit the poor, especially the children.

Please also remember our key team member Lou Johnson. Lou is our Treasurer in charge of the financials, tracking our donors and sending out thank you letters and generally appraising myself and the board regarding how things are looking each month. Lou is committed to supporting Pastor Von in whatever way possible and takes on a number of “special assignments” for him.

We have been busy trying to add resources, but finding reliable recruits for our work is a challenge as the work in Tijuana isn't glamorous and can be a little frightening for many - but seeing people's lives improved and changed dramatically is more rewarding than words can describe.

Our finances are always an area of need. Von&On has nobody taking a salary with almost all of our team being volunteers. We do support Pastor Von especially with medical insurance needs. We pay our local workers on a project related basis. This means that your $$ are going directly into the work.

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email: vonandon@mail.com 
1-(619) 602 5969 

Contact Tijuana: 
01152 1 (664) 217 7642
What next....

We have two major potential projects coming up in the near future.

The most urgent project is to raise funding for our Christmas 2016 program as this year we have decided to do things a little differently. Last year we supplied $$ donated directly to families, simply because it required less resources to hand out thin envelopes with $$ inside than other options. However, this year we have a plan to provide a food hamper to 350-400 families. The team along with Lucas and his 10-12 young energetic teens plus a willing band of sewing graduates who are prepared to sew and assist with distribution should be enough. The sewing team is going to make 300-400 cloth hamper bags which also have a use after delivery. Inside this hamper will be the ingredients to make each family a good sized Christmas meal. We have identified a good quality boneless turkey roast for less than $10 plus some other staples and a couple of special foods for the hamper. In addition to this we have planned Christmas gifts for the children. We will be sharing more details on Christmas 2016 in the near future via Pastor Von’s Facebook and Snapshot updates. We would like to raise $15,000 towards Christmas Hampers for 400 families and gifts for the children.

The second potential project is the possibility of starting English as a Second Language classes for people we encounter. Many jobs today in stores across the border require the applicants have basic English skills, so being able to communicate in English offers them a big advantage in the job market. We believe we have a suitable venue to host classes. **Now all we need is a bilingual teacher!!**

In closing, I realize that many of you have known and supported Pastor Von for many years. The "On" part of Von&On truly appreciates your continued investment in our work across the border as does Pastor Von as he has always expressed his desire to see his work continued after he is unable. Thank you again for your belief in what we are doing.

**On behalf of the Von&On board - Philip Cunningham: President/Director**

**PS. I realize that you receive these newsletters and updates etc. by “traditional mail” (means there is paper involved) so we would like to offer the option for you to receive these electronically if you desire. This helps us reduce stationery costs, postage fees and Lou’s (our treasurer) licking reserves. If you send us an email, requesting this change to the vonandon@mail.com email address your email will be kept confidential and we will add you to the “paperless division”. If we don’t hear from you, you will continue to receive our mail as you do today**

*If you have questions or comments you can mail them to the same postal address that is on letterhead below or else email them to vonandon@mail.com. Also, for those of you so inclined, you can also give electronically at www.vonandon.com/donations/*

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