

Hillsides: light and hope

THE EDITOR'S DESK

YOU might not notice it — you might not have noticed it for years, driving down Avenue 64 — just past the Church of the Angels near the L.A. border.

Hillsides, its campus tucked neatly up into a canyon in the San Rafael Hills, doesn't call a lot of attention to itself from the street.

But since 1913, when such a place was called an orphanage, it has saved the lives of thousands of children. Its mission is to be a haven for abused, abandoned and neglected children. And what should be more noticeable than that?

Even so, even though you know as you walk around the campus and look at the children, about 70 of whom live there just now, that the fact they're at Hillsides means they have reached a calm port out of the storm that is their lives, it's a stroll that can break your heart, over and over again.

There is a story in each one of those lives that I am not strong enough to really want to know. The people at Hillsides are strong enough, though, and that is a good thing for us all.

Several years ago, when I last visited, a \$10 million capital campaign at Hillsides was underway. On a stroll through the campus with Hillsides' Marisol Barrios-Jordan the other day, I was privileged to see the rather brilliant results of that campaign: a Children's Village that opened last month, including a new resource center with private counseling rooms and a big new library filled with thousands of books and a series of light-filled cottages where the kids live in private rooms built around a big common space for meals and time with others.

PBWS Architects' Fred Wesley, the principal designer, says he used the huge skylights as a way of bringing warmth and brightness into lives that have not had much before Hillsides — lives where their favorite

room was the bathroom, because it was the one place that had a lock.

It works. The campus is a nice place to be.

As Marisol and I came down a gently sloping walkway between wide lawns at the far end of the campus, she mentioned that there had been a soap-box derby there

recently, with children driving cars designed with the help of PCC students and Rusnak, the Pasadena auto dealer.

"The kids were laughing" and having a great

time that day, Marisol recalled. "And I just couldn't believe at that moment that these were children whose parents had abused and abandoned them."

That awful fact is the great, tragic back story of the lives at Hillsides. Here on the other side of that past, they are great lives to get involved in. Check out www.hillsides.org or call (323) 255-9005 if you'd like to know more.



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