



Homeward Bound

Felipe was 13 years old when he was picked up by the police, who had noticed him hanging around the street on his own. Although he didn't look dirty or hungry, they were concerned that he seemed to have nowhere to go and wasn't at school.

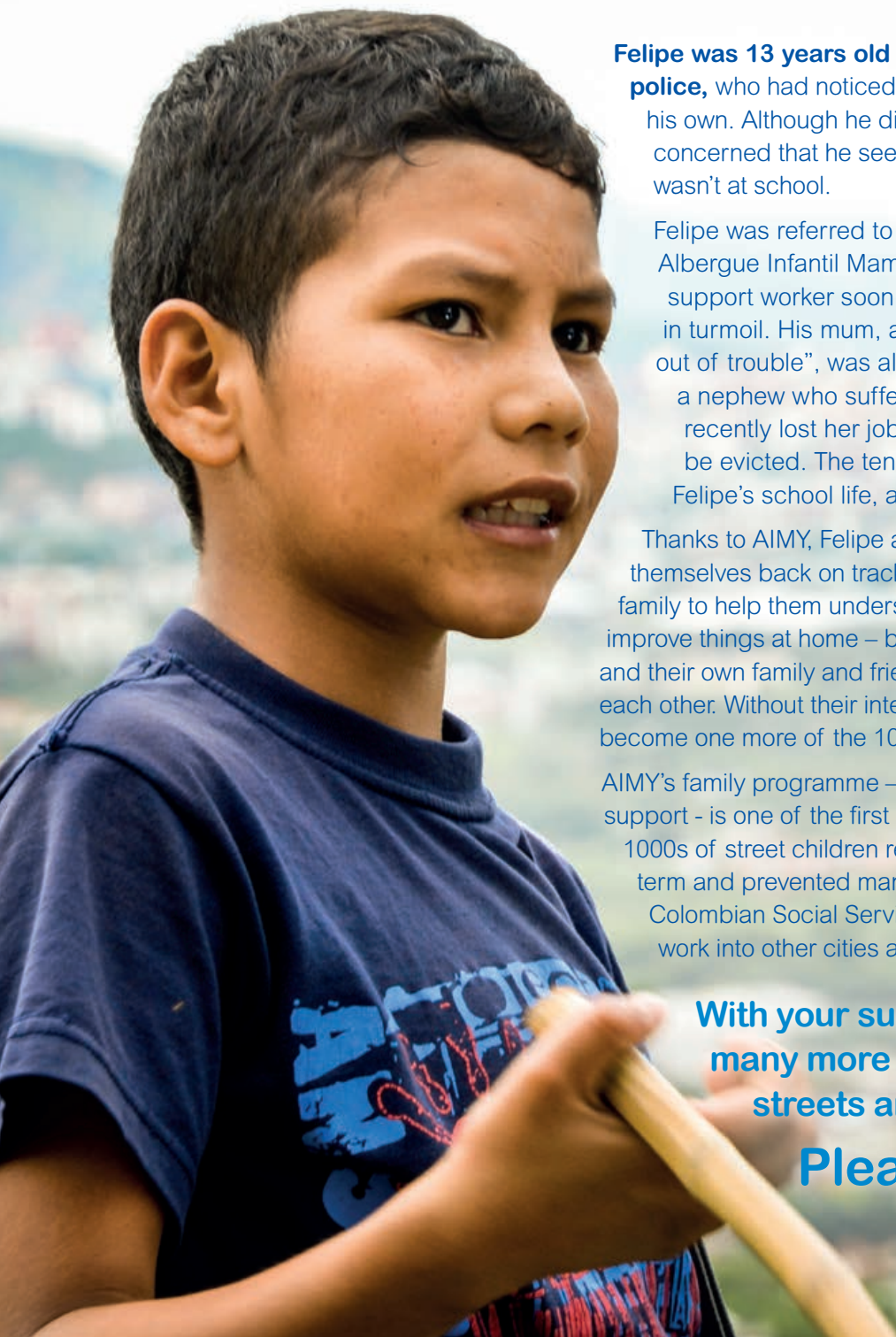
Felipe was referred to a day centre run by COTA Partner Albergue Infantil Mama Yolanda (AIMY). Felipe's family support worker soon discovered that his home life was in turmoil. His mum, as well as "trying to keep her son out of trouble", was also caring for her elderly mother and a nephew who suffered from schizophrenia. She had recently lost her job, and was terrified that they would be evicted. The tensions at home soon spilled over into Felipe's school life, and he was expelled.

Thanks to AIMY, Felipe and his family were able to get themselves back on track. AIMY's team worked with the whole family to help them understand how they could work together to improve things at home – by making better use of local services and their own family and friends, and by talking and listening to each other. Without their intervention, Felipe could so easily have become one more of the 1000s taking refuge on Bogota's streets.

AIMY's family programme – established and funded with COTA's support - is one of the first of its kind in Colombia. It has helped 1000s of street children return to their families for the long-term and prevented many more from wanting to run away. Colombian Social Services now hope to expand AIMY's work into other cities across Colombia.

With your support we can help keep many more children like Felipe off the streets and safe with their families.

Please donate today.



Children on the streets and in care

The high levels of poverty in Colombia, where 32% of the population currently live below the poverty line, mean that many parents face a daily struggle to balance the burdens of earning enough money to feed their family with caring for their children. Tensions at home can lead to children seeking refuge on the streets – whether this is to escape the tension, or to try to earn some money to take home. On the streets, they become vulnerable to involvement with drugs and crime and losing their connection with their family and their school-life.

In 2013 there were 80,290 children in care across Colombia. Colombian law limits the amount of time children with families can spend in care before they are returned home, but Colombian Social Services currently provides no funding for care homes to work with families to address the reasons why children left home in the first place. This means that, when children return, they face many of the same problems that existed before. As a result, an average of 34% of family reunions in Bogota fail, with children either returning to care or the streets.

AIMY has found that while there are a range of problems that can cause a child to be taken into care, the main reason that children become vulnerable to these problems is because of difficulties within their family.

Supporting families

COTA started working with AIMY in 2008 and helped establish a family reunification programme for children who have been taken into care after

spending lots of time on the streets, aiming to keep them safe in the long term by reintegrating them with their families. This programme provides intensive support to families before, during and after the child is returned home, to help ensure that families are able to cope and can provide a stable and safe environment for the child.

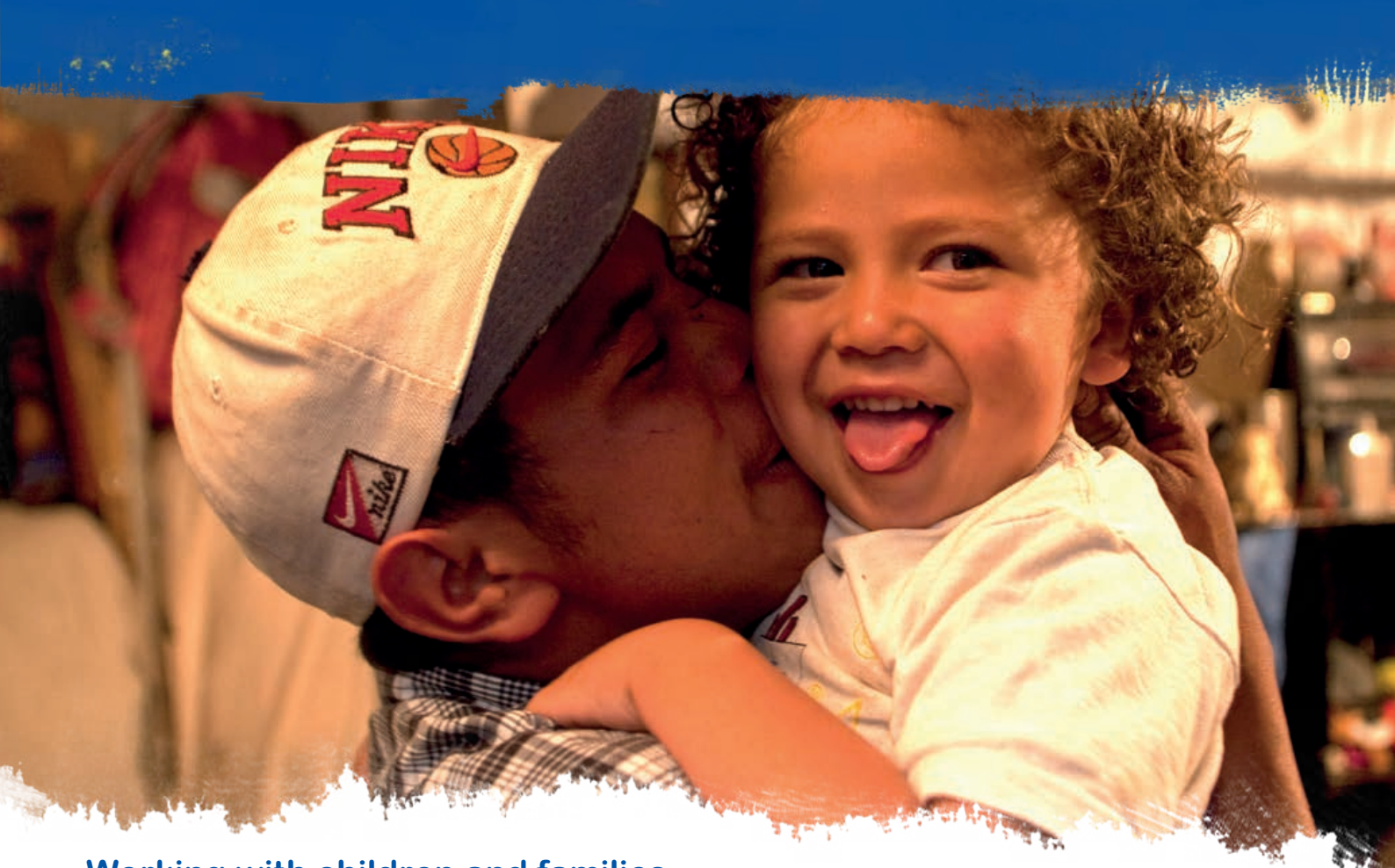
In 2011 Comic Relief provided COTA with a grant for the first time, enabling the expansion of AIMY's work to include children who were at high risk of living on the streets.

Over the last 2 years AIMY has worked directly with 538 children from 228 families. They have had an 89% success rate with these reunifications so far - 204 of these families were still together at the end of 2013. Thanks to AIMY sharing their work and successes with Colombian Social Services (ICBF), ICBF are now proposing to develop the first state funded programme to use this model of care to reunify child workers with their families in 5 cities across Colombia.

“If it wasn't for the Albergue, I don't know what I would be right now - possibly a burglar or a drug addict”

Cristian, 13 years old





Working with children and families

“ I used to hit my son, and I would hit him really hard. But I don't do that anymore. Now we talk, I sit down with the children when there is a problem and explain what is wrong and why they shouldn't do it again. I don't need to hit them ” Luisa, mum

AIMY helps families provide a stable and safe environment for their children by developing stronger relationships: *“they taught us to play together, to share. Now we do things together, we go out to the park, we play sports”*. AIMY also works with families to improve the way they communicate with each other, and enable parents to impose rules and boundaries for their children without resorting to violence.

The starting point for AIMY's work is to encourage families to see themselves as part of a support network that includes their family, friends and community, as well as state institutions. As part of this network they can reach out to others for help, but they also have the capabilities to help others themselves. In this way parents and children are empowered to find solutions to their problems,

whether they are ongoing, or more immediate crisis situations. This also helps children and families learn how to access basic services, like healthcare and education, and ensures that they can use them without AIMY's support.

Last year AIMY was independently evaluated as part of our Comic Relief funding. The evaluator found that the project had significantly improved family structures, dynamics and communication, and helped families create support networks.

“ I think other organisations working globally could learn from AIMY's family based approach ”

Comic Relief

In this way, AIMY is strengthening families' abilities to protect their children from situations where they could be at risk.

Comic Relief is really pleased with the progress we are making, and has said *“There is a great deal to be learned from your methods of working with vulnerable children in Colombia.”*

However, 2014 is the last year of this phase of the project, and will also be the last year we will receive Comic Relief funding. Comic Relief made an announcement last year that they would no longer fund work in Colombia. AIMY has made so much progress over the last 2 years and now we need your support to help them keep up this momentum.

Please donate and help us keep this vital project running.

What do our project partners think of us?

How do we know if COTA is providing the support our partners really need? There are many ways to find out, but one of the best is to ask the partners themselves.

We asked all of our current partners (and many of our past partners) to fill out an anonymous online survey, to try to get an idea of how effective our support to them has been, what we are getting right and what we could improve.

The survey looked into all aspects of our work with partners, including how responsive we are to their needs, whether we improve their work, the amount and type of financial support we provide and our knowledge and influence in the specific areas.

In general, the responses suggest that our partners find us easy to work with – they described us as approachable, trustworthy, flexible, competent and sensitive to their needs.

Partners were asked to compare COTA with their other local and international partners. We are very pleased to say that in *all areas* our partners rated us better than all their other partners. We are considered significantly better in three – respect, value added and monitoring and evaluation.

Although it's great to know that we are getting many things right, we don't want to be complacent. The survey was also an opportunity for our partners to suggest areas where we could improve, or where they might like more help.

For example, our partners told us we could make reporting less arduous and provide more funds for this.

Some have experienced problems because our grants don't arrive regularly enough. Others want us to help them have a greater influence on public policy.

We are acting on this feedback. We have already simplified our reporting forms; we are investigating ways to provide more certainty about grant timetables; and we are making a push to increase our profile in Colombia with policy makers, so that we can help our partners make an even greater impact.

We aim to do this survey every year, so that all of us – including you - can see how we're doing.



Become a COTA Promoter!

All of us at COTA are very passionate about our work. However, as a small team working in a challenging financial climate, we rely heavily on the solidarity of our supporters to spread the word about what we do and help us raise the vital funds we need to support our project partners. So, we have created a network for people who want to support us and fundraise for our work - we call it the 'COTA Promoter Network'.

Since 2012, over 50 people have joined the network, raising over £15,000. Promoters have organised events of their own, ranging from picnics to parties and cake sales; got their friends and family involved; and helped out by volunteering at COTA events. Along the way, they have had loads of fun and made new friends.

Get involved!

If you are passionate about our work and would like to dedicate some of your time to supporting COTA, why not consider becoming a COTA Promoter? We hold regular Promoter Induction Sessions, which are an opportunity for you to find out how the network works, share your fundraising ideas and experiences, ask any questions, and meet other COTA Promoters.

Our next induction meetings will be on:

- Saturday 5th April 2014
- Saturday 21st June 2014
- Saturday 6th September 2014

Time: 2pm–3:30 pm

Place: Children of the Andes, Development House, 56–64 Leonard Street, London, EC2A 4LT

Nearest Tube: Old Street (Exit 4)

RSVP to: victoria@childrenoftheandes.org



“ Thank you for inviting me to the promoters meeting and sharing with me the incredibly valuable work you have been doing. I have come away feeling incredibly inspired and grateful for finding an organisation which is doing exactly the kind of work that I have been looking to support... ”

News

Upcoming Events

COTA Thames Walk: Saturday 10th May 2014

Join us and invite your friends and family to come along too, our traditional route along the riverside and into Richmond Park is very beautiful!

Fernando Montaña's Gala: Sunday 8th June 2014

After last year's success, COTA Patron, Fernando Montaña will be organising another fundraising show for COTA! The evening will be filled with live music and dance performances. Save the date and watch our website for details coming soon!

Stewards needed

We urgently need volunteer stewards for the Thames Walk. Stewards will need to be available for a "Dummy Walk" on 26th April, as well as for the actual walk on 10th May. If you'd like to help please contact Victoria (victoria@childrenoftheandes.org) by 22nd April.

Help us spread the word!

By distributing COTA leaflets around your local community, whether it is your school, church, library or workplace, you are helping us tell more people about our work! Please contact victoria@childrenoftheandes.org if you would like to help.



Dear Friends

Our article on the work of Albergue Infant Mama Yolanda (AIMY) is a good illustration of how COTA works in Colombia – by focusing on problems that need urgent attention, identifying organisations with the potential to make a difference, and working alongside them to help maximise the impact of their work.

Over the 8 years that we have been working with AIMY, they have developed one of Colombia's most effective family support programmes and have now been approached by Colombian Social Services to expand their work on a national scale. Their work now has the potential to transform the lives of 1000's of vulnerable children across the country.

This would not have been possible without the technical support AIMY received along the way from COTA's Field Team and significant COTA funding – provided in part by

Comic Relief. Sadly, both of these are now under threat. The funding we rely on to support our Field Team has fallen sharply in recent years. And Comic Relief, our largest multi-year funder, has announced that it will be pulling out of Colombia and most of Latin America this year.

There are still so many areas of urgent need in Colombia. We are hoping to start work in the Colombian port city of Buenaventura – a city dominated by illegal armed groups, where 81% of the population live in poverty and 65% are unemployed. In the increasingly difficult financial climate, we will only be able to do this with your help. Please support us today – set up a standing order, become a "COTA Promoter" or make a donation.

Thank you!

Rachel Joseph
Executive Director

Thanks

Thanks to all our supporters, whose generous donations make our work possible

Individuals

Anita Lalwan, Georgie Maddock, Mara Giraldo, Andres Jaramillo, Mario Serna and Andrea Stodieck organised fundraising events. **Camila Coulet** asked for donations to COTA in lieu of birthday presents. **Catherine Hull** donated to COTA in lieu of giving Christmas presents. **Steve Henderson** organised a concert. **Diana Fino** and **Roberto Pasandin** organised a fundraising make-up workshop. **Charlotte Stokoe** (Kensington Dollhouse Festival) and **Alejandra Cuesta** (LATIDOS) invited us to have fundraising stalls at their events.

Community

A big thank you to everyone at Haringey Sixth Form Centre, Tonbridge Grammar School and St Winefride's Convent School (Shrewsbury).

Thanks to religious groups that have supported our work in recent months, including: Alderney Religious Society of Friends, Barnstaple Religious Society of Friends, Canterbury Cathedral, Church Of The Immaculate Conception (Stroud), Didsbury United Reformed Church (Manchester), St Andrew's Clubmoor (Liverpool), St Edward the Confessor (London), St Joseph Catholic Church (South Molton), St Leonard's Toddler Group (Teighmouth), St Margaret Clitherow's Church (York) and Westminster Abbey.

Sports Challenges

Thanks to everyone who has raised funds through sporting challenges, including: **John & Liam Browne, Tom & Ruth Mills, Rosalind Reece** and **Sophia Watson**.

The Silverstone Half Marathon 2014 team: **Alex Jones, Priyesh Parekh, Esaut Parra, Conor Ryan** and **Mark Shotton**.

If you would like to organise an event to fundraise for COTA or for more info about fundraising challenges in your area please contact victoria@childrenoftheandes.org or **020 7549 0225**.



Spring 2014

Regular Giving

Remember: a standing order is the most cost effective way for us to administer your contribution

Instructions to the Manager

Your account:

Name of the Bank or Building Society: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____ / _____

Account No.: Sort Code:

Your donation:

Please pay **Children of the Andes** (Account No.: **22052801**, Sort Code: **60-07-02**) at NatWest Bank plc, 14 High Street, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1AX,

The sum of £ _____ on the day of ____ / ____ / 20 ____
(This date should be at least one month from today).

And the same sum Monthly Quarterly Yearly

Your details:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ / _____

Email: _____ Tel: (_____) _____

Signed: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____ (dd/mm/yy)

Gift Aid Declaration

I would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Please return completed form to Children of the Andes, Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, EC2A 4LT. For more information about Gift Aid, standing orders, legacies or payroll giving, please telephone our office on: 0207 549 0225

Thank you!

Field Office Diary

COTA's Patron and Royal Ballet Star, Fernando Montaña, visited some of our project partners on a recent trip to Colombia. Here he tells us about his experiences at the Albergue Infantil Mama Yolanda (AIMY) in Bogota and Paz y Bien in Aguablanca, Cali.

"This was my first time visiting our partners and my first trip back home to Colombia in three years, so it was very emotional. At AIMY I was surprised to see how all the children were so full of positive energy, despite the traumas many of them have experienced. You can see how the project helps to build their confidence. They were all so articulate, and as a ballet dancer, I was also impressed by their discipline – their rooms were more organised than mine!

I was shocked by the problem of invisible borders – the invisible lines dominated by different gang groups. This is a major issue facing the children in Aguablanca, where COTA's partner Paz y Bien works. Some told me that they don't even go to school, because they are too scared to risk their lives by crossing the borders.

The children and young people at Paz y Bien were particularly curious to hear about my journey, from growing up in Aguablanca to being a dancer at the Royal Ballet. I encouraged them to follow their own dreams. I told them that there will always be obstacles along the way, but if you persevere with discipline, dedication and determination, you can reach your dreams.

During my visit, I was able to see the impact of COTA's support on the day to day lives of the children. They filled me with their positive energy, and it was great to know that in some way my support of COTA's work is having a positive effect on their lives.



Children of the Andes: Keeping children safe, defending children's rights and strengthening children's organisations in Colombia.

Please donate now

Donor details: (We won't share your details with anyone else.)

Title: _____ First name: _____ Last name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ / _____

Tel: (_____) _____ E-mail: _____

Your donation:

I would like to make a donation of: £5 ; £10 ; £25 ; £50 ; £100 ; Other £ _____

Payment details:

(By BACS transfer: **Children of the Andes**; Sort code **60-07-02**; Account no. **31623212**)

Cheque (Please make cheques payable to **Children of the Andes**)

Visa; Mastercard; CAF Charitycard

Card No.: Expiry Date: / (mm/yy)

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____ (dd/mm/yy)

Gift Aid Declaration

I would like Children of the Andes to reclaim tax on any donations I have made over the last 4 years and all future donations until I notify you otherwise.

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Please let us know if you change your address or if you no longer pay an amount of income tax or capital gains equal to the tax we will reclaim on your donation (currently 25p for every £1 you give).

Yes, I require an acknowledgement (please tick or we will assume you do not; this will help us save on administration costs).

Please send me a COTA fundraising pack

Thank you!