



## OCCASIONAL REPORT

August 2008

Once again I want to fill you in on my just completed trip to Nicaragua and our schools there. I am very proud of the faculty, staff, Felipe (our manager in Nicaragua), and Henry Greeley our Peace Corps volunteer for the progress and state of things at Escuela San Miguel (ESM). Although we are about \$1000.00 short of our budget requirements, the school is bringing in needed funds on the long road to self-sufficiency. Our shortfall comes from the lack of follow-through by the municipality to help. They had promised \$250.00/month support which we have not received. This is typical of Nicaraguan local politicians, to promise things and not deliver. This promised help would have made our projected budget right on. Perhaps they will still come through. We can hope. The other thing that caught us short is the electric bill, escalating from \$75.00/mo. in June to \$250.00/mo.

This setback could have hurt much more but for the fact that our director was able to secure a contract with the government schools for our woodshop to refurbish student writing desks. Also a friend and donor of PFP and ESM ordered 40 folding cots to furnish the houses she continues to build for the poor. Our woodshop and sewing class were able to do a fine job making these cots and we have a promise of 40 more this coming year. And, from preliminary contacts we may also have another contract to refurbish more desks.

Student/workers in the woodshop have excelled under the great tutelage of Don Avillan our woodworking instructor. At ESM he is known as "*El Maestro de Ebanisteria*" (The Master Cabinetmaker). They are making very fine furniture and the students are learning a lifelong skilled trade.

But I have much better news. ESM will graduate 93 students with full government accreditation in November! This has been a major goal of ours since the opening of the school-to become accredited, and now we have it. **The students will receive diplomas from a fully recognized course of study from ESM.**

Other good news that is turning to bad involves the Internet. After many attempts and frustrations we were finally able to get an ISP here serving us by satellite for a monthly fee of \$90.00. (It is good service too-faster than my N. Idaho connection.) Henry Greeley, working with the director, set up a "Cyber Cafe" at the school and it is has become very popular. This is the only Internet connection in Cárdenas! The Cyber has been paying for the connection fee, while at the same time allowing students and Cárdenas residents to be connected to the world. We have been planning to set up an Intranet connection in the classroom to expand our computer classes using the Internet. Now, sadly, the ISP has announced a rate increase to \$230.00/month and this is impossible for our budget. This is a big setback for us. We, the students and townsfolk alike are disheartened, but are hopeful a cheaper competitor will arrive soon.

### **NEWSFLASH!**

Upon letting great friends know of our dilemma, they have offered a \$50.00 monthly donation (in addition to their annual giving) to bring back the Internet to ESM. (We will not pay the exorbitant fee of \$230.00, but we are working to find another provider.) They asked if I could find others to team up with them and together bring back the Internet to our school. So----if anyone out there is so disposed please contact me at (208) 265-4589, or at 223 Sunny Shores Loop, Sagle, ID 83860.

Some though are not so fortunate to even care about the Internet. Of course the economy going south always hurts the poor the quickest and hardest and I observed this close up. While hauling out our refuse one day I saw women and children picking through the garbage at the dump. (This, in a society where nothing much of value--especially any food is thrown away.) One woman had to stop rummaging and stood protecting "her pile" while she nursed her baby. The phrase "Give them a fish or show them how to catch them for themselves"--sometimes makes for tough decisions and nightmares.



But at ESM we have chosen to try to give them the skills to "catch" for themselves. To aid them in that development I took down a much needed projector for our computer teacher to use with her classes. While there I also worked with the director to make necessary cuts and adjustments to try to squeak through the year within our budget, and to develop a projection for 2009. To help in this regard our friends at Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH) orphanage ordered cabinets from our school for the new facilities they are building. They also ordered fitted and flat sheets to be made in our sewing school "*Doña Coco's Centro de Costura*" near Tola, Nicaragua.

I took the opportunity to meet the presumptive new mayor, acquaint him with the school and with our financial concerns. He was very encouraging about helping the school financially next year (he will take office in January). Some of his children have been students with us so this may help. I also met with the ex-mayor who made the gift of the land to us possible. He is a very strong supporter of the school and he agreed to help us where he can. He now has a position with "The European Union" who are very actively making grants throughout Nicaragua. He will look for opportunities for us to partner with the Cárdenas municipality for a grant to help the school. He also agreed to be nominated for a position on our school board and I believe he would make an excellent addition.

Also, a four party delegation from Sister City "Malgrat de Mar" in Spain came by to investigate our school. They had heard of our need for financial help and will try to assist. They were very impressed with what we're doing and said they would try to find some money for us. They said

they couldn't do monthly funding but would try for a one-time grant. This is OOOOO KKKKK  
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So, the students are using and enjoying the school and will be rewarded in November with bona fide diplomas. All are welcome at our school regardless of the ability to pay the small largely symbolic fees. We have twenty-five students on full scholarships paid for thanks to the generous trust set up by a founding donor to the school. The only requirement of the scholarship students is that they attend, participate and try hard.

I hope once again you keep us in your thoughts when considering your charitable contributions. We've barely spent any money on administration this past year. My trip down in fact was a very special gift. All donations are essentially going directly to the schools and to help students.

Lastly, our grounds around the school compared to just a few years ago are absolutely beautiful. Great thanks to Felipe who also keeps the buildings, tools and equipment in top shape. Please feel entirely free and at home to come by the school if you happen to be close either in Nicaragua or Costa Rica. We are located only one kilometer from the Costa Rican border. Contact me for details.



Blessings to all,  
Dean