

Report No. 6 from Alto Cayma - 8 Apr 18

Time Out

These reports were interrupted for 2 weeks while we got away to Colombia for a little vacation. This was the first time that John and Ben had ever been to Colombia, and they were very anxious to see this land they had heard so much about. Carol hadn't been back to Colombia since she celebrated her 21st birthday there, so she was well overdue also. We visited



family and friends in Bogotá, and then continued on to Cartagena and Medellin for tourism. Now we've been back in Alto Cayma for a week, and we're already ready for another vacation. :-)

An Entrepreneur

Sra. Marcia, one of the mothers in our Acercánonos sponsorship program, earns about half the money her family lives on by selling snacks in the street. She was able to get ahold of a cart to sell from, and Briza



intervened to help her stock the cart and get the concession to operate it outside the main entrance to the largest school in Alto Cayma. Hopefully, this will enable Sra. Marcia to improve, through her own efforts, the condition of her family's finances.

Community Progress - A New High School

The Colegio Dean Valdivia (the school I just mentioned), has long



operated with a split shift, with primary school kids (and faculty) in the morning and high school in the afternoon, an arrangement somewhat inconvenient for all concerned. Now, however, the government is building a



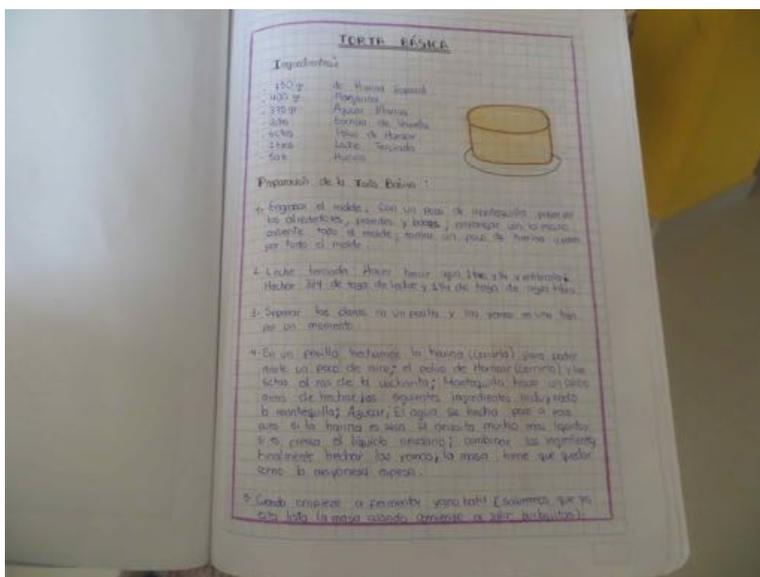
brand new building across the ravine to house the high school, so the two levels will no longer have to share a single facility. This is just one of many advances taking place in the lower area of Alto Cayma, where we started working 15 years ago and continue to work today. Meanwhile, in the new settlement of Mujeres con Esperanza, 2-1/2 miles farther up the hill, none of these amenities have yet arrived. That's why we're concentrating more and more of our efforts on our new operating location in Mujeres con Esperanza.

Cooking Classes

And speaking of Mujeres con Esperanza, the new cooking classes we're offering there are now underway. The ladies are enjoying the classes a lot. Here they're learning how to make delicious (I can attest to that personally :-)



little filled pastries. One requirement of the class is that each lady keep a



detailed notebook of everything they're being taught, and they do a very neat and careful job of that.

Letters

I never actually issued a call for letters from sponsors before I returned to Peru this time, because I'm trying to manage the correspondence on a continuous, ongoing basis via internet, rather than amassing a large collection of letters to be processed (translated) all at once. If any sponsor who hasn't written to their "ahijado" (sponsee) would still like to do so, please feel free. Just e-mail me your letter and I'll get it translated and delivered. If you include photos, I'll also print those out and see that they're delivered along with the letter.

Caritas

On Thursday, we met with Javier Delgado, the Administrator of



Caritas in Arequipa. (Caritas is the charitable arm of the Catholic Church.) Caritas Arequipa has built a vocational training center in the area by the airport known as Cono Norte. Javier told us about the different skills they teach, and it sounded like this center could be of service to our people here in

Alto Cayma. Next week we're going to visit their facility and continue to pursue whatever possibilities it offers.

Mujeres con Esperanza

On Thursday afternoon, we had our usual busy slate of activities up in Mujeres con Esperanza. With an elderly group, followed by two English classes running in parallel, followed by a Kids' Club, there's always a need for helping hands. Lidia has devised a way to provide John and Briza with all the "volunteers" they need. To maintain discipline in the student programs she runs, Lidia has established rules which, if the students break them, result in "rewards" for the transgressors. For example, being late to a meeting "rewards" a student with an "opportunity" to help out up in Mujeres con Esperanza. Here, for example, is Liliana, supervising the Leoncitos



("Little Lions") English class when Briza had to step out. She's showing a



video which has captured the rapt attention of her audience.

Meanwhile, in the larger English class with the older kids next door, it looks like chaos is reigning, but student "volunteer" Jhon is helping to



maintain order. The study of English is taken more seriously at this level,



with written exercises and exams.

The Executive Team

John and I work a lot with our 3 Directors (Victor, Lidia and Briza) as the Executive Team. These 3 work very well together, and now that we have



them all physically co-located on the second floor of our building, there is a constant flow of communication among them. The objective is for John and me to get ourselves out of the day-to-day decision-making business, and let the 3 Directors carry out the work of the Association, acting as checks and balances on each other to insure that all points of view are represented equally - Logistics (Victor), Finances (Lidia) and Social Work (Briza) - in the decisions which are made.

New Library Leaders

Our Youth Library is about to reopen for the new school year. Lia, the young woman who operated the library for us last year, has moved on to other responsibilities, but we have had the good fortune to hire 2 new student teachers to replace her, both of whom are studying at the Pedagogic Institute of Arequipa, the same as Lia was. Danilo is in his 5th year of studies,



specializing in Secondary Education, and Guisela is in her 3rd year, specializing in Initial Education. As always, their job will be to promote interest in reading on the part of the children, conduct dynamic activities related to reading, and help the children when they're having problems with their school homework.

Maycol

Maycol, a 12-year old boy in our Acercándonos sponsorship program who had been battling leukemia for a year, finally succumbed to this cruel disease on March 24. His last days were spent in the hospital, where he could be kept more comfortable than he would be if he were at home. All the



doctors, nurses and interns rallied around Maycol, inspired by his courage in the face of adversity. He got lots of attention from the young medics, in



particular. They conducted a fundraising activity to be able to buy him a PlayStation.

There is a professional soccer team here in Arequipa called "Melgar", and all the kids look up to the players as heroes. One of the interns had a friend on the team, and through that connection, got 3 of the players to come



visit Maycol in the hospital and give him a Melgar soccer jersey.

There was one intern in particular who really formed an attachment to



Maycol, and he took Maycol's passing especially hard. Maycol said he wanted his PlayStation to go to this intern.

Maycol has left a huge hole in the hearts of everyone who came to know him during his long and courageous fight.

Acercádonos Children's Meeting

On Saturday afternoon, we had our regular monthly meeting with the children in our Acercádonos children's program. We started the meeting



with a minute of silence in memory of Maycol. (When Briza announced Maycol's passing, the parents in the audience, thinking of their own children, reacted as if someone had just hit them in the solar plexis.)

We next gave recognition to Araceli, a little girl who had taken first



place in her second grade class last year.

We then had instructive talks from a nutritionist and a dentist, on



healthy eating and preventive dental care for children, respectively. Also in the medical vein, Briza announced that Health Bridges International, a nonprofit out of Portland, OR, which does a lot of public health work with Father Alex here in Alto Cayma, is about to launch a campaign against anemia in small children.

And finally, as they do at the beginning of each new school year, two members of the Interact club, Elizabeth and Luis Angel, issued an invitation



to all children ages 12-18 to join our Interact service club.

Pollada

On Sunday morning, there was a "pollada" (sale of homemade chicken dinners) conducted by a family to raise money to pay a family member's medical expenses. When this happens, I like to buy 10 dinners to support the cause (win), and then give the dinners to our neediest elderly people (win-win). I always have Victor and his family help me with the logistics of the



distribution as the people come out of church on Sunday morning, an activity that always gives them great joy (win-win-win). As for the cost, being blessed by God with everything I need and more besides, all I'm doing is spending my children's inheritance, of which they heartily approve (win-win-win-win). Oh, and I think I failed to mention - I love this stuff (win-win-win-win-win)!

Rain, Rain, Go Away..... Hey, It Worked!

Our rainy season this year proved to be a real dud. It hardly rained at all, and certainly not enough to test our spillway concept for controlling the



runoff and preventing massive erosion around our building up in Mujeres con Esperanza. So, as they used to say in Brooklyn, "Wait 'til next year!"

And that's this week's news from Alto Cayma, where every person has a story, and our mission is to see that as many of those stories as possible have a happy ending.

"Love God, Serve Neighbor/Serving Alto Cayma",

Jim