

Palo Alto Friends EL SALVADOR PROJECTS September 2008

www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org

Introducing Yoselín Yoseth Nolasco, Medical Student

Jamie Newton introduces the student his family is sponsoring. She is from Morazán, El Salvador's northeast department, in the mountains at the Honduran border. During the civil war, it was one of the most contested areas, and for years almost no one had access to schooling.

When we visited the Project communities as members of a small delegation traveling with Robert and Carmen Broz in March, 2004, my wife Marion and I were deeply impressed by the vision and sense of purpose that sixteen-year old Yoselín Yoseth Nolasco expressed with such clarity and obvious sincerity. In a letter of appreciation she had composed for Carmen, Yoselín wrote:

"I am in my first year of technical high school. I'm a person who sets tasks and objectives for herself. One of my objectives is to excel academically, to learn a little more every day. "I have always dreamed of becoming an excellent doctor with the



Yoselin Yoseth Nolasco

help of my parents, the strength of God, and the good fortune of the support I've been offered by many people. As a young woman I want very much to help my parents in the future, and also to contribute to the development of our country. ...With all my heart I thank everyone who has helped me all these years. I promise not to let them down."

Two years later, we were thrilled to learn that Yoselín had qualified for admission to the National University in San Miguel. With my sister, Alice Newton, and her husband, Danny Meehan, Marion and I share a commitment to sponsor Yoselín until she completes her eight-year medical training program.

Yoselín lives with her grandparents and cousins a short distance from the town of Perquín in Morazán, in the northeastern part of El Salvador, where health care for rural people is very limited. Her determination to serve her community as a doctor is inspiring, and we feel truly privileged to be able to help her achieve that goal.

Five universities and three educational programs met with high school graduates at the "University Fair" in Suchitoto. Shown: The University of El Salvador's stand. See story on page two.



Palo Alto Friends Meeting El Salvador Projects Field directors report, September 2008

Dear Friends,

It has been raining for the past four days, the first temporal (big storm) of the year. We have had a normal year for rainfall and the man-made reservoir, Lake Suchitlán, is nearly full. This is the time of year that brings troubling thoughts to mind, because CELL (the national electric company), which operates five hydroelectric dams on the Lempa River, tries to estimate lake levels, rainfall, and river flow to maximize its profits. The chance of more storms, tropical depressions or even hurricanes is quite high, and when water levels reach their maximum, forced releases become necessary. This normally results in flooding throughout the coastal lowlands or Bajo Lempa as it known here. In the fourteen years that I have lived in El Salvador the poor rural communities in these lowlands have been flooded at least seven times, leaving thousands homeless, their crops and livestock washed away, and their homes underwater for weeks at a time. In developed countries lawsuits would be filed, damages and losses would be compensated for, and life would go on. But here, the poor become poorer and nobody seems to care. I pray that this year the electrical company will put profits second to human life, that God will keep an eye on the storms that pass over in El Salvador, and that someday the national government will see all Salvadorians as equals.

Our educational projects continue as strongly as in the past, though recent changes in the way they are managed here has led our local committee to start working with other groups that maintain similar goals. For the last two years we have been supporting AVP (Alternative to Violence Program) workshops in the area of Suchitoto, working with Frank Cummings from Atlanta Friends Meeting, and sister Peggy O'Neil from the Centro Arte Para La Paz (Art Center for Peace). This year we have held one Facilitators' Workshop and two Basic Workshops in the communities of El Barío and La Bermuda. Co-financing of AVP workshops will continue in 2009, we hope.

Frank Cummings also works in education, and coordinates a student loan program very similar to our own. For the last two years we have been working together in the area of Suchitoto. Frank, with the support of his meeting, runs a program that is administered by CRC (Committee of reconstruction and socioeconomic development of the communities of Suchitoto). Four years ago he also convinced the Catholic priest to start a collection for university scholarships and in 2008 the parochial scholarships provided eight \$500 scholarships for university students from Suchitoto. We started combining efforts in 2007 when we planned our first university fair, inviting graduating high school students, five universities, and representatives of the three educational programs. Since then our objectives have widened; we now have a web page <www.suchitoto-edu.com>, a bilingual brochure, and we're pushing for the city government to get involved in educational programs as well.

The universities that have participated in the two university fairs offer information on enrollment, scholarship programs and academic orientation. Our plans for 2009, include looking for local financing from large national and multinational companies, improving job opportunities for univer-



Centro Arte para la Paz, and the graduation of the Advanced Workshop of Alternatives to Violence (AVP). The tallest in the group is Robert Broz!

city students, and inviting institutions that provide technical training, trade skills and other informal educational options for high school graduates to next year's university fair. Funding from our support groups in the U.S. is on the decline, and the number of high school graduates in need of financial support is rising each year. We are now looking to combine efforts in a similar manner in the areas of northern Morazán and Apulo, knowing that there are other groups that manage educational projects in these areas as well.

We hope to continue to better the lives of our friends in El Salvador by giving them the chance to study, empowering them to make the future social, political and economic changes that need to be made here.

To close this report I would like you to consider that even with the current devalued dollar, elevated price of petroleum, and high cost of living, we can change a life forever with a very little of money...for just \$250 we can put another person through a year of high school and with only \$1000 we can provide a year of university studies to someone that otherwise would have no chance to study.

Again I thank you for your past, present, and future support, making it possible for us to do our work here in El Salvador.

Robert Broz
Field Director
Palo Alto Friends Meeting
El Salvador Projects



From our clerk, Trudy Reagan

A room was alive with excitement at Friends' Pacific Yearly Meeting when seven different Friends' groups told of their projects in Latin America. Over and over again, we saw how extremely small committees were making a big difference in lives of people, from Mexico to Bolivia. The El Salvador Projects had a big presence at this meeting, especially the five young Friends who had just arrived back from our Teen Trip to the El Salvador Projects. Ebullient, and full of good insights, they were nevertheless awed when Carmen Broz, who started the projects in 1989, spoke about the potential of education to end poverty in every family it touched. And she was awed by them! (see her article on the right).

The Latin American Concerns Committee, which arranged this meeting, will soon have its own web site. It will have links to the web site of each project, including ours (www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org).

Over and over again, I see in our small committee meetings how much imagination and feeling goes into our work. And I see in the care Robert Broz takes in nourishing the projects, a quality of work not easily duplicated by larger organizations. Carmen has often said that if each congregation and

little community here would adopt a community in the developing world, we could vanquish poverty.

Robert hopes to visit the United States in summer of 2009, so some of you may get to hear first hand how the projects are developing.



Carmen Broz wrote this after hearing the young people from the Teen Trip speak:

I was so glad to have had the opportunity of meeting some of the young Quakers who visited the El Salvador Projects. One of my greatest fears was that I would die and no one from the Quaker community would know the leaders and people who had changed because of the El Salvador Projects. After hearing how their visit had impacted their lives and how they were sharing their experiences with friends and classmates, I am convinced that many of them will repay all the blessings they have received by serving those who have not been so lucky.

As a young woman I was an atheist. My encounter with the Quakers in a work camp in Mexico changed all that. I found them to be the greatest equalitarians in their belief that there is that of God in every human being.

From Bees to Business

Looking for economic alternatives in a world of globalization

On a recent trip to Morazan, I meet with representatives of FECANM (The Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Northern Morazan) to learn about a new economic project being implemented in the area. The project, an agro-industrial business venture with participation of members from some of the 13 agricultural cooperatives that form FECANM is now underway after more than two years of preparation.

I had been well aware of the bee keeping and honey production that was started some four years ago as a complement to the macadamia plantations, another initiative of the Federation to improve income to the small landholders in the area. However, I was quite surprised to learn about the new company, a cooperative agro-business started by the small scale bee keepers. They already have researched and developed a new product that they hope

to produce and sell locally and internationally after it passes the patent registration process here in El Salvador. The product is a diet supplement and immune-system booster made from honey, pollen, propolis and royal jelly.

It was truly amazing to hear about their future sales projections, see their trademark and prototypes of labels for the product, and learn about the health benefits of this natural wonder drink. The new company/cooperative is owned by the same bee keepers. They have hired technicians to aid them in the development, production and marketing. When I listened to the technicians, I realized the future economic potential for these once-impooverished Salvadoran campesinos. Economic benefits won't be limited to the members of the cooperatives. The company will be paying higher prices for raw honey, propolis, pollen and royal jelly to other bee keepers from the area, so they too will benefit by receiving more income for their raw products. The



Bee hives in the shady forest. Macadamia trees have flowers, so the cooperative reasoned that macadamia honey would be a secondary benefit to their operation.

Even before the nut trees matured, bees made splendid honey from other local plants, providing seasonal income to the families. Now, with the new plans, it will become another big enterprise.



In 2007, Trudy Reagan toured the macadamia orchard and bee-keeping operation with the teen trip. Note how mountainous it is! On the right is a macadamia tree, which is grown among other useful trees like coffee and banana, and preserving some of the pines. No monoculture here!

We also saw the macadamia nursery, with thousands of seedlings.

Our little adventure: Our hosts took us over a bone-rattling cobblestone road to the operation, but promised to bring us back by a smoother road. However, a bridge was washed out! Right: Turning the truck around.



cooperative considers it an obligation to pass on to the other bee keepers some of the added value of the final product. Wow! Isn't that what we call fair trade?

At the present they are only waiting for final approval of the patent and approval by the ministry of health, a process that has taken over a year and is now in the final stages. Once approvals have been obtained, the small processing, packaging and storage plant will start production. After my tour of the very modern installations came the final sales pitch: Would I/we help them by looking for market opportunities in the U.S.? And would I/we know of potential investors and sales reps to help promote this new product? I know nothing about sales but they seem to have a good

idea about profit sharing, percentages and sales benefits. The name of the company Eco Morazán, the first product to be produced is SaluMiel. Its web site:

<http://www.ecomorazan.com>

From their website:

Eco Morazán - a cooperative agribusiness
 "We are transforming the produce from our beekeepers into nutritional supplements that helps you to be alert and to stay healthy."

This is just one example of how the people of rural El Salvador are looking to better their lives in a world that faces global economic changes.

Robert Broz
 Field Director

Bill Bauriedel, our finance clerk, writes:

We are very fortunate to have a very responsive group of supporters. Each mailing goes out to about 550 individuals and about 25 Quaker Monthly Meetings plus one Unitarian Church. Other churches have learned about the Projects through their members who are supporters, and have scheduled meetings for reports on the Projects. Over the last three and a half years about 235 individuals and 15 Monthly Meetings have supported our work. That is a remarkable statistic! So far this year we have raised about \$10,700 which is far short of the \$36,700 budget we have set. The budget is very basic. Roughly \$19,200 is for university student loans, \$8,900 for community projects and \$8,600 for administration which is mostly for Robert's work on our behalf. Needless to say, if we are to achieve our goals for this year we count on your continuing support. Sadly, inflation of food and gas prices has been more severe in El Salvador than here, and creates new challenges in our fund-raising efforts. Even so, dollars spent in El Salvador go so much further than the same dollars spent in the United States. Imagine getting a year of college education for \$1000, or \$400 for a part-time elementary school librarian. Your money couldn't be better leveraged!



High school student in El Barío

Your old reading glasses can restore clear vision to a Salvadoran senior!

Our Project AGE (Adults, Glasses, and Education) provides glasses to older people in rural El Salvador whose vision has weakened, enabling them to regain lost independence and productivity. Workshops bring seniors together for companionship and skills training, with help from the young people whose education we support. Reading glasses of all strengths are needed -- and so many of us have the glasses we no longer need just tucked away in a desk drawer! Please send your extra glasses to:

Jamie Newton
1007 Almanor Avenue
Menlo Park, CA 94025



YES! I WANT TO OFFER ACCESS TO EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS IN EL SALVADOR!

Mail to: Palo Alto Friends Meeting - El Salvador Projects, 957 Colorado, Palo Alto, CA 94303

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY - STATE - ZIP _____
AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Contribution checks should be made to:
"PAFM - E.S. Projects" (This stands for Palo Alto Friends Meeting - El Salvador Projects)
This will be used for **General Programs**, unless you specify in the memo line
"College Loans" or another preference. Your contribution is tax-deductible.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

Please send **eyeglass donations** for Project AGE to James Newton, 1007 Almanor Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025
Please send **laptop donations** to "PAFM-ES" - %Paul Engstrom", 655 Washington, Los Altos, CA 94022 (Clearly mark "PAFM-ES" on the package)
Laptop requirements: Must be a PC of recent vintage with a Pentium 4 processor or greater.
These will be used in the computer lab at the El Barío high school.