

January – March 2009 Report

Taller Artístico Xuchialt



Marvin giving orientation on the first day of class.

TAX started their fourth year of classes on January 31. They currently have a total of 85 students registered in the seven different art and dance classes offered. This is a big year for TAX—in November 2009, they will have their first graduating class from the four-year long *Crear y Crecer* module. They consider this a huge accomplishment!

The youngest class, *Creatividad Infantil* (6-10 year olds), is by far the largest class, with 27 students registered! This class is taught by Gladys, with assistance from a few of the 3rd and 4th year *Crear y Crecer* students. Soany teaches *Preparación Basica* (11-14 year olds), while balancing

new motherhood. Her son Diego was born in December (photo at right). Marlon (who graduated from the Fine Arts School in Managua last November) is teaching *Crear y Crecer II* and *Crear y Crecer IV*, while a new volunteer, Pamela, is teaching *Crear y Crecer I* and Lenin is teaching *Crear y Crecer III*.



Marlon, helping one of our scholarship students from Talolinga

This year, PGL is sponsoring seven scholarships for students from Talolinga and El Porvenir to attend class at TAX. Three young people from El Porvenir hike down 45 minutes and take a 2 hour bus to León in order to attend art class (one of these same women comes back on Sunday for dance class!), while three young women from Talolinga hike down 2.5 hours and then ride a bus for 2.5 hours to get to art class. Talk about dedication! In exchange for their scholarships, which cover transportation, registration and monthly tuition, these six students have the obligation to use their newly learned artistic knowledge to benefit their communities. The young women from Talolinga will be working with Doña Angela to create an art school for children in their community and the young people from El Porvenir will work with the primary and secondary school teachers in El Porvenir to integrate art, culture and folkloric dance into classroom curriculum.

Infrastructure Grant Program

The Infrastructure Grant Fund is officially open! We sent out the RFP (Request for Proposals) for the first cycle of the Infrastructure Grant Program in February. This US\$1,000 grant (financed by PGL) provides funding for materials for small infrastructure projects in rural or urban León. The deadline for applications was March 1 and we received fewer applications than I had hoped for, but the applications we did receive are strong applications and we will definitely be able to fund one of them. All of the applications were from the northeast sector of León and most of them were for infrastructure/safety improvements to schools and health posts. I'll schedule site visits and meetings with the local boards next week and we should have a project funded and in execution in April!

El Porvenir

Installation of the pipeline started the first week of February and as of last week, we were well beyond the mid-way point. There is a total of almost 3,000 meters of pipeline to install and the terrain is quite rocky, with several elevation changes, making installation a bit complicated. The installation team is being led by Pedro and Pedro, two workers

from Jubilee House Community. They are assisted by several El Porvenir co-op members and last week, Mike Toole and George Waltman, both from the Engineering Department at Bucknell University, came to help with some of the more technical issues and to provide some general supervision and evaluation of what has been done. Now for some photos....



Above: The community is already out of the stored rain water, so the tractor hauls up water every morning from the tank down below. Every morning you see the line of community members with their buckets and pails to receive the two gallons per person that are allotted.



Above: They've mainly been using the tractor to haul the pipes up and down the mountain as needed. However, there are areas that are not accessible by tractor.



Above: The work group hiking to the work site.



Above: Co-op members storing pipes and rebar at the end of the day.

Right: The (re)installation of the new water pump. For the past several months, we had worked on a set-up with a diesel motor, but the motor ended up vibrating too much, to the extent to which it would have ruined both the base and the relatively fragile pump. Hence, we went back to the original idea of wiring a #2 cable from the existing generator at the well to power the new pump.





Above: Pedro and Pedro (two guys in white) from JHC working on tightening a coupling while Bucknell professor Mike Toole (in blue at left) cleans the next elbow for installation.

Right: More sections of pipeline



Delegations

We had a great time with the January CPS group, lead by Courtney Wege and David Neagley. I think they gave a presentation at the February PGL monthly meeting, so I won't elaborate too much on details of that delegation. Just last week (March 7-14) we had another CPS delegation down, led by Ruth de Jesus from the Intercultural Center. It was another relatively large group—fourteen delegates and one faculty leader—and their focus was on the financial crisis and its effects at a grassroots level here. It was a very packed schedule, with visits to TAX, El Porvenir, Xochilt Acalt, Padre Ramos Natural Reserve, San Juan de Oriente and a youth center. Ofelia has really been handling these last two delegations more or less on her own, which has freed me up to make more frequent visits/stays up in El Porvenir for the water project. Unfortunately for all of us, Ofelia will be leaving PGL in mid-April. ☹ She and her husband have decided to make the move up to their farm in Esteli, where they have coffee, fruit trees and cattle. We wish them the best of luck...

In other news...

As of March 16, we are sharing our offices with another NGO! In February, Global Glimpse (<http://globalglimpse.org>) came to us with an offer to office-share from March-August 2009. Global Glimpse is a San Francisco-based non-profit that brings down high school juniors on three-week delegations during the summer months. They needed some office space as their staff of four prepares this summer's delegations, so they will be sharing PGL offices for the next few months!

Also, Ofelia will not be only one leaving the organization... In February I gave my notice to the Ex-Comm that I, too, will be moving on. It has been a very full, rewarding and busy four years for me as Project Coordinator but I have decided to leave PGL in order to pursue other opportunities here in León. I want to dedicate time to my continued professional development and will be working on a distance grad program in Poverty Reduction with the University of London. I also hope to get involved with a coffee project that a friend of mine is starting with coffee cooperatives here in Nicaragua. The job has been very demanding at times (especially during delegations) and I think it is time for me to place more priority on having time for my daughter, Alejandra, who is already in the 1st grade. It was not an easy decision to make and I will miss working with both the friends I have made in Gettysburg as well as the people involved in our projects here in León. I am grateful for all the support and the confidence you have placed in me over these last several years—thank you!

*Submitted by:
Felice Chay, Project Coordinator
Project Gettysburg/Leon
March 18, 2009*