

## May-July 2008 Report

### Taller Artístico Xuchialt

#### *Business Planning Workshops*

We had our second session of the Business Plan Workshop series on May 31. This session focused on the Marketing and Operational sections of their Business Plans. The workshops have been pretty intense, starting at around 8:30am and ending around 6:30pm. The two business teams have been working hard on their business plans and I think they have also been enjoying the planning process. I sent them out into the streets during the May session to do some market research and surveys. The next session, which will focus on financial projections, will be done in August.



The Mask-Making Business Team: (L-R) Marlon, Lenin, William and Samuel



The Dance Costume Rental Business Team: (L-R) Soany, Gladys, Nancy, Marvin

#### *Fundraisers*

On June 28, the Parents of the TAX students helped organize a cultural presentation and fundraiser at the Casa de Cultura. There were dance performances, music performances, art on display and LOTS of food for sale, all prepared and donated by the parents. They raised almost C\$1300 (roughly \$65) after expenses. Despite the last-minute planning, the event was a huge success and the TAX Directiva was very excited about the parents' participation.

#### *Taller Artístico Xuchialt*

Attendance in the art and dance classes on Saturdays and Sundays has dropped a bit since the beginning of the school year and their current student count (as of mid-July) is 64 students. Many dance students have been lost, since classes have been inconsistent with scheduling conflicts with the teachers. A new volunteer, Elizabeth, has joined the team of TAX professors as the new dance teacher. She began at the beginning of July and we hope more consistency in classes will bring the matriculation back up.

#### *October 2008*

Mark Kavanaugh and his students at Urbana High School have raised \$1200, which will go towards bringing at least two TAX artists up to Urbana High in Frederick, MDA in October of 2008. The two artists, William Caceres and Marvin Hernandez, will spend a week and a half at Urbana working on a collaborative mural and giving art classes and presentations to students. William and Marvin will also be in Gettysburg for the Annual PGL-sponsored Salsa Dance on the Square and will be present at the opening of the TAX Painting Exposition at the Ragged Edge, all to take place on October 3.

## El Porvenir

### *Water Project*

We have a few technical issues that have us a little delayed (again) on the installation of the water system. We needed to determine the phase (single-phase or three-phase) of the submersible pump at the well and after several months, many consultations and a handful of voltage/amperage readings thrown in, it has finally been agreed and concluded that it is indeed single-phase. This both complicates and simplifies the situation. The good news is that both pumps (the old one at the well and the new one that Bucknell students installed last summer) are indeed compatible, since both are single-phase. Unfortunately, we also discovered that because the generator at the well is wired to be single-phase, it does not have the capacity to power both pumps at the same time. So Bob the Canadian (one of my chief advisors on this whole project) suggests re-wiring the generator and extending a cable so that the generator can power both pumps or purchasing a second dedicated generator or fuel engine for the new pump. We are trying to research the costs associated with the different options.

There has also been the question of where to start with installation (at the top of the mountain or at the bottom) and how to pressure-test the pipes to make sure installation has been done correctly-- a whole other can of worms which has not yet been resolved.

Fortunately, rainy season has started and the community has water again up in their metal cisterns. Unfortunately, this has seemed to reduce the sense of urgency to get this water project done! Regardless, I continue "poking" everyone involved trying to get things moving and decisions made.

### *Delegations and other visitors*

I've made several trips up to El Porvenir in the last few months, both to collect information from the water project, but also to introduce a few other groups in León to the coffee co-op. In May I took a group of 5<sup>th</sup> year secondary students from Calasanz Catholic School that were doing research for a school project on organic coffee. On June 24, I also took up a group of 33 high school juniors from the San Francisco area that were in León with a program called Global Glimpse. I'll be taking a second group up from Global Glimpse on July 25.

On July 19 (the anniversary of the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution), I will be taking the professors from Taller Artístico Xuchialt and ten of their students to give art and dance classes to the youth in El Porvenir. I had taken the TAX Directiva up in April of this year to visit El Porvenir and they promised the community's directiva that they would return at some point to give art and dance classes to the youth in El Porvenir, since the youth of the community rarely have opportunities for cultural activities. The TAX teachers and students will be giving painting and dance classes to 50-60 students in the morning and we'll have an exhibition and cultural presentation for the community in the afternoon.

## Santa Rosa

Unfortunately there is not much new news in Santa Rosa. The directiva has been very helpful in making arrangements for this summer's delegations but, other than that, has not been very active nor diligent in meeting regularly. Doña Bertha has taken a full-time job with the Ministry of Health as a nurse in a health post in El Jicaral (a nearby municipality), so she has been noticeably busier and absent in meetings and activities. We had hoped to send Lilliam on another round of community visits this year, but I was quite disappointed that the Health Center was not willing to provide 50% of the funding (with PGL putting forth the other 50%).

## **Delegations**

Ofelia spent May and the first week of June busily preparing for Mark Kavanaugh's high school delegation. We made several trips up to Santa Rosa to meet with the host families and to make arrangements for the three days and

three nights that the Urbana High School students would be staying in Santa Rosa. In León, arrangements were made to stay (for the second year in a row) in Sutiava.



The eight high school delegates and Mark arrived on June 13. (Photo at left with their Sutiava families). The favorite part of many of the delegates' trip was their time in Santa Rosa! Activities in Santa Rosa included a hike to El Charco (Lilliam's community) and ice-breaker games with youth there, meetings with different community members in Santa Rosa, including the CENMIN directiva and the new FSLN mayoral candidate, bathing in the river, extraction of gold and making tortillas. They also spent two afternoons with English classes in their sister school—Colegio Jose de la Cruz Mena. The students had a great time, though a few did get sick during the course of the week!

July has been a busy month, as well, as we prepare for our first community delegation in several years! Karl Mattson will be coming down with seven other Gettysburg community members from Aug 1-9. We are excited to have found a new host family neighborhood (in Barrio El Laborio), as well as to try a few new activities, such as a visit to the Padre Ramos Natural Reserve, a rural community ecotourism project just north of Chinandega (and the site of Ofelia's bachelor thesis). The delegation will consist of a general introduction to Nicaragua and PGL's work here. We will spend a night in Santa Rosa, as well as visit El Porvenir, take a tour of rural schools, attend dance class at Taller Artistico Xuchialt and visit a fair-trade artisans organization in Managua.

### **In other news...**



Ale and I spent a week in Gettysburg during the month of June. I was able to participate in the annual retreat, where we had some really great discussions on strategic areas that PGL needs to work on in the next several years. During the course of the week, I also met with Barbara to discuss grant-writing opportunities, Gretchen to work out our new delegation policies and fees and I also made a trip to Bucknell to meet with engineering professors Mike Toole and Charles Kim regarding the water project in El Porvenir. We had a good conversation regarding pipe testing and some other logistical issues regarding installation of the system.

After leaving Gettysburg, Ale and I spent a little over a week visiting friends in Philadelphia (where Ale celebrated her fifth birthday!) and then we flew to Atlanta, where we attended my brother's wedding. Ale was the flower girl ☺ (photo at left).

*Submitted by:  
Felice Chay, Project Coordinator  
Project Gettysburg/Leon  
July 2008*