

SISTER CITY UPDATE

Issue 15

Richland Center-Santa Teresa Sister City Project

September 2001

Chacocente Turtle Hatchery Set to Open

At the northern end of Chococente's beach, near the village of Veracruz, a small population of Pacific Ocean leatherback sea turtles lay their eggs.

This month, Randall Arauz, Central America Director of Earth Island Institute's Sea Turtle Restoration Project, will return to Chococente to begin setting up a system for accurate collection of data about leatherbacks and a hatchery for their eggs. He will train local people to protect the collected eggs in a nursery so that none are lost to poachers or predators. A biologist living at Chococente will supervise this work.

Several organizations will be working together on the project. Our Sister City Project's money will be used specifically for the hiring and training of local Chococente residents to monitor the turtles and run the hatchery.

The leatherback is the largest of all turtles. It may grow to eight feet long and weigh 1500 pounds and is the only sea turtle that does not have a hard top shell. The leatherback is a great wanderer, as it ranges in search of jellyfish, its main food source. For example, Atlantic leatherbacks nesting in northern South America have been found as far north as Newfoundland.

There has been a drastic decline in leatherback numbers in the Pacific Ocean. Turtle scientists estimate that 80% have been lost in the last fifteen years. The main problems are human consumption of eggs, people killing the turtles for food and oil, death in fishing nets and deep sea long lines, and loss of nesting habitat through beach erosion or building construction.

At this year's International Sea Turtle Symposium, the Central American Leatherback Initiative was formed to address the decline of turtles at nesting beaches and offshore. Our Chococente leatherback project will be part of this initiative.

Smith Reports on Work in Nicaragua

As many of you know, Peter Smith has been representing the Sister City Project in Nicaragua since last year. He has been focusing his work on the villages of La Palma, El Papalon, and Escalante in the Chacocente region of Santa Teresa. Following are excerpts from his latest report to the SSP board:

The last 3 months have been very busy, but not necessarily real productive. Working in Nicaragua is like working in deep mud or sand. A lot of the progress may be in intangibles – improved relationships, acquiring more info about different things, getting to know more and more of the players in the area...

One of the things I have been working very hard on is the health committees. These are made up of the 2 Promotores de Salud and one more person to help organize and raise funds. After the 6 ladies came back from Esteli (*with help from SSP funding, 2 women from each village attended a natural healing school there in*

July), we had a meeting with all the communities in which they talked about their experiences. It was really nice to see the interest on both sides. They all agreed that it was important for the communities to at least raise some of the funds for their health care.

The six will go to Barrio Nuevo for a 2-day training which includes a lot of other health promoters from other communities. This is a whole new world for these ladies, and they seem to be responding to the challenge. I have provided packets of medicines from the Nandaime clinic for each community so that the promoters have something to work with.

The distribution of the eyeglasses was a smashing success. (*When Peter returned to Chacocente in June, we took 100 pairs of glasses donated by local Lions Clubs.*) About 10% of the glasses could not find a happy home because they were too powerful one way or another. I could use another suitcase full—finishing the job in Escalante and then turning the rest over to the Alcaldia.

I thought we would be working on the community health center by now, but a variety of things have kept us occupied, not the least of which was getting the plot of land for the center surveyed and legalized. I think there is a lot of support to get on with the project.

For the school, I delivered the books sent down and they were a big hit. Then a lot of people said they could find me a blackboard, but no luck, so I finally bought the materials and had 2 made at a local carpenter shop. They are now at the school.

The conservation food-for-work program was started. 6 men were "hired" each week (*paid in food purchased with SSP funds*), working on completing the wells and installation of the pumps, development of the community gardens including fencing to keep the cattle out, erosion control ditches, & making compost pits. Frankly, it was a mixed bag. The rains came and it was planting time again, so the men were busy. My feeling is that, while the results of the program were not dramatic, we made definite progress towards real conservation goals and also toward a higher level of community organization.

Legalization of the (*La Palma & El Papelon Development*) Association is progressing. The legal document is prepared and signed by the members and presently José Martínez has it because it has to go through the legislation for approval.

The SSP has hired Yader Estrada, a Nicaraguan technical advisor to work with the villagers to establish a functional dry forest agriculture. Peter expressed some disappointment with his final report and plans to ask him to improve it. However, he also notes that: Yader mixed well with the villagers and started some important conservation work and helped several farmers with past problems with vegetable production.

Editorial Statement from the Staff of the Sister City Update.

On behalf of the SSP membership, we wish to express our sympathies for all those whose lives were shattered by the events of September 11. As the people of this country and their leaders consider how to respond to these attacks, we ask that the focus be on justice rather than acts of retribution, which can only perpetuate the cycle of violence. We believe that the principles of peace, justice and reconciliation which motivated, in part, the founding of the Sister City Project, represent our only hope of preventing more such tragedies from happening in the future.

SISTER CITY EVENTS

BURRITO SUPPER IS PART OF FIESTA

On Saturday, October 6 from 5-7 pm, the second day of the Center Color Fiesta, our Sister City Project will present its Seventh Annual Burrito Supper at Blue Highways. The supper will feature tortillas with a wide variety of fillings, as well as salsas and sauces, Central American-style rice, and delicious homemade desserts. The meal price is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child. Lower family rates are available.

Those in attendance will also have an opportunity to talk to Peter Smith, our representative from Santa Teresa, who will be back in Wisconsin in October. Peter will be presenting a slide show about his work in Nicaragua between 7 and 8.

Starting at 8 pm, the BeOh'Be Blues Band will play for your listening and dancing pleasure. This local group, from Richland Center and the Kickapoo Valley, can really rock. They play a mixture of electric blues, rock'n'roll, and original music. The band is currently working on an album of original songs to be released next year.

You can listen or dance on the beautiful Blue Highways hardwood floor for \$5 per adult and \$3 per child. The special combined price for the supper and dance together is \$8 per adult and \$4 per child. Volunteers are needed to donate desserts or serve at the meal. Please call Jane Furchgott at 583-2431 or Mary Bard at 647-2594.

All proceeds will benefit the Project's work for the people and environment of Santa Teresa, Nicaragua.

Note: We would like to thank the Richland Center Chamber/Main Street Partnership for including the Burrito Supper as part of the Center Color Fiesta. We encourage all to take part in other Fiesta events during the weekend of Oct 5-7. Krouskop Park will be the center for a wide range of family-oriented activities all 3 days. The Ocooch Mt. Bike Tour is set for Sunday. Those attending our benefit can take in the "Canyon of Lights" illuminated parade, which will pass in front of Blue Highways. It is scheduled for 7 PM on Saturday.

SISTER CITY FEATURED ON WRCO

WRCO radio (100.9 FM, 1450 AM) will feature the Sister City Project and our work in Santa Teresa on Thursday, October 4. Peter Smith and Jane Furchgott will be guests on the Morning Show, which airs at 9:10

Plans are being made for Peter to speak about Santa Teresa at other times during his upcoming visit, but dates and locations had not been finalized at press time. More information should be available on the radio show or at the benefit. If you know of a group that would like to sponsor Peter as a speaker, please call Stein Goering (538-3820), Jane Furchgott (583-2431) or Peggy Swan (536-3993)

VARIETY SHOW RETURNS NOVEMBER 10

The Variety Show Returns! To be held at Blue Highways on Saturday, November 10 at 7 pm, this year's edition will be a benefit for our Sister City in Nicaragua.

The show will include a big variety of acts, including both kids and adults. Dawn Kiefer will be master-of-ceremonies. With a maximum act length of ten minutes, this should be an evening of fast-paced fun.

To top it off, the intermission will feature a selection of delicious food made by Larissa Wilson from Pine River Food Co-op ingredients. Larissa teaches the Co-op cooking classes.

HOLIDAY GIFT SALE SET FOR NOVEMBER 17-18

The Richland Center Sister City Project and the Friends of the Library in partnership will hold a Benefit Holiday Gift Sale on Saturday and Sunday, November 17 and 18, from 10 am to 5 pm at Blue Highways.

Both organizations will profit from sales of holiday gifts made by about sixty local artists and craftspeople.

This year, shop locally for holiday gifts that are made locally. Prices will be very reasonable. For more information call Peggy Swan at 536-3993.

Richland Center - Santa Teresa
Sister City Project
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SISTER CITY BENEFIT

Blue Highways - Saturday October 6