
Sister City Update

Issue 5

February 1996

RC Group to Visit Santa Teresa

LA PAUSA DE PRIMAVERA EN SANTA TERESA

Seven sojourners from Richland County will be heading to Santa Teresa on an "alternative spring break" venture from March 16-22. The "alternative spring break" concept has become a fairly popular community service substitute for many university students in lieu of the traditional "fun and game orgies" during spring break. According to Emil Haney, project leader and Spanish professor at the UWC-Richland, the actual activities to be performed during the group's stay in Santa Teresa are still being worked out with community leaders there. But he hopes that in addition to carrying medical supplies and other materials from Richland Center to Santa Teresa, the group will be able to assist our sister city in a couple of ongoing community projects. Arrangements are also being made for members of the group to stay with families in Santa Teresa and reimburse them for room and board. Emil hopes that the group will not only be perceived as emissaries of the sister city program, but also as the first influx of ecotourists to this fascinating ecological area.

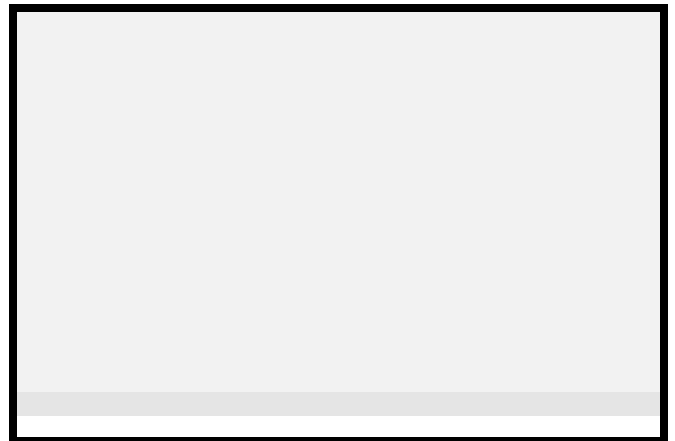
Joining Emil in the venture will be: Dr. Bill Cooke (who recently returned to the Richland Medical Center), his daughter Erin (a high school junior in St. Cloud, MN), Jane Papke (a Spanish student at the campus and co-owner with husband, Ray, of the Empire Drug Store), Kathy Neckar (a Spanish student and co-coordinator of the International Youth for Understanding program at the campus and sheep farmer with husband, Larry, near Blue River), Jan Swenson (Spanish student at the campus and former school teacher who operates an organic dairy farm with husband, Dean, near Spring Green) and Peter Lawrence (attorney in Richland Center). Besides delivering medical and school supplies on behalf of the Sister City program, members of the group have also offered to deliver personal messages or gifts to friends in Santa Teresa.

Benefit Supper and Dance Set for March 1

Cabin Fever?? Dig out and eat with your friends at our Burrito Supper, then warm up and stretch your limbs at an anything-goes dance with music by DJ Dan DeFillipo and send our delegation off to Santa Teresa in style. The supper will feature tortillas with all the fixings, followed by delicious homemade desserts. The benefit will be held at Blue Highways (Masonic Temple) 165 N. Central, Richland Center. Supper starts at 6:00 pm, with the dance at 8:00 pm. A suggested donation of \$6.00 per adult and \$3.00 for kids 5-12 would cover both dinner and dance, though larger contributions would be gratefully accepted. We'd like to see everyone there!

All proceeds will go to the Sister City Project. We'd like to send school and medical supplies, and possibly money for projects such as wells or latrines, along with the group when they go to Santa Teresa. Material donations

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Richland Center mayor Tom McCarthy is welcomed by Luis Matus, Tom's counterpart from Santa Teresa during a visit in January of last year. For a complete report see Neil Bard's article beginning on page 2. (Photo: N.

Neil Bard's Report from Santa Teresa

On January 2, 1995, my 15 year old son Nate and I, left the winter of Wisconsin and entered the tropical world of Nicaragua. The purpose of our trip was to continue an aspect of our sister-city project that had begun a few years ago; to personally meet people from our sister city.

Seven years ago, Jane Furchgott, our sister city coordinator, had traveled to Santa Teresa and stayed with the then mayor, Luis Palacio. In 1990, Tom Bachman, our town librarian and project member, observed the elections and visited Santa Teresa. Most of the visits to Santa Teresa by Wisconsinites, however, were travelers who had contacts with WCCN. We supported water and sanitation projects, medical projects, school projects, and road improvement projects. Those who visited Santa Teresa from our group were too few. The money and support were definitely appreciated by the people of Santa Teresa, but they and we both yearned for that human contact that can bond people together.

Two years ago, our group raised enough money to bring a representative of Santa Teresa to Richland Center. We felt that this contact would allow us to understand firsthand the needs of our sister city. Jader Castro Guadamuz, a public health care worker for the Centro de Salud for Santa Teresa, came to Richland Center and spent three weeks touring our area and telling us about Santa Teresa. We learned a lot.

Last year a friend, Ilse Hecht of Madison, visited Nicaragua on a personal trip. She took a supply of medicine from us and gave it to the health center officials in Santa Teresa. They appreciated the material goods very much, but also asked Ilse why someone from Richland Center didn't come. Ilse returned and told us about the needs of Santa Teresa, material as well as personal.

As a result of personally hearing this invitation to visit, I decided that the time was right for me to go. I wanted to travel with someone else and since one of my sons is entering adulthood, I thought that a father-son adventure would be just the ticket. My Spanish is pretty rudimentary as I've only studied it sporadically over the last five years at the University of Wisconsin-Richland Continuing Education night classes. Still, I was game for the challenge and my son, Nate, having only elementary school Spanish was willing to take on the adventure with me. It helped both of us greatly that not only were we going to meet the people of Santa Teresa, but we were going to see our friend, Jader.

Jader and Luis Matus, the mayor of Santa Teresa, picked us up at the airport in Managua and never stopped showing us their hospitality. They organized visits to the health center, mayor's office, schools, mercados, and public lunchrooms of Santa Teresa. We met all the people associated with these programs. The custom of shaking hands with all the people one meets was a great physical way of "embracing" for us "norteamericanos." It was also a great way for a shy 15 year old student to really reach out to people of another culture.

The mayor arranged for us to stay with the Jose Martinez family. We shared their home, their food, their play, their truck, and their friendship the week that we were there. We played baseball on a mountain top diamond, visited small subsistence-type farms, toured a cooperatively owned sugar cane factory, and saw the sites of Lake Nicaragua, Masaya, Granada, San Juan del Sur, as well as the mountain top roads from Managua south to Santa Teresa.

Another very meaningful aspect was the visit of a fellow Spanish class student to Nicaragua during this time. Tom McCarthy, a friend and mayor of Richland Center was on personal trip to Guatemala and agreed to visit Santa Teresa. His addition to our visit really made an impact on those involved with the sister city project. Tom was officially received and he presented Luis Matus with a plaque from the people of Richland Center. The plaque was inscribed with words of friendship and solidarity between the two communities. This act was reported in two of the Managua newspapers.

Tom assured the reporters that the change in leadership of the US Congress will not affect our sister city project because we have always been independent of government. He told them that the person-to-person nature of the project would continue. We are thankful that our mayor could show such personal support.

A day trip to Chacocente offered us a great insight into both the natural beauty of Nicaragua and to the complexity of the economics and politics of its people. Chacocente is a national park consisting of a pacific beach and surrounding tropical dry jungle. It is the site of a giant tortoise refuge. These tortoises return here to lay their eggs each year. It is one of only a handful of locations around the world where this occurs.

To get to Chacocente, we had to travel 12 miles on a road that leads south from Santa Teresa. This road, lying in

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Bard Report, *continued from Page 2*

the municipality of Santa Teresa, was at times almost impassable. It took us 2 hours to get there by four-wheel drive truck. Being an avid biker, I thought that this would be an excellent mountain bike trail if eco-tourists were desired.

The "capitalist" thinking amongst them want a better road to this pristine park. They want to build hotels and restaurants with a beautiful view of the park and ocean. I feared for the tortoises.

Others, however, think that the road is a pipe dream and that any financial resources should be used to help the campesinos or combat the 60% unemployment in a way other than through the lure of foreign tourists. The campesinos, for instance, need money to buy seed to plant the fields and continue to be self-sufficient. Any way to provide jobs must also reward the municipality and not just a few wealthy capitalists.

The public debate on this was an example of one of the best lessons that we learned while on our trip. Nicaraguans are passionate about how to accomplish something. Both groups cherished the opportunity to debate. We heard from all groups that they only wanted one thing; to improve the lot for Nicaragua.

As I listened to this debate on the beach of Chacocente, I was impressed at how each side listened to the other. After the debate, all were back to enjoying the day and our company. I now know that like people everywhere else, the people of Santa Teresa are composed of individuals with different ideas on many topics. To understand this collective personality has helped me connect on a deeper level with this community.

Leaving Santa Teresa, I took with me many ideas of potential projects with which to continue building bridges to this sister city. Many Nicaraguans asked how we could strengthen our bond in the future. Realistic projects like a student/teacher exchange, continuing support of the Centro de Salud, the potable water and sanitation projects all came to mind as things that have already happened. The bond has been strengthened by this 1995 cultural exchange. I know that many people from Richland Center have interest in participating in the sister city project and now that personal contact has been maintained, the bond between the people of our two communities can only get stronger.

Neil Bard lives on the ridge in rural Richland County with his wife, Mary, and sons Nate and Jonathan. He works as a family physician.

Nate Bard is a sophomore at the Richland Center High School and now knows how to greet people with a handshake and "mucho gusto."

Recent SCP Activities

Through your contributions and support of our benefit events, the Richland Sister City Project has sent money to pay for the construction of two community wells in rural areas of Santa Teresa. Each well cost about \$350.00, which was the cost of the materials and a manual pump. The people of the community itself did the digging and construction. Previously the water came from rivers and streams, often contaminated with such deadly diseases as childhood diarrhea and cholera.

During the spring and fall of 1995, the people at the Richland Hospital helped by donating and supplying money for postage to send xylocaine to the Centro de Salud in Santa Teresa. The first shipment was of xylocaine only and was sent by US Postal Service to see if normal means of mail had been re-established. That shipment arrived intact and so a second shipment of xylocaine along with a supply of syringes and needles was sent this past November. Frank Ward, the hospital pharmacist who has been a great help in arranging purchases of medicine to send to Santa Teresa, donated the xylocaine personally. The staff at the Richland Hospital took up a collection and paid the almost \$100 it took to send the packages. Hospital personnel have expressed interest in maintaining their connection to Santa Teresa's clinic by regularly supplying medical goods.

Ideas that we may wish to consider for future projects include: Xylocaine for dental anesthesia (less than \$50 per month), basic antibiotics (\$150 per month), dental Equipment (\$60 to \$150), wells or latrines (\$300 each), assistance with Eco-tourism, educational exchange (bringing students to RC - Airfare \$500), and loans to subsistence farmers to plant crops.



This well in the village of Paso la Solera was built with Sister City donations.
(Photo by Jader Castro)

Economic Crisis Continues in Nicaragua

Nicaragua's foreign debt is currently the highest per capita in the world, totaling 11 billion dollars of \$2600 per person. Most of the foreign aid received goes to pay the interest on this debt.

Because of this debt, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), acting along with US agencies, have required Nicaragua to implement a "structural adjustment program", keeping the country dependent on foreign markets and insisting on great cuts in essential government services.

This has meant drastic cuts in education, medical care, credit for small farmers and businesses, and food subsidies for the poor. As a result 60% of Nicaraguans are unemployed, and 70-80% are living in poverty.

Those conditions in turn have generated a rapid process of social decomposition, with widespread hunger, increased crime and environmental degradation.

News from Nicaragua was compiled by Jane Furchgott

National elections are coming up in October. Although not yet officially confirmed, two popular candidates for president will be ex-President, Daniel Ortega (FSLN) and former Managua Mayor Arnolfo Aleman (Liberal Alliance). Aleman is known for his extreme right-wing views, and was the target of numerous corruption allegations during his term as mayor. _____

Benefit Supper, *continued from Page 1*

of compact items will also be accepted. Suggested items include pencils and other school supplies, old eye glasses, and baseball caps. If you can't attend the benefit, but would still like to make a donation, you can bring contributions to Tom Bachman at the Brewer Library in Richland Center, or mail them to the Sister City Project, %Brewer Library, 325 N. Central, Richland Center, 53581. Material goods can be delivered to Emil Haney at the UWC-Richland campus.

We also need people to help stage the benefit. If you'd like to make a dessert or serve at the supper, please call Jane Furchgott at 583-2431 or Mary Bard at 647-2594.

Richland Area - Santa Teresa
Sister City Project
%Brewer Library
Richland Center, WI 53581