

Welcome to the *Boletín Informativo* of FUNDACION AYUDA NIÑOS LA PAZ, A.C.

This newsletter has three aims: to let you know what has happened in our past 11 years of working with the children of La Paz, to keep you current on projects in the works, and to let you know what is coming up in the next few months. Your comments and suggestions will be welcome.

Children's Eyecare Outreach Visit

More than three thousand seven hundred eyes. Those are a lot of eyes to peer into in ten days. That's what happened when a group of ophthalmologists and opticians came to La Paz to check the vision of primary school students.

The visit of the Children's Eyecare Outreach team in January 2008 was organized by Sr. Raymond Dennis of Middlesex Community College in Connecticut.

Accompanying him were Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Bacotti from

Mineola, NY, Dr. and Mrs. Elwin Schwartz from Middletown, Connecticut, Sr. Scott Helkaa of the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, five optical students, and some family members, making an invincible team which worked long hours in schools and health centers to find students who needed glasses they could not afford to buy for themselves. During the first week of their visit, when 14 people were here, they visited primary schools in town. Weeks before the group arrived, we spoke to the school principals, asking for permission to interrupt their daily routines by pulling students out of their classrooms a grade at a time. The group set up their equipment in the school library or computer room, with preliminary screening held in drafty porticos with the ubiquitous **E** chart for first graders, and the letter chart for the rest. Those who were found to need glasses finished with a visit to a desk where they were able to choose from a selection of frame designs.



January, 2008

The second Monday, when personnel changed and a smaller group was available to do the screening, they visited small rural communities served by government health services. Accompanying us were Dr. Jose Luis Vasquez; the visiting nurse, Carmen Barrios; and their chauffeur, Juan Antonio Gonzalez (whose vision, the nurse and doctor were glad to know, was 20/20). This trio is assigned to an area of small ranches off the pavement on dusty wash-board roads about an hour from La Paz.

Seventeen students from 6 to 13 years old attend classes in the one-room schoolhouse in Cirulito which we visited on Monday. Solar panels and an inverter provide the school with electricity for lights and a computer, and the computerized auto-refractor, ophthalmoscopes, tonometer and retinoscopes were used to check the eyes of both children and adults. Adults who had come in from outlying ranchitos to see Dr Vasquez were screened for cataracts, glaucoma, and other optical problems. Many will receive reading glasses or bifocals that are being fabricated by other opticianry students at Middlesex Community College and the College of Southern Nevada. The younger members of our group played volleyball or kicked around a soccer ball with the students who had already been screened.

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Children's Eyecare Outreach Visit – from page 1

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday followed the same pattern...a drive on a rough red-dirt road to a collection of simple houses centered around a one or two room school and a health center. Dr Vasquez gave up his "front office" to the eye team and consulted with his patients in the examining room. The last day saw us back in town, finishing in a "muy humilde" colonia on the outskirts of La Paz. Most of the last ninety-three students screened in Colonia El Calandrio need glasses.

When the screening team left La Paz, they took with them 1,863 forms of those who had been checked. After the team's first visit a year and a half ago, of the 750 students screened, 175 were provided with glasses. This year, 304 children and adults will receive eyeglasses within the next two months. For some women, it will mean they can once again thread a needle and sew; some men will be able see their goats on the next hillside again or repair their carburetors; and the students will be able to read the blackboard from the back of the room. All of these, and other benefits, are thanks to the dedication of those who traveled several thousand miles to help others. # # #

Bags, aprons, glasses cases hand-embroidered in Colonia Laguna Azul make great gifts and provide income for the women.



Carnival 2008

Carnival 2008

Carnival, (as it is spelled in Spanish) or Mardi Gras celebration, is a big deal in La Paz. The Malecon (waterfront street) is closed to traffic and lined with booths selling trinkets and food; carnival games are set up on a still-vacant waterfront lot; Bad Humor is burned in effigy; kings and queens are crowned; and fireworks displays light up the night.

My favorite part of Carnival has always been the parade, and wonderfully this year the cooks and kids from Colonia Laguna Azul were invited to be participants. In December last year, the promotion department of Centro Comercial Californiano (CCC), the best grocery store in La Paz, which supports the Foundation in many ways, invited the lunch cooks and lunch-eating kids to participate. In keeping with the Carnival theme "*Our Oriental Roots*" and CCC's promotion of the importance of eating fresh fruits and vegetables, 25 children were dressed as fruits and vegetables, while the mothers and I were Oriental farmworkers.

Although the first parade was scheduled for Sunday, February 17, the kids were initially disappointed as the float was unfinished. But Monday afternoon a CCC bus picked up the moms and children in Laguna Azul, where we met them at the staging area at the east end of the Malecon.

The pineapples, strawberries, grapes, and apples, the ears of corn, beets, and onions, couldn't wait for the parade to start. Finally we were on our way, an hour after the scheduled start. The real fruit, which was to be tossed gently to the crowd, was thrown with wanton abandon, in answer to the confetti-filled eggs flung by the spectators. The fruit, which should have lasted through the whole parade, was gone by block two. The end of the parade came way too fast and everyone was loaded into the bus going back to the colonia. The next night was a repeat of the last; however, the fruit was not "gently tossed to the crowd" until the float reached the reviewing stand at 16th of September street. That night, many kids were very tired; in fact one strawberry slept through the first half of the parade.

Thank you to CCC for giving our children this opportunity, which they will remember for years. ~ ~ *Judy Peterson*

Muchas gracias to Centro Comercial Californiano (CCC) for their generous help with our programs. Please support them too.

A Letter of Thanks

Dear Mary:

Ever since I learned about your foundation I have been meaning to write a little story of my life and how people like you touched my heart so deeply that made me become a better person.

It was the winter of 1980 just before Christmas. My family had just arrived in La Paz a year earlier. Seven children, Mom and Dad, from a little ranch in the Mexican State of Guanajuato looking for a better life. My dad had a dream; he wanted all of his children to go to school and get an education. He wanted to give them an opportunity in life, something he was not lucky enough to have.

That day I was at our little shack playing with my twin brothers when I saw the enormous trailer approaching. I was amazed when I saw people getting out of it, white people who spoke a language I could not understand. Something I had never seen in my five years of life. I was even more amazed when they started unloading all kinds of food and toys from their trailer and began handing out toys to the dirty, undernourished, barefooted children who belonged to my deprived neighborhood and family. I received my very first new toy that day. A little piano made out of wood that made me the happiest girl in the world. I will never forget that day when with watering eyes I asked my father who those people were, why they were giving us things and why I could not understand what they were saying to me. My father answered me in a shaky voice that they were people from another country who just wanted to help us out and that if I worked hard and went to school perhaps some day I would be able to understand their language. That day I learned that there are good people in this world who enjoy sharing with others who have less.

We never know how our actions can affect so deeply the little minds of children.

Now 25 years later I have learned the language of those good people who gave me more than just a new toy; they gave me hope.

I want to thank you for what you and your foundation are doing; I know that there are a lot of children out there whose lives will also be filled with hope because of you,

With gratitude and admiration, (Name Withheld)

Expansion of the Community Center/Library

It did not take Fundación Ayuda Niños La Paz, A.C. long to outgrow the premises built in 2003. Very quickly the room was used for many differing community activities, and for classes. A year later the large single room was partitioned with the financial help of Club Rotario Balandra. The *Red Nacional de Bibliotecas* supplied books and furniture, and trained the librarian. The room is used by students as a study room and little children color or watch videos on a small TV. FANLAP pays a local student, Hilario Rodriguez Juarez, to act as supervisor and librarian. On Saturdays the room is used for English classes; during the week various governmental agencies use the room for courses such as adult education and parenting classes. (Hilario was a *becario* through senior high school; he now attends the University, no longer receiving a scholarship from FANLAP.)

In July 2007 FANLAP received the last signature by which the municipal government granted full ownership to FANLAP of the property on which the Center is located. This has cleared the way for the Fundación to begin soliciting funds for the construction of a second story. The projected cost of this expansion is \$640,000 pesos or \$61,000 in US currency.

The new room will become the library/study center. *Red Nacional de Bibliotecas* will donate furniture, computers, and additional study materials to the Center when they assure themselves that the physical plant is adequate to house the equipment, and that the Fundación has the funds to pay an additional *bibliotecario* to staff the library for the hours they require that it be kept open. The computers will have a wireless connection to the Internet, saving the students the necessity of having to go to an Internet Café, spending 10 pesos an hour to do their homework. Adults will have the ability to obtain their high school diploma by taking a course on the Internet.

The current library room will be used, instead of the dining room, for summer arts and crafts projects, courses for women sponsored by DIF such as those mentioned above and the embroidery class women of the neighborhood were given several years ago.

You can now help by donating money, in amounts large and small, for the construction of this much needed expansion. All donations will be maintained in a separate fund and not used for on-going expenses of the Fundación. We would hope to have enough to begin construction this summer and have the room ready for use when school begins at the beginning of the school year in late August.
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Muchas gracias to Centro Comercial Californiano (CCC) for their generous help with our programs. Please support them too.

Order tamales for your fiesta from the cooks at the Comedor; they are unbeatably eatable.

**FUNDACION AYUDA NIÑOS LA PAZ, AZ
INCOME AND EXPENSES
FANLAP - YEAR ENDING 2007
10.5 PESOS X 1 DOLLAR U.S.**

Income	Pesos	Dollars
Donations, not including through ICF	115528.00	11002.67
Donations, through ICF	420,000.00	40,000.00
Club Cruceros' Subasta	154,677.18	14,731.16
Rotary Foundation	133,612.50	12,725.00
Reinhart Family Foundation	262,500.00	25,000.00
Circus in March	16,340.00	1,556.19
Total Receipts	1,102,657.68	105,015.02
Expenses		
Breakfast program	26,912.65	2,563.11
Lunch program	125,154.21	11,919.45
Building Expenses	22,533.39	2,146.04
Christmas	31,184.45	2,969.95
Scholarships	767,788.99	73,122.76
Employees (librarian and English teacher)	44,785.48	4,265.28
Workshops (psychology and CAPOIERA)	6,154.06	586.10
Bank Charges	6,404.72	609.97
General operating expenses	11,840.17	1,127.63
Total Disbursements	1,042,758.12	99,310.29

Please Help Continue These Programs – They are Sustained by People Like You

1. Via the Internet, visit: <http://donate.icf-xchange.org/donate.php/losninosdelapaz>
2. You may leave cash or a check written on a Mexican bank at the office of Marina de La Paz, or mail it to:
FANLAP at Calle Santiago 320, Colonia Bella Vista, La Paz, BCS., 23050
3. Mail a check drawn on a U.S. bank to: International Community Foundation, 11300 Sorrento Valley Rd., Suite 115, San Diego, California 92121