

Report No. 1 from Alto Cayma – 7 Jun 08

We're Here

Well, here we are, back in Alto Cayma once again, this time for 4 full months. We got here Friday afternoon, along with 1/3 of our luggage. The other 2/3 reached us on Saturday morning. It seems like that's the norm now. Lately almost everyone who has come here has had baggage issues. (In our case, 2 of our 3 suitcases didn't even leave Charlotte on the same plane as we did.) This was also our first experience at having to pay \$25 for each checked bag beyond one per person.

I start a new series of these reports each time we arrive in Alto Cayma. This is the 5th series of reports, so they're now entering their 3rd year. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I do writing them.

Serving Alto Cayma

As of June 1, our organization, Serving Alto Cayma, has added a new person to the staff. Victor and Lidia are now joined by Giuliana Zevallos, who prior to this was the housekeeper/hostess at Father Alex' Volunteer House since that facility first opened. Giuliana's complete duties are yet to be defined, but I know that with her gracious manner and sincere compassion for others, she will be a great addition to our team.

Important Notice – for anyone who ever mails anything down here for us or for any of the people included in our projects, such as Acercádonos and Salir Adelante, we now have our own postal box to which your letters and packages should be addressed. The address to use is as follows:

Serving Alto Cayma (name of recipient)
c/o Victor Galdos
Casilla 158
Arequipa, Peru

Please take permanent note of this new address.

Visitors

We don't have any official visitors yet, but there are a couple of newly-arrived students from Davidson College who are staying in downtown Arequipa but will be volunteering their services every morning in the Policlínico, Father Alex' medical clinic. We met Victoria and Alex back in

North Carolina, and you'll hear more about them over the next couple of months.

Our first visitors to Alto Cayma itself will be Dwight Hartsell and his daughter, Sherry. They'll be arriving June 22, so you'll hear more about them beginning in a couple of weeks. During their 3-week stay, they'll be involved both in Father Alex' mission and in Serving Alto Cayma.

Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

None of the girls from the cardshop were at the airport to meet us, which was an all-time first, but also a big red flag that they were up to something. When we reached our house and were unloading the suitcases, what looked like a big blue wall with writing on it came slowly shuffling around the corner, propelled by 18 pairs of little feet whose owners were hidden behind the wall. The writing on the "wall", which was really a huge blue banner, said "Welcome Home Mama Kitty Cat and Papa Vampire". (Long story.) We invited the girls in for refreshments and to let them have a chance to tell us how good they've been while we were gone. Starting Monday morning we'll be with them in the cardshop once again, and "the rest of the story" (as Paul Harvey would say) will begin to come out.

Acercádonos ("Coming Together") Sponsorship Program

We really had to hit the ground running this time as far as Acercádonos was concerned, as we had 2 big meetings the day after our arrival. The first was a Saturday morning meeting with the youth of Acercádonos, some 35 to 40 in number. By way of background, this is a new group which was started 2 months ago, just as we were leaving for the States. (It's so new that it doesn't even have a name yet, but that will be remedied sometime this month.) The group was started in reaction to some recent incidents in which young people in the community were getting in trouble for lack of good guidance and positive role models. Although the group has started with the youth of Acercádonos, it is open to any young people in the community who wish to participate. Growing and shaping this group will be one of our major initiatives during this stay in Alto Cayma.

Saturday afternoon was the monthly meeting with all the Acercádonos "ahijados" (sponsors). It was great to see the church full of people, and they all wanted to know, "How is my "padrino" (sponsor)?" We have over 190 people in the program now, and with the children all being accompanied by at least one parent, the numbers add up fast. At this meeting alone we welcomed 5 new "ahijados" into the program, so I'm sure we'll cross the 200 mark sometime during this stay.

Our House

We were pleased to find our house just as we left it, having been well cared for by Victor. The uncharacteristic green on the hillsides and in the ravines that we had enjoyed during the exceptionally wet rainy season of our previous stay has all passed into history now, leaving behind brown stubble instead of the usual bare dirt. This makes us appreciate all the more the rich green of our alfalfa “plantation” in front of our house.

Final Note

This has been a shorter report than usual, but then again we’ve only been here a couple of days. More subjects will be included in the succeeding weeks as we again pick up the reins on all the projects and activities we have underway here. So until next week, don’t forget to be alert for every opportunity to

“Love God, Serve Neighbor/ Serving Alto Cayma”,

Jim