

Report No. 10 from Alto Cayma – 10 Aug 08

Halfway Home

On the 6th of August we crossed the halfway point of our current four-month stay (Jun 6 – Oct 6) in Alto Cayma, so now we can say we're halfway home. The question is, "Where's home?". Our roots and family are back in the States, of course, but we spend the majority of our time now (7 months or more of every year) with our "extended family" here in Peru. Whichever place we're in now feels like "home".

What to Wear?

Aug 15 is Arequipa Day, the anniversary of the founding of Arequipa in 1540 (468 years ago, for the mathematically challenged). There's an old tradition here that El Misti always puts on a new "white dress", in the form of snowcover well down its sides, in honor of the fiesta, but in recent years we haven't seen that. On Thursday afternoon last week, however, the weather turned foul and the mountains disappeared, and on Friday morning El Misti was resplendent in a beautiful white dress. But in the two days since, most of the snow has disappeared from El Misti, while it still remains on Chachani, the next mountain over. I think it might have something to do with the steam and fumes that emanate from the crater of El Misti. (Good volcano, nice volcano!)

450 Years and a World Apart

While Arequipa is turning 468, the community of ENACE Dean Valdivia, on the edge of the city, where we live and work, is celebrating its 18th birthday today. Downtown Arequipa looks old, and the city as a whole is very well established, but up here where we are, by comparison, it looks more like a frontier town. In the next 20 years it's going to change so much it will hardly be recognizable, but today it's definitely still a "work in progress".

Serving Alto Cayma

One of the miscellaneous sponsorships we have here which doesn't fit into any of our broader programs is the sponsorship of the family of Tomás and Maruja by a couple from the Charlotte Rotary Club. The sponsorship has enabled Tomás to greatly improve the condition of the family's house, but just this past week we had the pleasure of delivering them some news that may have an even greater and longer lasting impact. We read the family a letter from the sponsors in which they were promised that the family's 3 children will have their educational expenses guaranteed for as far as they're capable

of going in their studies, even if that includes a university education for all 3. The inaccessibility of higher education due to economic constraints is one of the major factors holding the people here back, and with the stroke of a pen, that barrier has been completely eliminated for these 3 kids. That's huge!

Visitors

Victor and Chabelita, our visitors from Lima, had originally planned to return home on Thursday, but they found they like Arequipa and Alto Cayma so much they decided to stay until Monday. They've been dividing their time between tourism and helping us, as you'll see below, and we've really been enjoying their company.

Our next group of "visiting gringos", this one made up of Rotarians from Charlotte, will arrive Arequipa next Saturday. The trip is being organized by the Dilworth Rotary Club, with members of 2 other clubs being included as well. A group from Dilworth comes to Alto Cayma every year, and always includes some repeat visitors who can never seem to get enough of our sunshine, dry air and dust.

Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

This week we celebrated the 21st birthday of Janet, the girl in the wheelchair who has been a part of Creaciones Angel almost since its very beginning. If it weren't for coming to the cardshop every day, Janet would almost never get out of her house, so being a member of this group has had a major impact on her life.

We also celebrated another milestone, the first payday for Charo, the newest member of the group. We hope she'll be around for many, many more.

I'd like to remind all of you who always buy Christmas cards from Creaciones Angel that now would be a great time to place your order, in that the cards can be handcarried back to the States by Gloria and I, saving the girls a fortune in shipping costs. I know it's probably blazing hot wherever you are, and Christmas may be the last thing on your mind, but please give this your consideration.

We received an e-mail from a Fair Trade shop in Omaha, NE, this week, asking if we would be willing to sell them cards at wholesale prices. I wrote back to say that all our customers pay wholesale prices, since there's no markup and the full purchase price goes directly back to the girls who make the cards. If you know of a shop that might be interested in carrying our cards, please tell them that we will sell them all they want at the prices

shown in our catalog (www.serving-alto-cayma.info), and that they're free to mark them up from there to whatever the market will bear.

Acercádonos (“Coming Together”) Sponsorship Program

Since Giuliana is replacing Luisa in the afternoons now, Luisa has been taking Giuliana around to show her where to find the homes of the people she'll be responsible for. Luisa has to personally show Giuliana because the streets here have no names. Blocks have letters, and houses have numbers, but more often than not, they aren't posted. (Take down all the street signs, and remove 2/3 of the house numbers in your neighborhood and you'd start to get the idea.) If someone is looking on their own, they have to rely on knocking on neighbors' doors until they find the person they're looking for. And you can't call ahead to make an appointment, because the vast majority of the impoverished people we work with don't have telephones. This makes even routine coordination a challenge.

On a different subject related to Acercádonos, over the course of time many of our sponsors have gotten behind on their payments. I'm sure that this is almost exclusively due to oversight, and my failure to send out notices certainly hasn't helped the situation. In the coming weeks, however, Susan Hartsell and I will be contacting many of you to compare our records with yours, and hopefully we can soon have everyone up to date again.

Nuevos Horizontes (“New Horizons”) Youth Group

“What the heck is Nuevos Horizontes?”, you might be asking. It's the new name for the Youth Group you've been reading about for the past couple of months. The full name is Jovenes Amigos Unidos hacia Nuevos Horizontes (Young Friends United towards New Horizons), but we'll go with Nuevos Horizontes for short. The first 3 words in the long title came from names suggested by the youth themselves, and capture what the group consists of. What was missing was an expression of the purpose of the group. Since we intend for this group to provide opportunities to learn new things, be exposed to new ideas and have new experiences, we see them as moving toward New Horizons, hence the complete name.

New Horizons meets the 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month, so yesterday was a meeting day. One thing we started this time was giving prizes for every 7 meetings attended, and we had quite a few kids who already qualified. Our visitors, Victor and Chabelita, were heavily involved in the athletic activities of this meeting, Victor leading half the boys in a soccer game against Victor Galdos (temporarily known as “Old” Victor) and the

other half of the boys, and Chabelita teaching the girls the finer points of volleyball. Their energy and enthusiasm added a lot to the meeting.

For the next meeting, scheduled for Aug 23, we are trying to organize an excursion to take the kids to see La Momia Juanita. Juanita was a young girl sacrificed by the Incas on a mountaintop some 700 years ago, and her mummified remains were just discovered a little over 10 years ago. She now rests in a museum created just for her by the Catholic University. She's a cultural icon here in Arequipa, but only 1 of the 40+ kids in Nuevos Horizontes has ever seen her. On to New Horizons.

Salir Adelante (“Getting Ahead”) Educational Sponsorships

It's been a busy week in Salir Adelante, but this program can never be too busy to suit me. We added Marcia as our 29th member when a Rotarian from our district agreed to sponsor her through the rest of her university education to get a degree in Bilingual (Spanish and Quechua) Primary Education.

We also received a guarantee of 3 years of support for our 30th student, yet to be named, from a Rotary club in our district. We are lining up candidates, and plan to ask Karen Shore, our next District Governor, to make the selection when she visits here with the Dilworth group starting a week from now. I think that it's a “natural” for Rotary clubs to sponsor students here, since education is central to so much that Rotary does, and the full name of Rotary is, after all, Rotary International. We are encouraging all clubs to consider making a multi-year commitment to provide \$600 a year (\$50 a month) to open the doors of opportunity for some deserving student to achieve their dreams.

Just this morning I learned of one of our students achieving a major milestone when Susy approached us after church and showed us her Bachiller certificate. That certificate caps off her undergraduate course work, and with a few more months of postgraduate study, she will receive her full professional degree in Education.

Aldea “Sagrada Familia” (The Orphanage)

Yesterday was also the monthly birthday party in the Aldea, this time for 4 kids. Our visitors, Victor and Chabelita, were with us again and added a lot to the success of the party. The kids in the Aldea are full of energy and Victor, being quite athletic (and a lot younger than “Old” Victor), taught them a number of tumbling tricks. That exercise took some of the starch out of

them, but not much – they quickly bounced back to their normal, hyperactive selves.

Rotary Projects

In preparation for her visit, Karen Shore asked me for a summary of Rotary District 7680's participation in Alto Cayma. I was pleased to report that over the past 5-1/2 years a total of 38 D7680 Rotarians, from 11 different clubs and including 3 District Governors, have visited us, along with 21 of their family members. Clubs in D7680 have also sponsored 10 projects with a combined value of approximately \$335,000 (a third of a million dollars) to improve virtually every aspect of the people's lives here. It's no wonder, then, that I refer to Alto Cayma as a "living laboratory" of Rotary's involvement in International Service.

And that's it for another week in Alto Cayma, where there's never a shortage of opportunities to

"Love God, Serve Neighbor/Serving Alto Cayma",

Jim