

Report No. 12 from Alto Cayma – 24 Aug 08

Serving Alto Cayma

Miguel Angel, our “celebrity” of cochlear implant fame, leaves for Lima this afternoon, accompanied by his mother, Vicky. They’re going to stay the only place they can afford, which is in the home of the Vicky’s sister, who is so poor herself that Miguel Angel and his mother have to take along their own pad to sleep on. The sister lives on the opposite side of the city from where the audiologist works, so there will be long commutes, but none of that matters. What matters is that tomorrow, on Miguel Angel’s 14th birthday, he is going to hear for the first time with the aid of his new implant.

Visitors

This was the Week of the Visitors, with the 9-person Dilworth Rotary group with us all week. There were actually 3 clubs represented in this group, and we followed the usual pattern for group visits – tourism downtown in Arequipa on Sunday, orientation on Monday, and then plunging into the projects in detail during the remaining days.

Multiple-return visitors Ed King and David Hodgkins visited all of their own and their family members’ “ahijados” (sponsees), which included both children and elderly in the Acercándonos program and a student in the Salir Adelante program. A couple of the repeat visitors also chipped in to help their old friend, Victor, buy a new stove for his house, since the one he had had just caught on fire and was no longer safe to use.

We went with the group on an excursion to the Colca Canyon, taking Victor and his 13-year old daughter, Nikole, with us. Neither of them had ever been to the Colca, and Victor was like a little kid. Watching his excitement made our whole trip. Victor took hundreds of pictures of the canyon, and we took pictures of Victor.

The group included Karen Shore, our Rotary District Governor Elect. Karen was duly impressed with the demonstrated possibilities she saw for Rotary involvement here, and said she will be making Alto Cayma (both sponsoring projects and having people come down to visit) an area of emphasis during her year as Governor (or as our Governess, as she is fond of saying).

Alto Cayma has long been an area of emphasis for the Dilworth Rotary Club, and this group did some amazing things with money they brought down from the club, coupled with their own efforts. Dilworth was the original

sponsor of the Home Improvement Initiative, under which a family saves up half the cost of an improvement project and the HII fund provides a matching grant to pay the rest. This time they even took sillar blocks into their own hands, so to speak, and constructed a one-room house for Karina a young girl who was marginalized by her own family. This is the first time that we've ever organized a hands-on construction project for a visiting group, and we learned many lessons in the process, the most notable of which was to completely excavate the floor before you build the walls. Had we done that, we would have discovered the 3 huge boulders that were lurking just beneath the surface and which now have to be removed from the already-constructed house. Current Dilworth funding is also going into 2 more Home Improvement projects and 2 restorative dental projects. The group left a significant number of positive changes for Alto Cayma in their wake as they returned to the States from this trip.

It was a rich but packed agenda, and we were worn out by the time the group left, but we were able to relax for a good half hour after their plane took off before we had to head into town on an outing with 41 kids (see **Nuevos Horizontes** below).

Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

We engaged the Dilworth group in a discussion of how the card business operates, and they committed to help us find additional, and hopefully better, ways to market the cards. If anyone out there has any ideas, now would be a good time to offer them.

The group left with over 1,800 cards in their suitcases. We're going to have more cards than ever to sell this Christmas season when we get back to the States.

The visitors also left with warm hearts, as the girls surprised them with a folkdance from the Colca, complete with the colorful costumes of that region. We also experienced many touching moments involving David Hodgkins and the girls. David and his wife, Donna, just recently lost their daughter, Jessica, to melanoma, and they have started a foundation in her name to help battle this insidious disease. They needed a logo card for the foundation, and the girls of Creaciones Angel created one for them which features a sand dollar in purple on a white background. The girls said they feel that Jessica is now one more guardian angel looking down on them. This sentiment on their part was very meaningful to David, who himself has long been a guardian angel to the girls of Creaciones Angel.

Nuevos Horizontes ("New Horizons") Youth Group

Yesterday, right after the visitors' plane took off, we headed downtown with a group of 41 kids and six adults in a commandeered "combi" (mini-bus), 3 cars and a Tico taxicab. (Yes, it did look like the midgets act at the circus.) We were off to open a New Horizon that was waiting right under the kids' noses, to learn the story of La Momia Juanita (the Mummy Juanita). Juanita was a 13-year old girl who was sacrificed by the Incas atop Ampato, a 20,000-foot snow-capped volcano, some 700 years ago. Her mummified remains were discovered there in the mid-90's, and now reside in a special museum created just for her by the Catholic University of Arequipa. Her story is a fascinating account, both of the Inca culture and the unique circumstances which led to her discovery, but almost none of the kids in Alto Cayma have ever visited this cultural icon of their own civilization, so we were happy to be able to open this New Horizon to at least 41 of them. We would also like to take them to the number one historic site in Arequipa, the Santa Catalina Monastery, but that will be more difficult to accomplish. Even on the two days a month when they offer a reduced admission fee for Peruvian nationals, it still costs 5 soles to get in, and in Acercádonos alone we have 130 kids now.

Salir Adelante ("Getting Ahead") Educational Sponsorships

This was a huge week for Salir Adelante. As of last week, we had 29 students on scholarships in this group. Today we have 32, with a promise of one more - an increase of over 10% in just one week!

The first new scholarship awarded was in the field of nursing. This was sponsored by Marinell and Ralph Bostian of the Charlotte North Rotary Club, who had previously visited Alto Cayma with the Charlotte Rotary Club and had now returned with the Dilworth group. We had 2 outstanding candidates for them to interview, and they chose Vanessa, a 20-year old girl who is studying at the Alas Peruanas University. Vanessa comes from a very united family, and it took a great sacrifice for them to get her into this private university, so the Bostians' scholarship is a great benefit to the entire family. The Bostians also formed a strong personal bond with Vanessa during the short time they were here, so I'm sure we'll see them back again next year.

The second scholarship was offered by Karen Shore's home club, the Mooresville-Lake Norman Rotary Club. Karen had to pick from among 3 candidates, and she chose Carla, a girl who is studying to be a nurse-midwife. Carla had the highest grades coming out of high school of any of the 100+ students we've looked at for Salir Adelante scholarships, and she is continuing to distinguish herself academically at the university level.

As a totally unexpected spinoff from the Mooresville-Lake Norman Rotary scholarship selection process, Karen decided to also personally sponsor another one of the candidates. That was Marina, a girl in Creaciones Angel who is already bilingual (Spanish and Quechua) and is now studying English in the Cultural Institute. Marina hopes to someday go on to get a degree in Tourism and Hotel Administration.

And finally, Frank Kiker, of the Dilworth Rotary Club, offered to sponsor the education of the son of a woman he met in the knitting shop. He didn't even get to meet the young man, but the mother told Frank that her son was about to give up and join the Army (not a road to opportunity in this country) because he couldn't get a decent job for lack of education and he couldn't get an education for lack of money. That's all it took for Frank to make the commitment, and now we'll work with the family to turn this into a true opportunity for advancement.

Aldea "Sagrada Familia" (The Orphanage)

Of course we took the Dilworth group for a visit to the Aldea. Chad, one of 3 extended family members that Frank Kiker brought along on the trip, is the Assistant Principal of an elementary school in North Carolina, so he was right in his element with the kids in the Aldea. We're going to see if we can define a project that the 500 kids in Chad's school could participate in to benefit the kids in the Aldea. Frank's other two extended family members, Tyler and Brian, are teenaged boys, so naturally they got mobbed by the kids in the Aldea as well.

Rotary Projects

The Dilworth group visited the weekly meeting of the Arequipa Cayma Rotary Club, the club which has partnered with us on most of the projects which clubs in District 7680 have carried out in Alto Cayma. Besides enjoying fellowship, we talked briefly of past and future projects of mutual interest.

We also took the group to see the antiquated water treatment plant that will be replaced in the Charlotte Rotary Club's Water Project. We are still awaiting release of the funds for this project from The Rotary Foundation – "any day now".

We also took advantage of Karen Shore's presence to present the second bicycle under the Southwest Cabarrus Rotary Club's Bicycle Project to a young man named José. We felt José was deserving for the excellent job he's doing raising his 2 sons on his own, since his mentally-unstable wife left

him a year ago, but we also learned that he needed a bike for his job as a night watchman, so this award was a win-win.

And that brings us to the end of this week's Report – lots of activity and lots of stories to write about, most at a loftier level than dogs and motorcycles, fortunately. Now we're off to start a new week in which to

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

Jim