

## Report No. 15 from Alto Cayma – 14 Sep 08

### Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

On Wednesday a very rare thing happened – the girls took an entire day off in the middle of the week. They did so in order to take advantage of an invitation from David Hodgkins, of Dilworth Rotary, to visit 3 of Arequipa's major cultural sites – the Santa Catalina Monastery, the Momia Juanita, and the new Norky's chicken joint! The girls were really impressed with Santa Catalina (though I didn't hear any of them volunteering to stay). One of them said she had always thought it was like a big house, but it's really like a small town, with streets and everything. They also enjoyed the visit to the Mummy, although they had an unpleasant experience there. We had made a reservation for them to enter as a group, and we ourselves did not accompany them inside. It turns out that they were put with a group of 8 Spanish tourists, and when the guide saw how big the group was, she told our girls to stand aside and proceeded to attend to the Spanish tourists only. Our girls protested (Gloria has taught them well), but didn't get any satisfaction until the guide's supervisor pointed out to the guide that these girls had been brought by a couple of foreigners, and then their treatment improved. When the girls came out and Gloria heard about this, she went to the office and demanded the return of the tip she had prepaid for the guide, and it was returned with no argument. Then we all marched across the river to Norky's. This is a chain of rotisserie chicken restaurants which just opened its first store in Arequipa a couple of months ago. It was such a novelty when it first opened that people were standing in line to get in (imagine a 30-minute wait to get into KFC!), but by now things have settled down. For a city of 1 million people, it sure doesn't seem to take much to get them excited.

Janet, the girl in the cardshop who's in a wheelchair, wasn't able to go on the cultural outing because of problems with accessibility, but this weekend she's getting to do something even better – visit the Colca Canyon! Susan Tang, a Physician's Assistant who has been working as a volunteer in Father Alex' clinic for a year and a half, organized a special excursion for 4 handicapped young people and their parents. It will be very interesting to hear what Janet has to say about the trip when she comes back to the cardshop tomorrow.

Four of the girls in the cardshop are studying English at the Cultural Institute, and after 12-18 months of study, the thing they were needing most was a chance to practice conversation, so we've been inviting them over to the house after work several days a week. I'm really impressed with how well they're doing. They make mistakes, of course, but the way they're rattling off

their sentences clearly demonstrates that they've gotten over the big hurdle of being able to think in English.

### **Acercádonos (“Coming Together”) Sponsorship Program**

This week we took 215 letters down to the Cultural Institute to be translated before we head back to the States the beginning of next month. These included some from the students of Salir Adelante as well as the “ahijados” (sponsees) of Acercádonos. Every time we go into the Cultural we have more letters than the time before, and their eyes get bigger, but hopefully they'll continue to support us. This would be a tremendous workload if we still had to do it ourselves, because nobody in the Acercádonos office is bilingual (unless you count Quechua, which wouldn't help here).

We had another instance occur this week which illustrates what a “family” Acercádonos is. The family of one of our very newest “ahijados” had a problem when the boy's father went off to a remote region for a couple of months to seek work. We know that this guy normally provides for his family as best he can, but he hadn't sent any money in all this time, so we assume he didn't find work. (Communication to and from this remote region is almost nonexistent, but he did manage to make one phonecall home the end of August in which he said he had no money.) In any case, the mother let Victor know that the family's cupboard was bare (literally). We contacted the boy's “padrinos”, who generously pledged extra money to help tide the family over. We advanced the money here, and late Friday night were able to show up at the family's door with bags of groceries as an initial increment. Without Acercádonos, the mother would have had to appeal to her relatives who are as poor as she is, and all would have suffered. But thanks to the teamwork of Acercádonos, we were able to orchestrate a near-instantaneous and substantial response. I love this stuff!

And finally, in the good news/bad news department, the good news is that the girl I reported as missing last week has been found. More “good” news is that we learned that she had run away from home of her own free will, rather than being abducted. She was working as a domestic in a home in another town about an hour from Arequipa. The bad news is that this 14-year old has a 22-year old “boyfriend” (predator, I would say) who has taken advantage of her. (As one of seven children in a family with little education, this girl didn't get much attention and affection, so she was easily manipulated by a guy who could fool her into thinking she was going to be his little princess.) Now we have a big job ahead of us to work with the girl to get her head screwed back on straight, and to work with the family to fix the causes of her having run away in the first place. I don't love this stuff!

## **Nuevos Horizontes (“New Horizons”) Youth Group**

The above story underscores the need to get out ahead of problems and work with the youth and their families to build relationships which will prevent such situations from occurring. It was for this reason that the New Horizons Youth Group was formed, as a direct result of the earlier instance I mentioned last week in which a wayward 14-year old boy was found dead in the bottom of a ravine earlier this year. Today we had a special meeting with the youth and their parents. Professor Reynaldo, a schoolteacher who lives in Alto Cayma and who does a lot of work with youth, gave a good talk on how families should work in terms of authority, responsibility, communication, etc. There was a lot of interest on the part of the families, so hopefully some of the ideas exchanged will stick.

You will recall that 2 weeks ago we took the kids of New Horizons to see the Momia Juanita. We asked them each to write a short report on what they saw, and when I reviewed the reports I saw that several of them had included a list of the things which were buried with Juanita for her to take into the afterlife, one of which was “dollars”. It seems that there was a pot in the museum for freewill donations, and some of the kids thought that belonged to Juanita also.

I am very pleased to report that now we have a sponsor to take the kids of New Horizons to see the Santa Catalina Monastery as well. It will be interesting to compare the reaction of these young kids to that of the older girls from Creaciones Angel.

## **Aldea “Sagrada Familia” (The Orphanage)**

On Saturday we had a birthday party for 9 kids, an exceptionally high number. We were fortunate to have Oscar back with us, after a semester in which he was carrying a double class load in the university and didn't have any time left over for anything. He puts the kids through some organized activities which are different every time and are always a big hit.

In preparation for this party, due to the large number of kids involved, Gloria volunteered to accompany Rosario, Victor's wife, on the shopping trip to buy all the presents. Gloria came away from this experience very well impressed with Rosario's ability to squeeze a sol until it yelps, and to manage to buy the best quality possible within a constrained budget.

## **Alto Cayma in the Moonlight**

We're in full moon now, which is something extra special in the environment of Alto Cayma. The thin, clear air here at almost 9,000 feet lets the moon shine far brighter than at home. Last night I was literally able to read by its light, and the permanent snowcap atop Chachani seemed to float 2 miles up in the air in the moonlight. Savor that image until next week, as we continue to

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

Jim