

## **Report No. 16 from Alto Cayma – 21 Sep 08**

### **Serving Alto Cayma**

The bookkeeping task force that was occupying the first floor of our house has finally finished its work, after what was thought would be one week turned out to be three. It's funny how combing through receipts for 3 years worth of purchases for up to 200 people can eat up time. There are still other accounts that need to be scrubbed as well, but they're not nearly so extensive as were those of Acercádonos, and they won't require the task force approach. We do expect to inaugurate the formal accounting system on Oct 1, as scheduled.

This week one new project under the Home Improvement Initiative (HII) was launched. Esmeralda, one of the girls in the cardshop, has put up 1,800 soles from her Creaciones Angel savings account to qualify for an equal amount from the HII fund. She's using the money to buy materials with which to put a cement roof, to replace the current corrugated metal roof, on the one-room dwelling she and her mother share, and to build a bathroom to replace the hole in the ground they're currently using. If you could see the grin on the face of Esmeralda these days, it would be easy to understand where it comes from.

### **Visitors**

We have come across some new visitors to Alto Cayma who are not exactly "visitors" to Arequipa. They are Pat and Steve Kehm from Wisconsin, who are teachers at the Prescott School in Arequipa. They have been here since last February, and will be here a total of at least 2 years. They came up to Alto Cayma looking for us because the teachers they replaced had told them about us. We are glad to have met them relatively early in their stay, as I'm sure that there are lots of things we can work on together. It's always exciting to meet new people, and then just let your imagination run with ideas for possible synergy.

### **Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group**

As you know, the girls of Creaciones Angel are like our own daughters, and we're trying not only to support them, but also to form them as such. When it comes to formation training, we started with 12 girls whose attitude was dog eat dog, because that was the rule in the world they came from. The next step up the ladder, and a very difficult one at that, was to get them to see that if they all worked for the welfare of the group, their own individual welfare would be maximized as well. Fortunately that step is well behind us

by now. The ultimate goal was to grow them into servants of the community as a whole. We began to make inroads on the spirit of altruism by getting the girls involved in helping with projects like the Acercádonos birthday parties, which was great, but that was them responding to our call. This week, however, something happened which makes us think that perhaps they have finally turned the last corner. The girls have a self-imposed system of fines to discipline themselves with respect to punctuality in the shop, and these fines have been going into their common fund for paying utility bills, replacing tools, etc. The fines amount to an appreciable sum of money, however, and the girls just now informed us that they have decided (with no input from us, mind you) that they want to set that money aside and use it for social projects and charitable acts which they themselves will identify and act upon. Imagine that! If we've finally brought them to a point where they've internalized new values and are acting upon them, any remaining doubt as to whether we have changed these girls' lives is now erased in my mind.

And this bulletin just off the wires – by the time next week's Report comes out, Creaciones Angel will have moved to a new location. Watch this space for details next week.

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

Yesterday was the monthly Acercádonos birthday party. This time, for some reason, the reaction of the recipients said that the gifts that were bought were especially on target, from stuffed animals for the little ones to a transistor radio for 19-year old Karina (a special child) to a sweater for Justina, the oldest “ahijada” (sponsee) of them all. 84-year old Gregorio (who happens to be Giuliana's father) gave an eloquent speech of gratitude on behalf of the entire group, but for me the best thing was to see 5-year old Alex, with a big grin on his face, running after a friend. (This is Alex Soto, who could barely stand on his crooked legs before he got a series of corrective surgeries thanks to Chris Connelly's Handicapped Medical Fund.)

We are just now undergoing a significant change of personnel in the Acercádonos office. Luisa, who has been with us for two years, will be leaving the office at the end of this month. You may recall that she had earlier cut back from full time to mornings only, in order to spend more time with her children, and that Giuliana was filling in for her in the afternoon. We found through experience that in this case, two halves did not make a whole, i.e. that the break in continuity when we divided the job between two people was causing a degradation in our service to the “ahijados”. Therefore, after an exhaustive series of tests and evaluations, we have hired Lurdes Llaza as a full time replacement for Luisa. One special strength which Lurdes brings to the job is a fluent command of the Quechua language, which

is the only effective medium of communication with many of our elderly “ahijados”. Luisa will continue as part of the Acercádonos “family”, in that her daughter, Karely, will be one of our “ahijados”.

And now I’m going to do something out of the ordinary. I seldom use these reports to “advertise” for a sponsor for someone, but Francisco Cayani Mendoza is a special case. Francisco is only 49 years old (in 2 weeks), but he’s in very poor health due to diabetes. For example, his vision has deteriorated and he is barely able to walk. Francisco and his wife have 7 children, and the family’s income is only about 300 soles (approximately \$100) a month. Francisco has been in the Acercádonos program for several years, but he has now lost his sponsor. We obviously want to keep him in the program, so if anyone you know would like to sponsor someone, please let me know. Francisco and his family really need the help.

### **Salir Adelante (“Getting Ahead”) Educational Sponsorships**

The monthly meeting of Salir Adelante was held yesterday also. Pat and Steve Kehm sat in on the meeting, and seemed to be well impressed with what they saw and heard. (As former Peace Corps volunteers in Colombia, they have the advantage of being able to understand what’s going on without the need for a translator.) I was pleased to be able to announce the names of 5 new scholarship recipients, bringing the group up to 34 members in all. We had an exceptionally full program this time. I led off by taking them through a teambuilding exercise called “The Minefield”, which provoked a number of thoughtful, and even heated, observations on the Peruvian culture by the exercise participants. Then the kids themselves took over with a series of very well done skits and other entertainment features. This sponsorship program is turning into such a runaway success that this time I even invited Rosa, a first year student of Education in the National University who is our next candidate for sponsorship, to attend as an observer to get a feel for the group, because at the rate we’re going, I’m sure we’ll find a sponsor for her very quickly.

Just the day before the meeting, we received a packet of letters in the mail which had come from the students in our Interact Club at Mallard Creek High School back in Charlotte. Unfortunately there wasn’t time to get these translated in time for this meeting, so they will be given out at next month’s Salir Adelante meeting and answered at that time.

### **Rotary Projects**

We have been waiting nearly six weeks for word of the funds release for the big Water Project being sponsored by the Charlotte and Arequipa

Rotary Clubs, and just this week I stumbled across the reason for the delay. The Grant Coordinator at The Rotary Foundation was awaiting confirmation from the Foundation's fiscal agent in Peru that the Arequipa club's contribution to the project had been deposited in the bank. The fiscal agent had, in fact, already reported that deposit, but there was an error in one digit of the Matching Grant number which caused the deposit not to be recognized for its intended purpose. Hopefully now we'll be able to get on with this project at long last.

We are pleased to report that we've found a new club to work with on international service projects here in Peru. The Arequipa Ciudad Blanca club is just 3 years old, but it includes some outstanding members, including one Past District Governor. We like what we've seen of this club thus far, and are planning on applying for a couple of new Matching Grant projects for Alto Cayma with them as our partners.

### **A Little Rest and Relaxation**

This afternoon we took time out to take 8 of our local friends down to lunch at the Montonero outdoor restaurant, a program we usually just do with our Gringo visitor friends. They fed us so well that afterwards we felt obligated to walk all over downtown Arequipa for around 3 hours until we had finally walked it all off. It was a very pleasant afternoon, but it threw me way behind schedule on getting this report out, so now I'm looking at the midnight hour. I think I'd better hold this for final review with brighter eyes tomorrow morning. Then we'll enter our final two weeks on this stay in Alto Cayma, so we'll be running full tilt trying to wrap up loose ends as we continue to

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

Jim