

Report No. 4 from Alto Cayma – 29 Jun 08

Serving Alto Cayma

Roof Project - The project to replace “calamina” (corrugated metal) sheets on roofs is now essentially complete. In all, we have done 60 houses, and we have a reserve of \$500 for emergency cases as they arise in the next rainy season. We owe our thanks to the many donors who gave so generously to make this effort possible.

“Judgment Day” – Victor is just now completing 2 years in our employ, so it’s time for his second annual performance review. This time we’ve asked him to lead off with a self-evaluation, which really has him squirming. That’s part of his growth process, to learn to constantly self-evaluate and find areas where improvement is possible. Don’t anybody tell him in advance, but he’s going to get excellent marks from us. He’s doing a remarkable job, including in areas we never dreamed of when we first hired him.

Independence Day

The 4th of July, the day Miguel Angel Soto will receive his cochlear implant, is now almost upon us. We met again with Dr. Rondón, the local ENT specialist who will do the operation, on Friday evening. He did a final evaluation of Miguel Angel, and everything is a go for 8 a.m. on Friday, July 4, in the Clínica Arequipa.

This operation is a really big deal, not only for Miguel Angel but also for all of Arequipa. This will be the first cochlear implant to be performed in Peru outside of Lima. There are two experienced surgeons coming from Buenos Aires to help guide Dr. Rondón, as well as an Audiologist from Lima and a team of technicians from Cochlear Americas in the States. It is expected that the Arequipa press will cover the event.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Rondón stressed two things to the parents which we really liked. The first was how important their support for Miguel Angel would be, because he may have expectations that are not going to be fully realized, at least not initially, and in any case, he’ll go through many ups and downs as he enters the world of sound for the first time. The second thing Dr. Rondón emphasized is that only God could have assembled such a complex network of sponsors and participants in such an extraordinary event for a poor lad from Alto Cayma, and that although the parents can never repay the donor, they should seek to become like the donor in their own way, and help others around them without even waiting to be asked.

Visitors

Victoria and Alex, our visitors from Davidson College, returned from their trip to Puno and Cuzco, where they got to see the Inti Raymi, the ancient Inca celebration of the summer solstice. They showed up on Thursday morning to participate in some home visits which had been set up specially for them, but then they mysteriously disappeared for the rest of the day. We found out the next day that they had just arrived by bus at 7 a.m. on Thursday morning. No wonder they weren't their usual bouncy selves!

Dwight and Sherry have completed their first week with us. Dwight is now the proud "owner" of two new saws, purchased by the Charlotte Rotary Club for Father Alex' woodshop where Dwight teaches. Sherry had an especially active and rewarding week. She made a two-hour introductory visit to the Aldea, where she fell in love with the kids in the orphanage. She wants to do a project for them with her Vacation Bible School class back home, and has already started a photo exchange between the two groups. Father Alex also found room to squeeze her in on a trip to the mountain villages which he had organized for Dr. Wayne Centrone's group. She also had an opportunity to visit with Micaela and Daniel, two people she's sponsoring in the Acercádonos program. (There's quite a contrast between an 89 year-old woman who speaks Quechua and a bright-eyed 6 year-old boy.) And finally, she undertook a new sponsorship which is very interesting. She's sponsoring Rosmeri, a 10 year-old girl from the mountains, along with her two sisters. These 3 girls were taken in by their aunt and uncle in Alto Cayma when they were being neglected by their hopelessly alcoholic parents up in the mountains. They are significantly underdeveloped in every way, and really need a guardian angel to help them catch up and fully participate in life. In Sherry Fowler, they've found such an angel.

This weekend Dwight and Sherry are up in the Colca Canyon for a little tourism. In an unusual move, Dwight invited the 4 girls from Alto Cayma that he and his wife, Susan, are sponsoring to come along and see the Colca for the first time. They're due back any time now, and I'm sure they'll have many tales to tell.

Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

Of the 3 new girls who were candidates for admission to Creaciones Angel, for some reason only 2 actually showed up at the door. We have interviewed them, and they both appear very promising. We still don't have their medical and psychological evaluations back yet, but we don't anticipate any show-stopper problems. The girls will begin their training on Monday, and hopefully will be selling cards within just a month or two.

Dr. Wayne picked up 200 beautiful cards that were specially made with his Health Bridges International logo. We expect those cards are going to draw a lot of attention and comments.

The girls' payday on Tuesday had a very unusual twist. They were given a little additional bonus which was totally unexpected. This was the extra money that was given to us by a recent customer who said we weren't charging enough for the cards, and insisted on paying us more than we were asking! Since all the money from the card sales goes to the girls, it seemed appropriate to convey this extra money in the form of a special bonus.

Rotary Projects

Once again our Rotary activities in Colombia are sneaking into these reports "from Alto Cayma". This time Dr. Wayne Centrone, who has worked with us on a project to develop a network of volunteer healthcare providers in a poor section of the capitol city, Bogotá, has told me that he would like to make another trip to Colombia around the same time that a delegation from the Charlotte Rotary Club is planning to be there. We are now working to see if we can bring all these players together face-to-face, to see what their synergistic efforts can produce in the way of new ideas and commitments.

Our House (and My Garage)

The Telefónica technicians returned and appear to have actually made our internet service work. This is a real luxury, after 5 years of having to bum internet service wherever I could find it.

As for the garage (and its new contents), we have a mixed report. Due to a faulty ignition switch on my brand new bike, I don't have any headlights, but I've found that with my left turn signal I can spot hazards on the left side of the road and with my right turn signal I can do likewise for hazards on the right side of the road. The good news is that, unlike my last bike, which was basically a road machine, this one is truly a dirt bike, which is much more suitable for riding conditions here in Alto Cayma. The Chinese seem to have done a good job of stealing Yamaha's designs, because this bike literally eats up the bumps. With a little more practice, I should be able to negotiate the ravines as well as the roads, and then it'll be "Hi Yo, Wanxin! Awaaaay!"

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

Jim

