

Report No. 7 from Alto Cayma – 20 Jul 08

Serving Alto Cayma

As we work our way through adjustments in staffing, Lidia continues to conduct training. Now she's teaching computing to Tulita and Giuliana. That's a personal development fringe benefit for people working in Serving Alto Cayma – everybody learns from everybody else, and there's no such thing as "turf" to defend.

Similarly, we relate to one another on a basis of "work together, play together". Last night, for example, the "Five Musketeers" (Victor, Lidia, Giuliana, Gloria and Jim) went downtown to dinner together, and we were joined for capuccino afterwards by Oscar Garcia, who spends so much time volunteering with us that he's becoming a regular member of our team. This was a great opportunity to get to know Oscar better, and to let him see what a bunch of crazies we can be when we're away from "work". This feeling of "family" is one of the main things that makes our work here so enjoyable.

Visitors

Monday was Victoria and Alex' last day in Alto Cayma. We enjoyed their stay very much. Victoria was especially helpful to us, translating dozens of profiles on Acercándonos "ahijados" (sponsorees) and candidates into English so that we can share them with sponsors and prospective sponsors. Victoria and Alex had both spent many hours working with the girls in the cardshop, and the girls surprised them on their last day with a going-away luncheon right there in the shop. The two kids whom Victoria's mother and grandmother are sponsoring in Acercándonos also came by to say goodbye. It was all such a joyful celebration of meaningful relationships formed that Victoria and Alex didn't want to leave at the end of the day. Gloria finally had to run them off.

Our next two visitors, Laura and Meghan, will be arriving in Arequipa on Monday night. You'll hear more about them in next week's report.

Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group

I write mostly about the fun we have with these girls, but they are continuing to work hard as well. Right now they're working to challenge us to sell more cards during the coming Christmas season than ever before. Dwight and Sherry took over 1,500 cards with them when they returned to the States a couple of weeks ago. The visiting group from the Dilworth Rotary Club will take a similar number at the end of their visit in August, and Jim and Gloria

will bring what's left when we return to the States in early October. So look out, Rotary clubs and church groups, here we come!

Acercádonos (“Coming Together”) Sponsorship Program

We had the monthly birthday party for Acercádonos “ahijados” yesterday. It was a record number of people for us – 15 kids and 3 elderly, for a total of 18. We were joined this time by Emily Fifield, a young woman from Iowa who has spent a lot of time volunteering in Alto Cayma over the past couple of years. She was there to help celebrate the birthday of Inés, an elderly woman her parents are sponsoring.

Earlier in the week we had taken Emily and her sister and brother-in-law to visit the homes of Inés and Juan de Dios, a young boy their parents are also sponsoring, as well as Juan, an elderly man who is being sponsored by their grandparents. Both Emily and Lindsey commented on how much Juan reminded them of their own grandfather, which was certainly unexpected!

Salir Adelante (“Getting Ahead”) Educational Sponsorships

We had the monthly meeting with the students yesterday as well. This time we welcomed 2 new members into the group – Luis, a first-year medical student, and Vicky, who's studying to be a Phys Ed teacher. Both Luis and Vicky are being sponsored by Rotarians from the Charlotte area. Our program this time was a talk given by Ezequiel, a third-year medical student, on the subjects of hepatitis and vaccinations. The group gave Ezequiel, who is being sponsored by a family in The Netherlands, an outstanding rating on his talk, and we're inviting him to give a similar talk at our next Acercádonos meeting. When Ezequiel was finished, Oscar took over and engaged the group in a continuation of his seemingly endless series of group dynamic activities which the young people love to do. At the end of this meeting, the group planned the program for next month's meeting. Since that meeting falls on Aug 16, the day after Arequipa Day (the 468th anniversary of the founding of Arequipa), they decided to do a program of songs, poems and legends celebrating the history and cultural heritage of this distinctive city and region.

The Salir Adelante group is rapidly becoming a personal favorite of mine – they're such talented and enthusiastic young people. I can't help but wonder how many other young people there are in this community who are equally talented, but are frustrated in their desire to develop that talent by their lack of economic resources with which to pursue higher education. We

already know of at least a dozen for sure who are currently awaiting sponsorship.

Aldea “Sagrada Familia” (The Orphanage)

Today we were to take the 3 Llallacachi siblings out of the orphanage for a visit with their 3 brothers who live on the outside, but it’s not quite working as we had hoped. One condition to earn this privilege is that they had to have been behaving themselves reasonably well during the weeks leading up to the visit. Elvis and Guisela, the two older ones, have been doing fine, both in the orphanage and in school, but little Madeley seems to be going through a rebellious stage right now. Father Frank specifically warned her that permission to go out on today’s visit would depend on whether or not she would correct her behavior, but she didn’t respond, so only Elvis and Guisela will be allowed to go this time. We certainly don’t question Father Frank’s judgment in these matters. He’s got a really tough job, being a responsible “father” to 50 kids whose biological parents, in most cases, are anything but responsible. Just seeing how the kids flock to him whenever he walks around the Aldea grounds speaks volumes on what a good job he’s doing.

Rotary Projects

The Charlotte and Arequipa Rotary Clubs’ Water Project is now in its “do or die” phase. We have only until the end of this month (11 more days) to get all the required paperwork into the hands of The Rotary Foundation in order to keep this already-approved grant project alive. We finally have a formal proposal in hand from the vendor of a relocateable water treatment plant that fits within the project budget. We presented this proposal to SEDAPAR, the local water company, on Friday morning, and told them that we need for them to firm up their supporting role in the project and give us a formal commitment, in writing, by tomorrow (Monday). We have been working on this revised approach ever since the original proposal for a fixed plant was approved by the Foundation last October, but this wouldn’t be Peru if we didn’t take it right down to the 59th minute of the 11th hour. That wouldn’t be exciting at all!

And that’s it for another week in Alto Cayma. I’m happy to report that El Misti is still in place, and prospects are good for yet another week in which to

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

Jim

