

## **Report No. 10 from Alto Cayma - 2 Mar 08**

### **We're Back**

We're back in Alto Cayma, but just barely. We left Bogotá early (very early) Saturday morning, so this week's Sunday report from Alto Cayma will be pretty thin.

It was great to have a little time in Bogotá again, and the trip provided us with some much-needed relaxation. Colombia has problems with poverty also, but the level of development in Colombia is much closer to that of the States than it is to that of Peru. We spent some time with Gloria's family (just 1 aunt and 11 cousins remaining) and friends, including the Rotarians from the Bogotá Chicó Rotary Club. They have a number of projects in a poor neighborhood called Suba Bilbao on the outskirts of Bogotá. The poverty there isn't as deep as it is in Alto Cayma, but they have many of the same problems - lack of employment, dysfunctional families, etc. - as we see here. We explored with the Rotarians how we might be able to support their efforts in Suba Bilbao through Matching Grants and possibly through shipping containers of donated food, clothing, etc. All this is still in the discussion stage, but from what we've seen of this club in the past, words will soon turn into actions.

### **The Roof Project**

Heavy rains (and accompanying cold temperatures) returned to Alto Cayma for a couple of days last week, reminding us of the ongoing need for good roofs on the poorer houses in the community. Victor delivered 5 new roofs this week, including one to a house right across the ravine from our house. This family has no connection to Acercándonos or any of our other projects, so Victor arriving on their doorstep offering free "calaminas" (corrugated metal roofing sheets) came as a complete surprise to them. They were very touched.

### **Visitors**

Dwight Hartsell returned home safely during our absence, so we arrived back in Alto Cayma in a "visitorless" state. We will have no new visitors the rest of this stay (i.e. through the end of March), so one of the richest sections of these reports will be blank until we return in June.

## **Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group**

The girls served their suspensions while we were out of the country, which was good. (I'm sure Gloria would have found it depressing to see as many as nearly half of the girls missing from the shop.) Now hopefully all that is behind us.

While we were in Bogotá, Gloria was very busy working on the girls' behalf. With help from Gladys Diaz, the teacher who taught the girls how to make the Canson (vellum) cards, she bought a ton of materials and supplies - watercolor pencils, chalks, paintbrushes, etc. - for the girls to work with. It took several days to hunt down everything that was needed, and we had to buy an extra suitcase to get it all back to Alto Cayma.

## **Acercádonos ("Coming Together") Sponsorship Program**

We got back to Alto Cayma on Saturday, just in time to join the monthly Acercádonos meeting in progress. All the "ahijados" (sponsors) were told they must turn in the letters they are writing to their sponsors this week, to give us adequate time to get all 180+ of them translated before we return to the States. We also welcomed one new child into the program, one who had been "adopted" by a couple of our recent visitors. Special recognition was given to the children who had most faithfully attended the summer school which Acercádonos sponsored, and the students from the summer dance classes gave us a little recital.

The hottest subject going in Acercádonos right now is the campaign to get the kids ready for the new school year which begins now, in March. As I've mentioned in past reports, the cost of uniforms and school supplies is a major economic challenge for the parents every year. To help ease the blow, Acercádonos has bankrolled most of the kids' benefits for the months of Jan, Feb and Mar, and Victor has negotiated favorable prices for school supplies at a store downtown. The parents can now cash in the accumulated benefits and obtain the needed supplies. It was interesting to watch how the parents hung on Victor's every word as he explained the process. There is nothing more serious to them than how to keep their children in school.

## **Our House**

With all the rain we've had, our alfalfa field has been flourishing, and we had a couple of ladies cut it again while we were gone. I'd like to say that another alfalfa crop is "in the barn", but we don't have a barn. Instead, we gave half of it to Nilda, from the cardshop, and the other half to our neighbor, Glenda, who waters the alfalfa for us faithfully every day that it doesn't rain.

I suppose that by now I can say that another alfalfa crop is "in the cufs (guinea pigs)".

### **Goings and Comings**

Saturday night, within hours of our return to Alto Cayma, we were invited to the mass marking one month since Lidia, our administrator's, grandfather passed away. After the mass, friends and neighbors were invited over to the house for food and drinks. This was the first time we had been invited to participate in such an event, and we found it very interesting.

Something even more interesting will take place next week, however. One of the girls in Creaciones Angel is getting married Saturday night, and I'm going to give the bride away! Who is it? You'll have to wait until next week's report to find out. Meanwhile, don't forget to

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

Jim