

Report No. 4 from Alto Cayma - 20 Jan 08

Visitors

Chris Connelly and Frank Printz departed Arequipa early Saturday morning, after a very eventful week for both of them. Chris arrived with a broken left arm, the result of having been thrown from his horse two weeks ago, but he's not one to let a little thing like that slow him down. Chris and various members of his family are sponsoring a total of 16 people in the Acercádonos program, and he managed to visit the homes and make an in-depth assessment of each and every one of them. Many of the "ahijados" (sponsees) immediate needs are being filled as a direct result of Chris' visit. Frank, a friend of Chris' from Charlotte, is a massage therapist specializing in Thai Massage. He saw patients every day in the Policlínico, and the feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive. He also conducted classes which were very well attended, especially by members of the Policlínico staff and one by the girls from Creaciones Angel. Frank said he wanted to come to Alto Cayma to share his gift for healing and leave something behind that would make a real difference. I'd say he succeeded on both counts.

This week we'll be receiving a small medical team headed by Dr. Michelle Ong from Mooresville, NC, a frequent visitor to Alto Cayma. More about her group in next week's report.

Creaciones Angel

The integration of the new girls into Creaciones Angel continues, but it's been like trying to hoist water in a leaky bucket. We had 7 candidates when we got here, but 2 self-eliminated before we even got to the interviews, citing problems with taking on a full-time job on top of the commitments they already had. On Monday we interviewed the last 2 of the surviving 5, and gave the green light to all 5 to enter on a provisional basis. But then, just in the course of this past week, 2 more of them withdrew after seeing more of what the work is like, thus leaving us with just 3.

The humidity that accompanies the wet weather we've been having has been a disaster for the cards. The big sheets of cardstock from which pieces are cut to make the individual cards are all warping. When new cards are assembled, the adhesive doesn't dry properly and the individual cards wind up warped as well. Fortunately, the girls had enough cards in the cabinets, made before the weather turned so wet, with which to fill the vacant space in Chris' suitcase as he headed back to the States, but if the

weather doesn't improve soon, we may have to suspend production for the first time ever.

Chris Connelly also left behind an offer to treat the girls to some kind of an outing, similar to the one we had a couple of years ago when the girls visited the old gristmill in Sabandia and had a cookout, compliments of our Spanish class back at Advent. The girls enjoyed that so much that they were very excited to receive Chris' offer, but of course we'll have to wait for this weather to improve before we can take advantage of it.

Adventure in Faith Woodshop

This week I delivered a set of carving tools which Dwight Hartsell sent down to donate to the shop. The woodcarving students are considering investing some of their own money to buy additional tools which they currently lack. At the same time, I am very happy to see that they are actively pursuing ways to market their own products all year round right here in Arequipa. The more such initiative they take on their own, the better off they'll be, because there just isn't enough left of us to go around to build a marketing system for the wood products comparable to that which we've built for the cards of Creaciones Angel.

Acercádonos ("Coming Together") Sponsorship Program

Yesterday was the monthly birthday party for the ahijados with birthdays in January, of which there were 15. We're getting a lot of help with these parties from the girls of Creaciones Angel now, which gives them an opportunity to give joy to others, as many of the things that happen in Creaciones Angel bring joy to them. The birthday parties are also a good way for us to spend some quality time with individual ahijados, as 15 or so is a manageable number. Dealing with all 180 of them at once in the regular monthly meeting can be a bit overwhelming.

Salir Adelante ("Getting Ahead") Educational Sponsorships

This has been a BIG week for Salir Adelante. As reported last week, we asked Father Alex to issue a call for scholarship candidates to come forward. It turned out to be a classic case of "Be careful what you ask for, because you just might get it". Forty-five (45) people showed up on Monday, another 36 on Tuesday, and so on. When we reached a total of 102 at noon on Thursday, we closed the inscriptions. We currently have 4 scholarships to offer - 2 in nursing and 2 open to any field - so we have a lot of work to do to arrive at a final decision. Last week and next I'm conducting initial interviews and collecting basic data. Based on this information, we will

narrow the field to perhaps 20 who can move on to the next phase in the selection process. I'm anticipating that we'll wind up with a prioritized list of those candidates, all of whom will be well qualified and deserving, but only 4 of whom can be given immediate scholarships. You'll be hearing who the 4 winners are later, and at the same time you'll learn about the specific individuals who fell just below the cutoff line.

Yesterday was also the monthly meeting of the 18 students who are already in Salir Adelante. We've only been doing these meetings for about 6 months, and they keep getting better all the time, thanks to the efforts of two people. Maria, the social worker, always facilitates an experiential learning exercise or gives an interactive talk, this time on the need to have a plan for your life, and the self control necessary to stick to that plan. The other person is Lidia, our administrator, who keeps the finances well under control while also dispensing her own advice and guidance, having recent experience as a student herself. By the way, 2 of our students (Diana and Alvaro) are taking the highly competitive admissions exam for the National University today (Sunday). Please wish them well.

Rotary Projects

As of this past week, we have a new Rotary project. The Southwest Cabarrus Rotary Club is sending us money to buy 7 really good mountain bikes. Working with Father Alex, we intend to find people up in the mountain villages who need these bikes as a serious means of transportation. We should come back from that with some very interesting stories, I should think.

We found out just the other day that our Charlotte container of donated goods got the "red light" in Customs. That's analogous to the "red light/green light" system that individual travelers go through when they arrive at the Lima airport, and it means in our case that the whole container will now have to be emptied and scrutinized. Only delays and problems can come from this, so stay tuned.

The Eye Clinic sponsored by the Charlotte South Park Rotary Club is scheduled to begin seeing patients next Tuesday afternoon. The buildup of patient visits will be metered to allow us to learn as we go and make sure we do things right.

The Motorcycle Riding Academy

The Hintz Motorcycle Riding Academy took in its 3rd student on Saturday. Miguel Angel, our favorite waiter at Capriccio, is considering

buying either a bike or a scooter for transportation, and he wanted to see how hard it would be to learn to ride a regular motorcycle, so I invited him to come up to Alto Cayma to try mine. He took to it like a duck takes to water - clearly the best student we've had. Victor's theory is that that's because the other two were girls and Miguel Angel has been the only guy. Others speculated it was because I asked Adán to give the instruction this time rather than doing it myself. But then I found out that the real reason was because Miguel Angel "cheated". He already knew how to ride a bicycle and drive a stickshift car, so all he had to do was put the two together.

And that's all the news from Alto Cayma for this week. Stay tuned for more, and don't forget to

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

Jim