

## **Report No. 5 from Alto Cayma - 27 Jan 08**

### **Better Late than Never?**

I'm sorry this report is a couple days late in getting out. The main reason is because I've been inundated with candidates for the scholarships we're offering under the Salir Adelante project (see below), but the fact that we've been without internet in Alto Cayma for a couple of days hasn't helped any either. I may have to take this report downtown and send it from Capriccio, which of course would obligate me to enjoy one of their capuccinos.

### **Calamina Roof Project**

Just last Sunday I sent out an appeal for funds to enable us to buy new "calamina" (corrugated metal) sheets for people whose roofs were leaking badly during our recent inclement weather. The response has been generous and immediate and, as promised, our subsequent action has been immediate as well. We came up with a list of candidate houses by considering those in the Acercádonos sponsorship program, the card shop and the knitting shop, plus a list of people in need compiled by Maria, the social worker. None of the money has physically reached Alto Cayma yet, but we have already bought and delivered calaminas for 11 houses and have material on hand to deliver to 8 more. The funds that are on their way will cover these houses and many more besides. Meanwhile the weather has improved a bit lately, making it easier for the people to install their new roof panels, which is a blessing.

### **Visitors**

Dr. Michelle Ong's group arrived on Thursday, despite some perturbations in the flight schedule caused by inclement weather in the States. The group consists of 3 doctors and 3 nurses, accompanied by 2 translators - Raul and Norma Echevarría, a Peruvian couple who now live in Statesville, NC. The doctors have been seeing patients in the Policlínico, including in the new Eye Clinic (see below), plus two of them gave a talk on arthritis to the group of the Elderly. The nurses have been helping out wherever needed, and Raul and Norma, besides helping with translating, have also gotten quite involved in the pastoral care side of Father Alex' mission activities. On Saturday we all took an excursion up into the mountains with Adán, but we weren't able to reach the village we had intended to visit because the road had been washed out by the recent rains. Nevertheless, it was an opportunity for the visitors to see first-hand the kind of environment from which many of the people now living in Alto Cayma have come.

## **Creaciones Angel Cardmaking Group**

The girls have been taking advantage of the improvement in the weather to "glue cards while the sun shines", so to speak, and try to make up for lost time on production. They just received a surprise order for more logo cards from Health Bridges International, a not-for-profit organization founded by Dr. Wayne Centrone of Portland, OR. Wayne is arriving for a visit Tuesday, and wants to take the cards with him when he leaves on Sunday morning, so the girls are really scrambling.

## **Salir Adelante ("Getting Ahead") Educational Sponsorships**

These past two weeks have been HUGE in terms of activity in the Salir Adelante project. We took a great leap of faith when we opened the door to all comers to apply for scholarships, even though we only have 4 in hand to award immediately. We had 102 people apply initially, and through 2 weeks of preliminary interviews and data collection we have selected 10 highly qualified candidates to compete for the initial scholarships in a second round, with the promise that we will seek additional sponsors to be able to cover all 10 as quickly as we can. We have further captured a list of 51 additional candidates who might compete for additional scholarships in the future. It's obvious that we've tapped into a great area of need here, and we will be looking for not only individuals and families to offer sponsorships, but also organizations such as Rotary Clubs. I will be sharing with you the stories of some of the most promising candidates, either in future weekly reports or in special reports. I am really excited about what we've embarked on here, and when you "meet" some of these outstanding young people, I'm sure you will be too.

## **Aldea "Sagrada Familia" (The Orphanage)**

On Sunday we took Michelle Ong's group for a brief visit to the Aldea on our way downtown. We happened to catch them in the middle of their celebration of the 6th anniversary of the Aldea's founding. The visitors were very impressed with how green and pleasant the environment in the Aldea was, in the wake of the recent rains.

## **Rotary Projects**

Father Alex has created a powerful package of capability for the local police through the Police Vehicle project. By shopping patiently and diligently, he was able to purchase a very good vehicle (a 4WD Nissan Frontier truck with a double cab) for just \$11,600, leaving \$3,400 from the \$15,000 grant to be spent on related equipment, most of which is going for a

radio communication system consisting of a transmitter, an antenna tower and 5 handsets. Between the vehicle itself and the radio communication network, this grant will provide a huge boost to the agility of the police in responding to crimes and other emergencies throughout Alto Cayma.

I had a chance to see the new Eye Clinic in action last week as ophthalmologist Dr. Royce Syracuse and his assistant, Heather, from Michelle Ong's group, were seeing as many patients as they could in their limited time here. Royce was favorably impressed with the quality of the equipment in the clinic. As the clinic is starting up, a local ophthalmologist is now seeing patients every Wednesday afternoon.

And that's the news from Alto Cayma for this week, so until next week, don't forget to

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

Jim