Celebrating our 20th Year in Service to Honduras

Summer 2009 www.hoi.org Phone 404-327-5768

We are in Critical Need of Your Help

As with many organizations, the economy has severely affected HOI's ability to help the people we serve in Honduras. Recent political events have exacerbated the impact with a number of cancellations and reduced numbers in those traveling.

Some measures have been taken recently to ensure we make it through the crisis:

* We have reduced HOI's operating costs in the US and Honduras
* We have downsized several programs in Honduras
* We have reduced pay and staffing in the US

In the midst of these cost reduction measures, a Constitutional upheaval occurred in Honduras resulting in ten groups canceling and another two serving with fewer than expected team members. In total, the political crisis resulted in the loss of 200 volunteers going to the Ranch from July to September. With this impasse continuing, we have canceled group travel until the State Department lifts the ban on non-essential travel to Honduras

What Survival Looks Like?

I remember asking my clients in my consulting days, "what does a successful project look like"? Now I have to ask, "What does survival look like"? It looks like this as far as I can tell:

* I've been listening to "*Here I am Lord*" the beautiful song by Daniel L. Schutte and this song inspires me to understand my purpose to serve others and to be courageous in spite of being fearful of possible harm which may come my way.
* Give sacrificially. Our donation base is down by 60% and the only factor which has kept us on kilter to some extent, was the increase in groups and volunteers this year. Well that's gone by the wayside! We will not survive now without a dramatic increase in donations. What do we need to make it through this year? Between now and the end of the year, we need to raise $300,000 (between now and December31).
* We will be launching an annual giving campaign. Be a partner in our ministry.
* Participate in our fund raising events. The HOI Golf Outing at Smoke Rise Country Club is on September 14. Sponsor or organize a foursome. Be a hole sponsor. Engage others. This is critical to our survival. If you can't swing a golf club worth a darn (like me) you can still play since it is a scramble format (play the best ball).

Does Honduras Need Us?

In the middle of this political situation, many came to realize that the principle means of help received by the Hondurans, comes through mission groups. The Agalta Valley was once considered one of the most destitute in Honduras. With the help of the 10,000 volunteers who have gone down over these many years, 600,000 people's lives have been improved dramatically. I can't believe God is telling us that it's time to stop.

Paul

Paul Tom
CEO

Reflections of La Pena (Grayson UMC)

Finally, our mission team of sixteen from Grayson UMC had arrived at Rancho el Paraiso. We had been planning this trip for months and now it was finally happening. Our bunkhouse turned out to be much nicer than we had imagined, with rocking chairs and hammocks lining the long front porch. Many of us spent our evenings relaxing there, watching the full moon rise over the mountains. We even had internet service! Well most of the time….

On Monday morning, we piled into the Land Cruisers and made the hour and twenty minute ride up the road—rutted goat path—to the small mountaintop village of La Peña. There we met the villagers who presented us with a homemade welcome sign. After introductions, they sang some songs and then our fearless leader Marta (we named her Queen Latrina… but that is another story) split us up into small work groups and sent us off to work on projects in all directions. The Bible School team set off up the steep trail to meet the children at the village school. This would become our daily routine. The work was hard but no one complained and everyone pitched in where needed. We poured concrete floors in eight houses, built three latrines and installed roofs on three houses. The La Peña villagers were always right there beside us working just as hard. In some cases, we would be teaching them a new skill. It was awesome!

Thursday was fiesta day, with lots of music, dancing, singing, tamales, piñata smashing and homemade thank you gifts from the grateful villagers. We were amazed at the depth of their talents and how our first impressions of a poor and destitute people had been completely transformed by their loving, rich and proud culture. The whole experience was very moving and over much too soon. We made friends with many of the La Peña villagers and as a team formed new friendships we will cherish forever while serving God and helping to further his Kingdom. It was truly an amazing experience.

—Charles Hill

Additional highlights:
Cattle in the road, chickens and pigs in houses, everyone has a machete, ants, frijoles three times a day, coffee plantations, banana groves, amazing sunsets, more ants, homemade saddles, waterfall swimming, and landing at Tegucigalpa airport!

The La Peña villagers were always right there beside us working just as hard.

Currently at the Ranch

By Kelly Jasper

Reprinted with permission from the Augusta Chronicle, July 9, 2009

Some people would call it bad luck or timing, but Dorna Adams isn't so sure.

She led a team of volunteer missionaries to Honduras on June 27.

"We were there for a reason," said Mrs. Adams, pastor of Connections at Stevens Creek Church. "We trust God to guide us."

For all the news reports featuring violence, Mrs. Adams said her team's trip was relatively calm.

The team traveled by bus for seven hours to its village accompanied by an armed guard, but that's normal protocol for the mission agency -- Honduras Outreach International (sic) -- which hosts Stevens Creek and several other area churches every year.

"The week was full of blessings. We were very safe. I'm grateful for that," said Mrs. Adams, who carried a satellite phone and checked in with the U.S. Embassy every day in case the situation escalated.

In the meantime, the team prayed and continued serving.

"With everything that happened, there were definitely extra prayers offered up," Mrs. Adams said. "We prayed for our safety, but we prayed for our families that they would know we were safe, and we prayed for the country and for the people and for peace."

Dorna Adams with Banner given to Team by Villagers

Philanthropy 101

HOI is blessed to have young people interested, involved and passionate about the families we serve through our seven program areas in the Agalta Valley.

Many of our "non-youth" mission teams include at least one teenager or young adult which means that during the school year these young people justify missing school days to share an experience beyond self: to serve, to work along side, and to embrace Hondurans in the communities where they will serve.

Other young "friends of HOI" find creative ways to support our ministry. To celebrate her 30th birthday, one woman donated $10 for each decade of her life. It was a remarkable statement from someone in the "Y" generation who had little knowledge of our organization.

Another young woman, who has not traveled to Honduras but who knows her family's involvement and passion for the organization, gifted HOI with a donation in her mother's honor for Mother's Day. It was a tender moment when the mother learned about her daughter's generosity.

When two Atlanta-area high school students, Morgan Withrow (The Howard School) and Deborah Green (Pace Academy) were recently at Rancho el Paraiso they heard about the staff, salary and program reductions affecting the entire organization. As a result they have offered to donate funds from their savings accounts to staff salaries.

Our latest donor, Tyler Gibson, a senior at the Westminster Schools, took a class about philanthropy in which the students learned about a broad range of not for profit organizations in their area. One of the requirements was that each student makes a financial donation to an organization of his or her choice at the end of the class. HOI was blessed to receive undesignated funds from a young man who traveled to Rancho el Paraiso in June 2008 and had, as he says, "a life changing experience."

Remarkable lessons these young people are modeling if we are willing and open to their lead! What can we glean from them besides a generous spirit? They teach us to be creative and to look beyond the ephemeral in our gift giving. They show us that small donations are as welcomed as large. They show us that they are looking at what WE as their elders do and where our hearts are and then honor what they see.

I pray that as you read each account of a young person's creative generosity, you will reflect on how you can help HOI. Can you make a donation for each decade the next time you (or a loved one) celebrates a birthday or an anniversary? Can you honor a loved one on a special occasion such as Grandparent's Day, Father's Day, Valentine's Day? Can you learn from the young man who had the "life changing experience," at Rancho el Paraiso that because his life was changed, he recognizes the importance of philanthropy to help the Hondurans he met also enjoy "a life changing experience?"

Letter from Dr. Fred Ingle

I want to thank all involved in selecting Bill Sell and myself for the Heart for Honduras Awards that were given out at the Silent Auction and Fundraiser on Saturday May 16. I WAS surprised and honored to be selected. I cannot say that I've remained with HOI thru the years just to receive the award. I think I speak for Bill also in saying that we both have a passion and vision for agriculture and strive for success even when it sometimes seems to be impossible.
I want to give recognition to some who have been responsible for me to have been considered for this award:
(1) Dr. Jim Thompson who bought my first ticket to Honduras AND told me I was going to 'where" ??
(2) Sue Church for her patience with me and the AG program in it's good and bad times
(3) Beth Barnwell for her belief and support of the AG program
(4) Paul Tom for his vision and belief in the importance of agriculture both in the Agalta Valley and Honduras
(5) Rob Fowler- without his support there might not be an AG program and school.
(6) Bill Sell who has always been there when needed and without his help and advice we *would not* be where we are today.
(7) Osman Echeverria- without his dedication, drive and compassion for HOI and his fellow Hondurans we would be a program in name only.
(8) Members of the AG program-Nelson Echeverria, Ediberto and others.

As you can see, I received this award in the name of so many people.
Osman said it well when he said that he was like a seed that had been planted, nurtured, watered and has grown and become the person that he is.
He is living proof of the influence and work of HOI.
Recently I have received several agriculture awards but this one I am especially proud of.
I am thankful God used Jim Thompson to involve me with HOI.
As always, I am available if I can be of assistance.
Fred

Each newsletter will feature the blessings which partnership brings to a village. Please submit a short summary of the village in which you worked so we can share your story.

The HOI Newsletter is published four times a year
Chief Editor
Paul Tom– CEO

Newsletter Director
Melanie Toven

Contributing to this Edition – Charles Hill from Grayson UMC, Anna Belle Pyle-HOI Board of Directors and Dr. Fred Ingle-HOI Board of Directors

Tech Needs at the Ranch:

The bulk of our computer equipment has come from generous donations in the past, and we are thankful for them! However, we need continued donations to support and maintain what we have now, and make progress toward tomorrow.

As such, we are looking for gently used computer systems, computer components and accessories to help our staff perform at their fullest– or at least minimize their struggles with equipment nearing the end of its lifetime. Currently, we are looking for the following items:

-DDR Ram (184 pin, 512Mb or larger preferred, though anything helps!)

-USB External Hard Drives (40Gb or larger, self powered if possible from Simple Tech, Western Digital, or Seagate).

-Complete or substantially complete Desktop and Laptop Systems. For laptops, chargers and bags are desired. Systems without operating systems are acceptable as we can install them.

-Partial systems with missing or damaged parts may be acceptable, however, HOI does not have the means or funds to become a computer recycler. If there are useable components in a machine, we may be able to use the parts to repair or upgrade existing equipment.

We are also looking for Computer/IT knowledgeable individual willing to donate time and expertise to help in our computer and network planning and maintenance. If you can donate your expertise, please contact Melanie Toven at: mtoven@hoi.org
She can put you in touch with Daniel Toon, HOI's technical advisor.

Education Advisory Board

Dr. Vivian Fueyo and Leslie Bobadilla

The third week of June was supposed to be a week of work. It was!

Four women gathered in the ranch dining hall each morning-Leslie Bobadilla, Kirsten Ely, Vivian Fueyo and Anna Belle Pyle. During the day, we had documents to review, ideas to marinate, adjustments to make and ultimately, a Ranch School System to run! We participated in discussions with Honduran educators of all levels -from University Administrators to Elementary teachers. Most importantly, we reinforced a direct support system for Leslie Bobadilla, Director of the Ranch School System. We are confident that the elementary, middle school, and now the high school have a strong set of teachers and staff. As always, scholarships and sponsorships are extremely important to the success of our program. Our time in Paraiso was sprinkled with laughter, tears, and evenings of quiet reading.

At least three of us "gringos" were reading Three Cups of Tea, a book about one man's determination (and success) in building schools in Pakistan. We shared the week with a wonderful group that served in the village of Rincon Grande. What a gift was their spirit!

The third week of June in Paraiso, one expects special gifts to appear. They did. A brilliant sunrise started the week. Another gift –two new birds were added to a birder's list. (White-collared Seedeater and Yellow-crowned Euphonia). There were exquisite yellow orchids gracing the limbs of the trees outside the old dorm. As always, there was the gracious gift of warm 'bienvenidos' from everyone we worked with at the Ranch and in the schools. Through the work and cooperation of the week, self-sufficiency in our schools came closer to attainment.

-A.B. Pyle