

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

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We've been blessed with a volunteer architect, Travis Schuerman, who is beginning the process of laying out the plans for a building on the adjacent land. This will house expanded cooking and eating areas, an upstairs classroom and offices, and a downstairs medical clinic. This is becoming part of the overall plans for The Bridge, which we'll share with you as they unfold. Nanci's adding the artist's touch, and we'll show you the results next time. Onward!

RECENT NEWS

By now you know that my plan to put out two smaller issues last month hasn't worked out. I will try again this month with another smaller issue about mid-month. Alejandro scored at school. We recently had an Easter celebration at The Bridge and discovered a strategy error. A new Joseph came to visit. Meet the Magnificent Mama Chicken – and there's a new "mama chicken" in town. For one day, Life Is A Carnival. Water, water everywhere, as supplies arrive in unexpected ways. A trip taken to Shiroles, a village in the interior. GoodShoppers are on the move.

ALEJANDRO SCORES

Good news - Alejandro, a fourth grader, was among 10 of the "smartest kids" chosen to take a special standardized test at the start of the school year in Puerto Viejo.. We've learned that only 3 of the 10 even passed this test – and that Alejandro was one of the three. Good going, Alejandro!

EASTER AT THE BRIDGE

Easter 2008 was so very special. We were delighted to have Timoteo Jackson, a local tribal leader, and his wife come again this year.



Timoteo, right, addressing the crowd

We were thrilled to be blessed with a chant sung in Bribri. Timoteo gave a delightful talk in Spanish and Bribri and before saying a lengthy but lovely prayer in both languages.



The Bridge celebrates Easter

The group had a great dinner of Carne Asada, and spent some time coloring the special place mats Nanci and the kids designed. Then they enjoyed an Easter Egg Hunt, with Nanci explaining that eggs are a symbol of new birth. The kids carried 40 beautiful baskets that Nanci and our wonderful volunteers created.



Tica guards the beautiful eggs before hiding them.

We learned something in this year's egg hunt that we'll use to streamline things next year. We asked the older kids to hide the eggs before the party started, and let them into the hunt along with the younger ones. That was silly! Next year, we'll let the younger kids to do some hunting first... duhh!

JOSEPH COMES FOR A VISIT

Talking about rebirth – you remember Joseph – or I should say the “Old Joseph”, or as they say around here, “José Antigua”? A totally different Joseph came here to visit the other day. You already know that he and Jacqueline have been in a drug recovery program for over a year. They got married in the program, and had a healthy, crack-free baby named Steven.



Joseph joined in with the preparations for Easter – coloring eggs, making Easter baskets, just joining in. He’s still wearing the photo ID he’s required to carry, And he is NOT wearing his rasta curls – drat! No dreads.

Talking with Joseph was the best part of the visit. He’s a whole new man. He has his head in the right place, and his head and heart are both engaged in coming back here and doing something about the drug problem in Puerto Viejo. We can’t wait to see them back. We already have some great contacts for them.

He, Jackie, and the baby are doing just fine. Yay, God!

MAGNIFICENT MAMA CHICKEN

You may remember that our little group of chickens has been doing a great job of pest control. One of the more recent members of the “flock” was a beautiful black chicken, who, after a whirlwind courtship with a neighborhood rooster, produced a crop of beautiful baby chicks.

A mama chicken teaches her babies how to hunt for food – where to look, what to turn over, how to scratch, how to dig, and how to clean their beaks when they get covered with mud. She also teaches them about certain noises and sights that mean danger – by commanding them to stand perfectly still until she moves again.



Here’s Mama Chicken on the job with two of her brood

Each evening, the process of “getting the kids to bed” begins at dusk. New chicks aren’t too handy with the ramp leading into the coop, so Mama chicken started taking her kids to the big roots of a nearby tree, where she knew Nanci would come get them – and her – and put them all into the coop.

About 2 AM one morning, we were startled awake by a terrible noise in the chicken house. A possum had eaten through the wire mesh around the coop. He had Mama Chicken by the neck. Nanci grabbed him by the tail and threw him out the door, only to find out that he still had Mama Chicken in his mouth – they both landed hard on the ground. The possum took off for the jungle.

Nanci picked up Mama and discovered some very bad neck wounds. This was a really critical time in the education of her babies, and it looked like she was going to die.

We put her in a pet carrier, and gave her water. She was having a hard time breathing, but was able to swallow some. Nanci, always the rehabber, went to work. A vet supplied her with a hypodermic filled with antibiotic, and began giving Mama injections. She mixed some powdered chicken food with water and started giving her some food.

She also put much stronger wire mesh around the chicken house.



Nanci the rehabber at work with Mama Chicken.

After about a week of care she was becoming alert. She could stand up and walk around. She still needed help eating, but willingly resumed the job of training her babies. After another week, she was nearly normal, and she and her kids were doing just fine.

One evening at about 5 PM we got sidetracked with fascinating company. We knew that Mama and kids were nestled in the roots waiting to be transported, but continued visiting, until a scream from Mama Chicken broke us up. You rarely see possums out before 2 or 3 in the morning. Incredulously, the possum had come out after the chickens again.

I chased the possum away with a barrage of stones. Nanci picked up Mama Chicken and found that poor Mama had almost been killed again. Nanci went back into rehab. In one feeding session, the food went down the wrong “pipe”, and the Magnificent Mama Chicken died in Nanci’s arms. We felt terrible.

Nanci thought that Mama shouldn’t go as food to the families here because she’d been so recently filled with antibiotics. We’ve dug a little grave and planted a little tree above her.

So what do baby chickens do when it’s getting dark and their Mama is not around – who do they cuddle up with as evening approaches?



Looks like we have a new "mama chicken". Our Little gray cat is not amused.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

We had a coffee klatch at our place recently. After much telephoning with AYA, the water company, we got to meet with a local maintenance crew. We served coffee, gave them brochures for El Puente, and explained what we do. We talked about the children that come through this yard to go to school and the families who come here for soup. We talked about our families, about working in the area, and the need for more rain. Then they unlocked a gate around the pumps nearby, and showed me where a garden hose could be connected to the main water line to get enough water to fill our tank. For several days, we were greeted by a friendly whistle in the morning, as a worker unlocked the gate and made sure we knew it was open. Each day, I would fill us up, disconnect the hose, and lock up the gate.

Then they got serious. Two truckloads of AYA workers showed up accompanied by a supervisor on a motorcycle. They worked on the main pump which needed serious repair. As they were able, they let us hook up the garden hose and fill 'er up again.

We invited Elwin, the supervisor, to join us for soup. He mentioned that they had been filling up a very large water tank on top of a nearby hill, and we'd have water by that afternoon. He was right – and our tank filled up that night. Now, Elwin stops in from time to time to see if we're OK.

The water issue is still on its way to resolution, but it's nice to know that we have some friends to call..

SHIROLES

I was privileged to go on a visit with Timoteo Jackson into the interior recently. The purpose was twofold – to get some family members in – and others out – of an interior village, and to spend some time talking about the medical clinic. It was a drive of 15 KM from Timo's place just inside the reserve to Shiroles, and it took just about one hour.

So what does Shiroles look like? Take a look at the main street in the middle of a weekday.



Here's Shiroles' main street, looking from one side back toward Timoteo's place.
The man on the right is a Fuerza Publica officer walking toward his small police station.

GOODSHOPPERS ON THE MOVE!

Earlier, I wrote about the GoodShop service – things bought online result in a donation to The Bridge. In the last few weeks, **you** made several purchases – on eBay, Lands End, Half.com and Overstock.com, among others, which will result in a total donation of \$12.64 to El Puente!

We can't see who made the purchases – that's part of the rules – but we CAN say **Thank You!**

To see how **you** can start using GoodSearch and Goodshop, go to

www.elpuente-thebridge.org/page33.html

FOR ONE DAY LIFE IS A CARNIVAL

We're fortunate to have a visit from Darcy Clark – a donor of supplies – who's visiting in Limón April 16 on The Liberty, a Carnival Cruise Liner. When Nanci and the kids had seen ocean liners in Limón, they looked in amazement at those huge boats. After a brilliant idea of bringing some of our kids on board ship to receive the donation, we thought we'd ask. The first people we asked said not only "No", but "HECK NO!"



Cruise Ship Liberty

Sooooo... falling back on old habits, I called the President of Carnival Cruise Lines. I had a delightful conversation with his Assistant, and learned that it's strictly against their rules for groups to visit onboard. Then, I told her about The Bridge and answered some questions. A day or so later, we got a call from a VP, who said "Send me a formal request, and we'll be pleased to have you and your party onboard to meet with Darcy and have a free lunch in our Lido Buffet." Woo-Hoo!

So what's "our party"? Four adults, including one Bribri mom, and twelve of the Bribri kids will be heading to Limón on Wednesday, April 16. We'll all have to pass high-level "007" security on the dock to be let on board.... but they promised there'd be no strip searches.

This should be interesting. We'll keep you posted.

YOU CAN HELP US!

There are several ways you can help.

- **Send this email to people you know** who might also enjoy it.
- **Post a message about us on social networking sites or discussion boards** dealing with adventure, travel, volunteering, education, microlending, human services, eliminating poverty, or other humanitarian activities.
- **Send us the names of your local newspapers**, together with an editor's name and email address. We'll add the information to our growing Press Release File.

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

We thank you all for your support of The Bridge. Without you, this would be impossible.

From now on, you'll start to see bits and pieces of our long-range plans as they unfold. We'll be talking with major corporate and private donors about funding for our long-range plans. They're exciting, and we feel that you'll enjoy the journey and join with us as it unfolds.

We are grateful for your continuing donations in support of our operations. Our monthly expenses vary from \$1,700 to \$2,500, depending on the month and the specific activities and expenses involved.

NOW's a GREAT time to contribute.

Donate online by [clicking here](#), where you can use a **credit card** or an **E-Check**.
Or, mail a check made out to "El Puente" with "**Member 29409704**" in the Memo Field
to

USE Credit Union, 8697 La Mesa Blvd, La Mesa, CA 91941

Deductions are tax-deductible

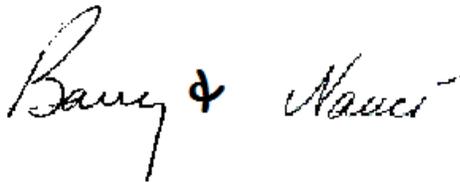
Do it NOW! You'll be glad you did!

Thank you for your support!

Well,

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Enjoy!



IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THE PICTURES

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