



Saturday, December 06, 2008

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Nanci (orange shirt on the right) listens intently as Ana (white T-Shirt, center, explains their UNICEF-Affiliated program at a meeting in the Reserve. More detail in this issue's first story.

RECENT NEWS

We're invited to a UNICEF-affiliated event in the interior of the Reserve, and the families say they "learned something." The empowerment of Elda, a Bribri Mom. Everyday Miracles – loaves, fishes, and the telephone! The power of prayer – water, water *everywhere!* Meet our Advisory Board!

FUTBOL POR LA VIDA - A UNICEF EVENT

A white government pickup truck with five passengers pulled into our yard. The logo on the door identified it as a PANI (Child Protective Services) vehicle. We recognized four people inside – they were PANI people we'd met before. The fifth was a young woman – Ana Soto – who was introduced as one of the main people in a group called "Futbol Por la Vida" (Football For Life), a program sponsored by UNICEF within Costa Rica.



Ana Soto, of the Futbol Para Vida Program



Meet Achmed Hernandez, the lawyer in charge of the local PANI office

Achmed, the PANI lawyer, invited Nanci and I to attend a two-day event in Shiroles – a small village in the Reserve – co-sponsored by PANI and UNICEF. The Friday session, shown above, was for adults only, and Nanci and I attended. Saturday, Achmed was sending a school bus, and he asked Nanci to gather as many as 30 Bribri children to bring with her on the trip. She was able to gather 17 kids and a few Bribri moms. On Saturday, including Irene and her mother Mayra, they got on the bus and headed off to Shiroles. Barry stayed behind to handle the Community Kitchen with help from a few wonderful volunteers.

The kids had a great play day, with about 100 women and children from the Reserve attending.



Roy, Ronualdo, Mauricio, Alejandro, and Dani, all Bridge Kids from the School Program, hung back in a typical pose, clumping together, arms folded, feet apart, looking at the action from a distance. It didn't take long for them to join in with the fun.



Marvin, another Bridge Kid, takes to the field on a pair of super Roller skates.



*The biggest miracle of the day – smiles on these kids' faces for a picture!
It's a rare treat to see someone smile in a photo.
I have no idea what she had to promise them, but Lucia, Irene, and Marvin are ear to ear in this shot. .*

Along with the games, messages and music were interspersed over loudspeakers. Apparently, Mayra told her husband Abel that they “learned something.” When the day was over, everyone was back, and the excitement had barely begun to subside, Abel walked up to our back fence, demanding to talk to me. I went to the fence. As usual, he had been drinking. “They said they learned things,” he said to me. “What did they learn?”

“They learned they’re human beings,” I replied. “They have rights. They are not your property.”

Abel stared at me for a few seconds, snickered, turned, and started to walk away. Then he turned back, and continued demanding an audience. As he was belligerent and hostile, and since there is an outstanding denuncia with a "stay-away" clause keeping him away from The Bridge, Nanci picked up the phone and called the police. He finally went away as he heard the call being made.

Yes, Abel, you don't own them. They are, indeed, human beings, and they do, indeed, have rights.

ONE EMPOWERED WOMAN

Elda, mother of Dani, Erick, Erasmo, and Ronualdo, couldn't go on the trip. She mulled over everything she heard about the trip. She talked with Mayra and Maria, who did go along with Nanci and the Kids. Then she made up her mind. She announced to the group at The Bridge, including her children, that she "would never again let herself be abused". Coming from an abusive family, and married to an abusive husband, that's saying a lot.

And so it grows.

EVERYDAY MIRACLES

Loaves, fishes, and the telephone

Every Friday, we buy a bag of groceries for 5 families in our Work-For-Food Program. On one particular Friday, we set a clear intention to provide the groceries - even though we didn't have the cash to do it. To make things even more exciting, we had been without a telephone dial tone for several days, and were waiting for the phone company to fix it.

So it was fun later that morning when the phone rang.

The call came from Stefan and Danna, a couple we had never met, but who were traveling from San José, the capitol city, to Puerto Viejo. "We wanted to bring some things for the Bribri children", Stefan said. "What are their greatest?" Nanci replied "Food." He answered, "If you give us a shopping list, we'll buy them here and bring down the weekly needs today." Nanci gave him the shopping list, and hung up the phone.

We picked up the phone a few minutes after the call. STILL - no dial tone.

The groceries arrived, and the families got their much-needed food.

The phone company fixed the line on Monday.

Loaves, fishes, and SOME kind of telephone!

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Water, water everywhere...

As a result of news coverage of a recent tropical storm here, we got inquiries from a few subscribers asking "are we OK?" Yes, we are, and thank you for your interest and concern.

We've apparently not been alone in praying for rain. After 7 weeks without a substantial supply of water from AYA, the water utility, there must have been quite a few people praying for water. We know that because we were "blessed" with ten days of torrential downpour, resulting in a torrent of water flowing down the street right out in front. Here's what it looked like at El Puente-The Bridge.



Outside in the driveway and road...



...Inside the yard

We got off very easily. The storm was quite a disaster elsewhere. For a time, a main bridge leading into Puerto Viejo was out, and the town was cut off. At this writing, there are still thousands who are without homes and living in shelters. We're not a newspaper, but you can visit www.talamancanews.com for local coverage.

There is considerable room for helping those in need. We've packed up all remaining donations of clothing that came to The Bridge and have delivered them to ATEC, who are among those coordinating collection and delivery of relief goods. If you remember the community of Yorkin, which appeared in an earlier issue of this newsletter, we note that, according to Talamanca News, they "have lost their bridge, their lodge, and their water and septic systems", and they need help rebuilding." There is a cash donation drive under way, being spearheaded by a local group of businesses. You can find out more about that by visiting www.puertoviejosatellite.com/news/category/helping-out/

ADVISORY BOARD

The Bridge is forming an Advisory Board. Its members are people with a lot of experience in international human services and both spiritual and temporal support organizations, as well as local politics and on-the-ground activities. The mission of this group will be to answer questions and provide direction as we proceed with The Bridge along what appears to be an exciting path of growth in service. Meet some of the new members.

Mr. N. Kumar Lakhavani

Mr. N. Kumar Lakhavani, an International Management and Relief Consultant, has had a distinguished career in Foreign Service. He has managed projects in Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. He worked closely with the Leadership at Samaritan's Purse International Relief as Director of Asia in response to 2004 Tsunami and 2005 Earthquake in Pakistan. He has served as Director of the United States Peace Corps in Guyana, South America. In 2002, President Bush appointed Mr. Lakhavani as a Special Assistant at the United States Agency for International Development. During his three years appointment, Mr. Lakhavani re-engineered Human Resources, Financial Management, Administrative Services and Procurement. He also implemented the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives at USAID, where he directly interacted with the White House on different initiatives. **Welcome, Kumar!**

Mike & Joanna Bresnan

Mike and Joanna Bresnan are currently owners of the Vista del Valle Resort in Rosario de Naranjo, Costa Rica, a beautiful facility enjoyed by both vacationers and those looking for a spiritual retreat. Mike and Joanna both have Peace Corps service experience. Mike is a former Baptist minister. They are forming FUCAD, a foundation in Costa Rica aimed at creating sustainable tourism and jobs within this country. Two decades ago, they participated in starting a similar foundation in Nicaragua, which has gone on to produce 1,600 small businesses, 5 trade schools, and 3 orphanages. **Welcome, Mike & Joanna!**

Edwin Patterson

Edwin Patterson is the owner of a popular local restaurant – the Tamara Restaurant, putting him right in the middle of day to day activities and local politics in Puerto Viejo. He has served two terms as a

member of the SALA – the Costa Rican Congress – and has been deeply involved in Costa Rican national politics. He is interested in issues of education, jobs, and economic well-being for the area and the people living in it. **Welcome Edwin!**

Ana Gaspar Aguerri

Ana Aguerri approached us and asked rather emphatically if she could work with The Bridge. She's a young Tica lawyer who currently works with the Costa Rican Human Rights organization, and has access to virtually all areas of the Costa Rican government. She fell in love with The Bridge, and has committed to working with us as she moves here from San José. **Welcome Ana!**

We are absolutely thrilled to have these magnificent folks as Advisors to The Bridge.

Welcome Aboard, everyone!

We'll keep you posted as this group develops.

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.
- **Drop down to “View From The Bridge”, and consider making a donation or a Monthly Pledge!**

DONOR NOTES

We say “Thank You!” again to our regular donors, who faithfully provide a monthly donation to help keep us going! And “Thank You” as well to those who continue to support us through occasional donations – they are appreciated.

THANK YOU!

A Christmas Party is coming up, and we're getting ready for the start of School Year 2009! We know we are continuing this wonderful journey together!

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

**We're grateful at the continuing support we have been getting.
You all are allowing us to continue to serve!**

NOW's a GREAT time to contribute.

Make a **Monthly Pledge** by [clicking here](#).

Make an immediate donation 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
(And please drop us an email letting us know you've done it
so we can say a proper “Thank You!”)

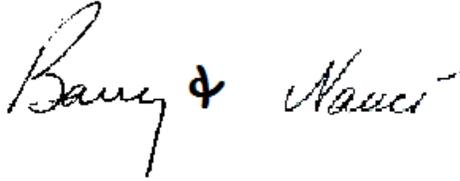
Do it NOW! You'll be glad you did!

Thank you for your support!

Well,

...djmiache

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry & Nancy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THE PICTURES

...go to www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly and download the file with the date of this issue.

Go to The **Bridge Website** by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Go to The **Bridge Online Store** by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Download a **Powerpoint presentation** by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Download **brochures in Spanish or English** by [CLICKING HERE](#)

Go to the **newsletter archive** by [CLICKING HERE](#)

See some **Video clips** showing activities at The Bridge by [CLICKING HERE](#)

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