



December 15, 2009

© 2009 Barry A. Stevens



*Erasmo is holding two very special pieces of paper -showing his test results for the year. Of all the Bridge Kids, he had the best grades and the best attendance record!  
Yay Erasmo!*

## **RECENT NEWS**

Erasmo wins with Best Attendance and Best Grades! A popular California business steps up and suggests a tasty deal that can really help some of the Bribri people here. Another California organization "Keeps Them In Suspense" as they visit to see how they can help the people here. International Scouting is on the move – and Barry gets signed up. The case of the honest taxista.

## **FOUR LITTLE BOYS ON FIRE - 3**

***A note to the Bridge Family about one of the Bridge Kids***

We had an exciting morning at The Bridge recently! Erasmo, one of those "Four Little Boys On Fire", walked into The Bridge carrying pieces of paper showing his attendance record for this year. He had a

tentative look on his face as he handed the papers to Nanci. She's promised to take the student with the best attendance record out to lunch as a reward, and it looks like he's this year's winner!

Erasmus is one of the Bridge Kids that you have helped put in school by paying his startup and ongoing expenses. He's working hard to build his future! Way to go, Bridge Family!

Thank you for making this miracle possible!

## **MAKING CHOCOLATE**

Daniel Leonhard is a young man on fire with the idea of setting up business arrangements that can benefit the Bribri. He contacted us through the Internet, and visited here recently. He is working with Earth Source Organics, a firm in San Marcos, California that produces chocolate candy bars.

We took him to visit Timoteo Jackson, who has a small batch of cacao trees at his home. Here, he and his daughter show the raw cacao seeds to Daniel. Extracting the seeds from the cacao fruit is the first step in the process of cacao – chocolate – production.



*Timoteo and his daughter show Daniel the Cacao seeds in process*



*Daniel shows Timoteo marketing materials from Earth Source Organics that, according to conversations with its President, is interested in working with the Bribri.*

***“We are really excited about this adventure, working with El Puente and the Bribri tribe,” says Audrey Darrow, Earth Source President and CEO. “Our corporate mission is to give back to the indigenous communities that are the sources of our ingredients. What better way to preserve the earth’s natural resources than to work with a society which subsists on its own agriculture.”***

Barry & Nanci Stevens, Co-Founders of El Puente say that , "We are thrilled to be able to serve as a 'Bridge' between ESO and members of the Bribri tribe here in Costa Rica. The potential of this relationship is that it can restart production of organically produced chocolate, a crop which was devastated by a bacterial outbreak. The method to introduce a bacteria resistant strain of healthy cacao is known - it just requires a small investment, and some patience. In the meantime, there is enough pure, unaffected cacao to produce a chocolate product and begin a relationship with the Bribri, just to get things moving ahead. This can develop into a 'win' for the Bribri, a 'win' for Costa Rica, and a 'win' for ESO. It is, as Audrey said, very exciting."

See more about Earth Source Organics by visaiting [www.earthsourceorganics.com](http://www.earthsourceorganics.com).

I'm really looking forward to keeping you posted on how this one comes out!

### **KEEP THEM IN “SUSPENSE”**

Suspension bridges are vital in the jungle. They can be constructed by volunteer labor, with assistance from a local contractor skilled at buying materials and working in jungle conditions.

Alex Fang and Bill Stefanacci, representing Surf For Life, visited here to work on a promotional video for Surf For Life, an organization that plans, among other things, to team up professional surfers and volunteers to raise money for projects requiring cash and labor to benefit people served by The Bridge.

Here’s information from Alex about Surf For Life, also called “S4L”..

*“Surf For Life is a non-profit organization designed to connect surfers and non-surfers with community service activities to create impact on an international level. Our Mission is to channel the interest and energy of individuals into teams that travel to various project sites where they serve as hands-on volunteers and goodwill advocates.”*

And some background Information from Bill Stefanacci.

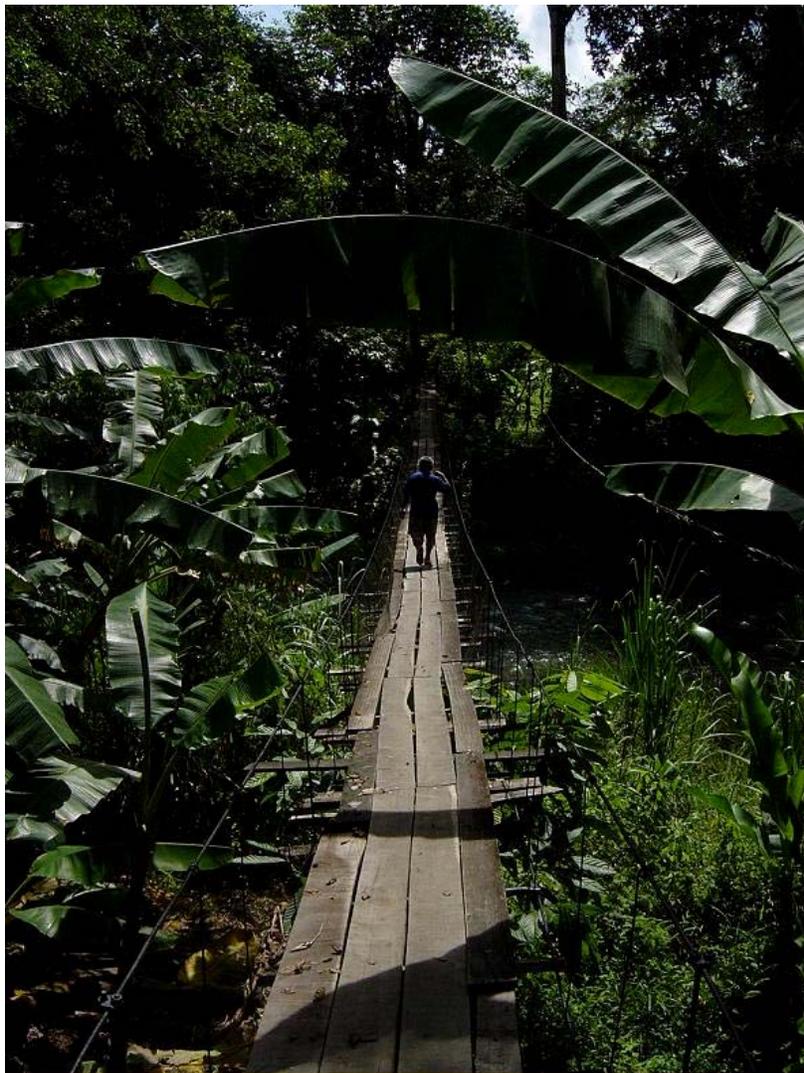
*"Bill Stefanacci is an audio professional in San Francisco. He specializes in documentary and educational television and music production services for network producers. He also runs a free martial arts school and surfs whenever practical. Bill has been on the core Surf for Life Team for about a year and participated in the first S4L mission."*

We spent some time with them talking about the types of projects that can be done by volunteers here at The Bridge.

We also took them over to meet Timoteo Jackson, a tribal elder. Timoteo told us about the suspension bridge near his home. A half-dozen families use the bridge to get from their homes on one side of the river, to work, school, medical attention, and food on the other. The bridge is in terrible shape.



*One of the steps on the way up to the bridge has simply rotted out. Some of the boards on the bridge floor have broken. Cables are rusting out, and a few of them have been replaced. More work needs to be done to bring this bridge back to a safe condition.*



*As Timoteo walks across the bridge, you can get an idea of the broken wooden flooring.*

As we walked across the bridge following Timo, Bill took a video of the bridge and its condition. You can see that video for yourself at the link below. It also contains an interview with Tom Franklin, owner of Bread & Chocolate, with his ideas for several projects that could benefit the youth of Puerto Viejo. And, I'm on there as well, talking about projects here, as well as a project to fix this bridge, and perhaps build another.

The video will take a little time to download, but please watch it! See the video at <http://www.workingmedia.com/trip>. Click on this link, which will take you to a page that says: "Download Surf for Life Movie, Right click here."

We look forward to working on many projects with Alex and the S4L crew! As usual, we'll keep you posted!

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

In a previous issue, you read about a Scout Troop being formed in Puerto Viejo.



I was invited to attend a recent meeting at Jackie and Joseph's home. Joseph, seated next to his wife Jackie at the left of this picture, and Hansen, a regional International Scouting Director, in the blue jump suit at the right, made it clear that six adults are needed to start the formation of a Scout Troop. "So far", Joseph said, "we have five adults signed up." The room fell silent. All eyes in the room turned toward me expectantly. Now... \*sigh\*...

...now there are six adults signed up! And the formation of an International Scouting Troop has begun in Puerto Viejo! In a later issue, we'll have more information about the troop, and the others involved in its formation.

International Scouting is an all-inclusive organization, and excludes no one from membership. It can "Bridge" the different groups and factions that make up the population here – and bring in some solid, positive ideals and goals. It is potentially a benefit for the entire community.

As usual, we'll keep you posted!

### **GET READY, GET SET – GO SHOPPING!**

Christmas is just around the corner. Doing your shopping at **The Bridge Online Mall** can save you time and money – and will benefit The Bridge! To hear how, turn up your volume and [click on this link to hear our Christmas Commercial](#). And along with GoodShop, which has over 1,000 stores online, we have the Bridge Bookstore, a Card Store – and so much more. To go to [The Bridge Online Mall, click on this link](#).

## **LOST AND FOUND**

One very busy morning, I managed to leave my wallet containing a lot of money to pay bills, in one of the 50+ pirate taxis that are calling Puerto Viejo de Talamanca their home these days. I asked all over town for the driver with only the vaguest description. As for the car, Tao, a volunteer working here, happened to

remember seeing the decal of a marijuana leaf on the front of the hood. Those of little faith said "he's probably half-way to Venezuela by now."

After talking with the three taxi "companies", their "dispatchers" seemed to concur on the name of the driver – "Peylote".

I calmed down with a (non-spiked) brownie at the Caribbeans Ice Cream shop, then hopped into a passing car coming past our place. Two hours after I gave away my wallet, I was back home taking a nap.

A half hour after that, Peylote pulled into our driveway. He produced the wallet, with the \$320, passport, and credit cards intact.

I shook hands with the honest taxista, gave him a token of my appreciation, said "Gracias!" and let him know how much I appreciated it.

His real name is José. I have no idea what "Peylote" means, and so far, no one's been willing to tell me. We believe it means "Honest Joe."

## **RANDOM NOTES**

**Nanci's Greeting Cards as Christmas Cards** – here's a message from Max Jackson, one of our subscribers – **"I would like to encourage everyone who reads this to take a look at your website for gift ideas. Last year people I sent the stationary to really appreciated it, and it is such a worthy cause." Thank you, Max!**

**Rumblings and Grumblings** – After much agonizing soul searching, we've started to shift gears with one of the families that comes to The Bridge. We want them to feel safe here, that they can come here for support. Yet, we could no longer ignore the things we're seeing and learning about. Ultimately, we feel obligated to protect those who cannot protect themselves. We're talking about Mayra, mother of 7 children, who has been beaten by her husband, and whose oldest daughter has been sexually abused by her father's brother (the police are looking for him now), Ynez, the children's grandmother, apparently has had much of her pension stolen by yet another of her sons for 15 years, and who has had her food stolen from her by yet another of her sons.

Nanci has taken it upon herself to ensure that appropriate enforcement actions are taking place. It has literally become a painful experience for her as the fragile relationship that has grown between her and Mayra has come under new and serious strains. Nanci's physical symptoms have now cleared up, but for a while it was an open question. We're knowing the highest good for everyone concerned.

## **VOLUNTEER CORNER**

Frequently, we are blessed with volunteers. Recently we've had the pleasure of working with Jetta Vaughans, a volunteer with quite an interesting background.



*Nanci greets Jetta in a recent morning at The Bridge.*

Jetta spent four years in the US Marines, then 13 months in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia. Now we have been blessed to have her volunteer here at The Bridge. She's just one highly spirited ball of fire!

Thank you for your service here, Jetta! We look forward to your presence!

We've also been graced with a visit from Tao Bittman, a dynamo volunteer from the San Diego, California area.



In this picture, Tao is helping Nanci create materials that will be used at the Christmas Party. Tao jumped in, helped serve soup, wash dishes, and in general has been dispensing high energy and good cheer with her time here.

Thank you, Tao!

### **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.
- **Look at our list of critically needed supplies** - go to our website and click on the link "What Can I Bring?" on the Home Page if you, or someone you know, is coming to Costa Rica.
- **Read through the "View From The Bridge" below** – consider joining the ranks of those who have made **cash donations** or a **Monthly Pledge**. We are very grateful for the donations of school supplies that are flowing in. Yet, **sometimes, only cash will do in getting things done here**. Know that your cash donations are very welcome!

### **DONOR NOTES – THE 100 TENS PROGRAM**

You'll remember the "100 Tens" Program, where we invited you to sign up for a new \$10 a month donation plan. A number of you responded, and for that we say "Thank You!" We're still far short of our goal of 100 new donors, however, and we invite you to join the ranks of those who have already signed up!

We say "Thank You!" again to our regular donors, who provide monthly support to help keep us going! And "Thank You" as well to those who continue to support us through occasional donations,

**All** are appreciated.

THANK YOU!

**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!

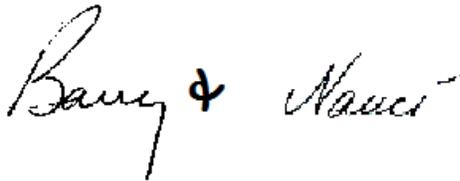
\*\*\*\*\*

***Thank you for your support!***

Well,

...djmiache

Enjoy!



**IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE SEEING THE PICTURES**

...go to [www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly](http://www.elpuente-thebridge.org/weekly) and download the file with the date of this issue.

Go to The **Bridge Blog** -"Angels With Their Skins On" by [CLICKING HERE](#)

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](#)

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Email: [barrystevens@earthlink.net](mailto:barrystevens@earthlink.net)  
[nanci.stevens@gmail.com](mailto:nanci.stevens@gmail.com)

Our toll-free number from the US is

1-866-462-7585

SKYPE: barry.stevens2