

Brookline-Quezalguaque Sister City Project

www.brooklinesistercity.org

Annual Report 2009

A Year of Accomplishments

Notes from the President

Dear Friends,

This has been a very active year for our Sister City Project. In December 2008 Sarah Johnson, Peter Stringham and I went to Quezalguaque. Peter and Sarah were there to report the findings of the summer investigation into the cause of the high morbidity from kidney failure in Quezalguaque. (See *Health Committee Report*.)

During our stay I checked on a few of our other projects. The 25 houses we helped finance were under construction. They are scattered around the urban area and some in rural communities. They are slightly bigger than the housing we constructed with Habitat for Humanity a few years ago and look very appealing.

Construction on the two-room school in the community of Soledad Nueva had started. It is a beautiful site with views of one of the nearby volcanoes.

We had a chance to visit the Art Class on Sunday morning. With help of the art teacher we selected 20 paintings to bring back to Brookline for an art sale and auction to raise money to continue the classes.

Oneyda Osejos, the new director of the library, is doing a splendid job. The library looks great and is getting more use. Oneyda works with local teachers to plan library visits and programs. She

is very happy with the mobile library and reports that the students and adults in the rural area look forward to the monthly visits.

In July 2009 Sarah Johnson and I returned to Quezalguaque for the dedication of the completed school. It was a festive occasion. The school children, their teachers and the community turned out to celebrate.



Much has been happening here in Brookline. This spring the school children in Brookline helped to raise the final \$4,500 needed for the school. In May we raised close to \$5000 through the art sale and auction at the Brookline Art Center. We also recently had a fundraiser for the Urgent Care Center in the central health clinic. The Health Committee did a wonderful job and raised a little over \$8,000. Our effort to help house poor families in rural Quezalguaque continues. So far we have raised \$2400, which will give 12 families the chance to have a new four-room house instead of the dilapidated structures they now live in.

All of us on the board of the Sister City Project and our "sisters and brothers" in Quezalguaque are most grateful for your support, which has made possible this year of gratifying accomplishments. Carol Caro

Health Committee Report

In December 2008 members of the Health Committee of the Sister City Project delivered a report on Chronic Kidney Disease to the town officials in Quezalguaque and to the medical people in Nicaragua. Detailed analysis of the data did not determine a definite cause of the epidemic, but it did document the seriousness of the problem. A group of committee members has written a paper on this subject, which is nearly ready for publication.

Partially as a result of the high quality of the Sister City Project study, long-time committee member Dan Brooks, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Boston University School of Public Health, was chosen by the World Bank to lead a multi-year, comprehensive study into the root causes of Chronic Kidney Disease in western Nicaragua. The initial stage of the study will begin next summer.

The committee continues to support the Quezalguaque health centers by funding transportation to and from the remote health center in Cristo Rey with twice-daily taxi shuttles five days a week (\$2,840 per year).

We also provide an annual stipend of \$1,500 to the health centers for use on their highest priorities. This year they repaired dental equipment and bought medical reagents and supplies. We will need to raise \$1500 yearly to continue this

support.

Our biggest effort this year has been to raise \$16,800 to build a 3-room, 2-bathroom addition to the single-room urgent care area in the central health center, which sees 2/3 of the patients. Last year the health center and the 2 health posts had 7,108 urgent care visits in addition to 30,605 appointments. The town is already in the process of constructing the urgent care addition, thanks to proceeds from the art auction and the fall house party. At printing time we reached our goal to complete the project.



Urgent Care Unit under construction

The committee is planning for a group of medical and public health students to return to Quezalguaque next summer. Since treatment of high blood pressure in people with chronic kidney disease is life prolonging, these students will work with local medical officials to screen for and provide public education about hypertension. We are currently recruiting students who are fluent in Spanish. Peter Stringham

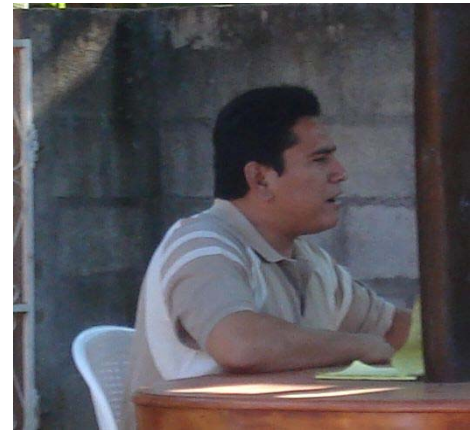


\$200
Will provide a
house for a family
In
Quezalguaque

Elections in Quezalguaque

In the Fall of 2008 Hugo Ruiz was elected mayor. Many of you may remember Hugo when he visited Brookline with a delegation from Quezalguaque in 1999. Hugo is returning to office after ten years. Mayors serve a five-year term and cannot run for re-election until the next term has elapsed.

Hugo feels very comfortable overseeing all of our projects, so he will be our primary contact. He is preceded in this coordinating role by Miguel Mendoza and Pedro Martinez to whom we are grateful for their management of our projects over the last five years.



Mayor Hugo Ruiz Urbina



Leon-Chinandega Librarians Hold Regional Meeting at Quezalguaque Library

The municipal library in Quezalguaque, under the leadership of Oneyda Osejos, is considered one of the best facilities in northern Nicaragua. Many meetings and training sessions are held in the library throughout the year.

From Letter Writing to Email... We Hope!

For the past several years, 7th & 8th grade Spanish language students in Brookline Schools have been exchanging letters with their sister city. The Brookline students

write in Spanish, and the students in Quezalguaque write back in English or Spanish. Many of the letters have included photos and drawings. While this is a wonderful project, it is dependent on our visits to Quezalguaque to deliver and exchange the letters. In addition, the differing school year and vacation periods of Brookline and Quezalguaque hamper the functioning of the project.



Now the town library in Quezalguaque has Internet access. Students in Quezalguaque are getting email addresses and will be able to use the Internet computers to write to students in Brookline. We hope to set up a listserv so the students will be able to communicate with each other and be learning another language at the same time.

If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Bambi Good (bambigood@gmail.com).