

# Brookline - Quezalguaque

## Sister City Project

ANNUAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2005

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## In Country Coordinator

In September, the Board of the Brookline Sister City project voted to employ a Quezalguaque resident to coordinate Sister City activities in Quezalguaque.

Miguel Mendoza, an engineer who works for the Nicaraguan Disaster Preparedness Program, will serve as the Project's first in country coordinator. Miguel currently works out of the Mayor's office giving him access to all the local government officials. A Quezalguaque native, he is well know and respected in town.

Miguel will provide written monthly update concerning the

many Sister City Projects. The Board received his first report for the month of October. "We were extremely impressed with all he had accomplished" said Maxine Shaw, Co-President of the Sister City Board.



**Miguel Mendoza, Brookline Quezalguaque Coordinator**

The first major challenge for Miguel will be to find a replace-

ment for one of the librarians who has resigned. After consulting with the Brookline Board he is looking for someone who will do more outreach work with the adult population.

Other projects on his agenda are:

- Wall for Library.
- Stove Project
- Habitat Project
- Medical Center
- Water Resources

At Miguel's urging, the Mayor has appointed a town councilor to serve as liaison to work with him on Sister City Projects.

## Maxine Shaw Leaving After 15 Years

In the mid-1980s, Maxine Shaw, a young Boston elementary bilingual teacher who lived in Brookline, was an active participant in the activities of Central American Solidarity Committee (CASA). CASA's Cambridge branch.

In 1984 Cambridge CASA arranged the visit of a delegation of two teachers from each Central American country. A delegate hosted by Shaw informed her that Nicaragua had 500 classrooms without teachers and urged her to come help. In 1985 she took a leave of absence and did so, teaching for two years in a previously boarded-up one-room schoolhouse in a rural town named Quezalguaque.

In 1987 John Bassett intro-

duced a warrant article in Town Meeting establishing a formal sister city relationship with Quezalguaque After months of fundraising, in mid-1989 a group of Project volunteers flew to Quezalguaque to build a municipal health center alongside volunteers from Quezalguaque.

The Sister City Project became dormant while Shaw returned to live in Latin America from 1991 to 1995. She returned to its helm in the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and has headed the project since that time. Shaw considers her primary accomplishments in the Sister City Project "holding the organization together through thick and thin" for more than 15 years, and leading it through

both of its largest projects to date: construction of the health center in 1989 and the municipal library in 2002.

Shaw was a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 6 from 2000-2003. She was married in 1993 to Enrique Durand. Currently living on Greenough Street with her grandson, Wega, and Enrique's son, Enrique, Jr., they plan to move to Florida in mid-2006 when they retire.

"Maxine is remarkable", said John Bassett. "She is hard working, focused, cheerful, positive and bilingual. She shines like a star and has for years held the Sister City project together." We will miss you, Maxine!



**Maxine Shaw**

# Habitat Project



Family and their new house.

Two brigades from Brookline have participated in the Habitat Project in Quezalguaque. In February they were involved in the construction of 10 houses. This past summer another brigade help build 5 more homes.

Each house cost approximately \$4,500. The families make a down payment and then pay for the rest of the house over an agreed time

frame. Each family is required to participate in the construction of their house.

BQSC agreed to pay for one of every 5 houses and provided labor during the construction.

It is hard work but the Brookline volunteers have learned a lot about construction, found it very rewarding and become friends with members of the work teams.

The team pictured here



worked at two of the home sites with our 4 of our brigade members.

One of the February brigade was so impressed with the work in Quezalguaque that she request that instead of gifts for her Bat Mitzvah donations be sent to BQSC.

## Medical Center Update

In February the Medical Center was painted, a new ceiling was installed and electrical wiring was repaired and this summer the roof was replaced.

In July, the town's portable sprayer for mosquito control was replaced and new equipment for doing blood test

was purchased. Because of the new equipment, the Ministry of Health will be adding a lab technician position to the staff at the Quezalguaque Medical Center as of January 1, 2006.

The water study project continues. Members of the Medical Committee here in

Brookline have been exploring funding possibilities to do a major study to review the high degree of renal failure in Quezalguaque and the surrounding area.

To get involved with the Medical Committee contact **R i c h a r d S e g a n** (rsegan@rcn.com)



Maxine Shaw & Vice Mayor in Library Meeting Room

The Library continues to expand. There are now more than 7,000 volumes in the collection. The wall to protect the garden area still has not been built, but we are optimistic that it will get done in the next few months.

A small museum to house a rock and mineral collection has been developed in a corner of the main room of the library. There are five cases of specimens with descriptions and area of origin. The rocks

## Library News

and minerals are from places around the world with a goodly number from Nicaragua. There is an emphasis on igneous rocks, which fits in nicely in with Quezalguaque's location in the shadow of the Cordillera de los Maribios, Nicaragua's volcanic corridor. The librarians reported that some of the townspeople had a hard time believing that some of the beautiful minerals like amethyst and quartz crystals were natural and not

human-made. Also the museum experienced a minor mishap: the halite sample began to melt in the heat and humidity!

This February, during school vacation week, a brigade will be going to Quezalguaque to complete the painting of the exterior of the Library. If you are interested in joining the brigade contact **M a x i n e S h a w** (maxi.shaw2@verizon.net)

# Seed Money Bears Fruit



In February, BQSC granted Padre Majano, the pastor of Nuestra Senora de los Remedios Catholic Church in Quezalguaque, \$500 in seed money to start producing

*ecofogones*, cook stoves that use much less wood than open fires and vent to the outside of the house, thus avoiding inhalation of smoke that produces illness.

Father Majano, in asking for the grant, noted that he hoped that the stoves project could help him address two serious problems in Quezalguaque: upper respiratory diseases such as asthma and an unemployment rate that stands around 50%.

The Padre used the seed money to send two unemployed Quezalguaque residents to San Juan del Sur, Newton's Sister City,

for training in the stove building technique, to purchase raw materials and tools needed to start the project and to build the first 14 stoves.

The stoves, which cost \$35 each have been installed in about a dozen homes in Quezalguaque so far and are being purchased on payment plans for as little as \$1 a month.

In July, to support the project's cash flow, BQSC purchased 10 stoves, some to be installed in the Habitat homes that are being built and others to be donated to families who could not afford even the most modest of monthly payments.

## Ometepe Marathon

Members of the Brookline Sister got involved with a project developed by Luke Schtele, a Peace Corps volunteer in Quezalguaque. He had organized a group of young people to train for a marathon that was to be held in Ometepe, Nicaragua. Most of the runners had no proper running shoes. Sylvia Mohundro, a friend of Sister City who lives in California, donated running shoes for all the members of the team. Customs in Nicaragua informed Luke he would need to pay \$400 in duty. The Peace Corps was able to get the Nicaraguan government to reduce the fee by 50%. BQSC sent an emergency email to its members and the money was raised and delivered in time to get the shoes out of customs a copy of days before the marathon

Many of this summer's brigade members were able to travel to Ometepe to cheer on the Quezalguaque team.



As to this new initiative growing into something that provides employment, it has already begun to bear fruit. The Padre has received an order for over 150 stoves from a homebuilding project in the nearby town of Chinandega. As a result more young men are now employed to help build the new stoves.

This is the type of self-sustaining project we are interested in pursuing. Of course there will be families that can not afford the \$35 for a stove. A donation of \$35 will help Sister City provide stoves to these families.

## Quezalguaque's Second Annual Environmental Fair

On August 5th, Judy Hikes, a BQSC board member participated in the Quezalguaque Environmental Fair. The day started with a 5 kilometer road race. Participants included the local running team, office workers, farmers, Peace Corps volunteers, and Judy, the oldest runner (65 yrs).

The day continued with expositions and entertainments in the library. The perimeter of the large library space was lined with "modelos," small constructions, demonstrating important environmental or health practices, and environmental posters made by classes from the schools and community groups. One

of the main themes was the use of soy bean and soy bean products. A model built by one of the elementary school classes showed soy beans sprouting, gave recipes for soy bean dishes, and even had some delicious cooked samples for observers to try. A series of posters from the health clinic, created by health care workers, gave information about HIV-AIDS and how to protect oneself using cartoons, which were humorous but very much to the point. Another table explained the use of a large clay canister called Filtron as a water filtration system. The demonstrator showed

how it can purify water cheaply and easily.

The library meeting room, was set up as an art gallery. Paintings and drawings about the environment submitted by children and adults lined the walls. A group of judges decided on the best ones.

Several groups entertained with folkloric dances. A couple costumed in folkloric attire demonstrating the placement of garbage in garbage cans won the competition for queen and king of the Environmental Fair.

## Brookline Sister City Project

Brookline Sister City Project needs your support to continue these projects and to fund new ventures. Please be as generous as possible.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount: \_\_\_\_\_ For Specific Project \_\_\_\_\_ or Where needed most \_\_\_\_\_

All donations are tax deductible.

Please make checks payable to Brookline-Quezalguaque Sister City Project.

Mail to: Carol Caro, 27 Elba Street, Brookline, MA 02446

Website: <http://www.sistercity.brookline.ma.us>

Brookline-Quezalguaque Sister City Project  
34 Greenough Street  
Brookline, MA 02445

Join us in Quezalguaque

During February School

Vacation Week

February 18-26.

email Maxine at:

[maxi.shaw2@verizon.net](mailto:maxi.shaw2@verizon.net)