

DOS PUEBLOS

New York–Tipitapa
Sister City Project

An International Partnership for Respect, Sustainability, and Human Rights

www.tipitapa.org

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Hello From Our New Board Chair

By Ann Garvin

I send you a warm hello as the new Board Chair of Dos Pueblos. Of course many of you know that I'm not so new, having been a part of the project since 1987 when the Committee for Non-Intervention in Central America decided to take on a sister city in Nicaragua. The Board has asked me to take over as Chair because Dena Fisher has accepted an overseas staff position with the Peace Corps and is now serving on our Advisory Board. We thank Dena heartily for her extraordinary service as Chair and wish her great adventures in Belize.

Our current work in Tipitapa is exciting, as our delegation witnessed this February. We met with community organizers, visited projects, the mayor's office, representatives of the city council, and citizens' groups. Our new strategy of working more closely with community volunteers has brought us in contact with some wonderful people who are wholeheartedly committed to the social needs of local residents. Here are some highlights that I'd like to share with you:



Children's Libraries

Biblioteca Rosa is run by a mother-and-daughter volunteer team that serves over 300 children who fill their house and yard to the brim every Friday. The children engage in reading, repair books, play games, and can chat with adults who are aware (Cont. Pg. 2)



Water in Ciudadela San Martin

By Steve Siegelbaum

A vast field, brown and barren during the dry season, separates the cinder block and tiny abodes of Ciudadela San Martin from a line of trees about a kilometer away. It was to those trees that a Ciudadela resident pointed when I asked her where she used to go to get fresh water. Her expression brightened considerably when she pointed to the new spigot, and gleaming white hose in the small yard on the side of her house.

With the successful completion of our 6th water project in Tipitapa, a garden of colorful flowers, new stone washboard "washing machines," and an outdoor sink doubling as a bathtub for a newborn puppy – these are among the most visible of many signs of the difference that access to water has made in this impoverished community. Although Ciudadela already had water, the existing dilapidated system was severely over extended and could not provide for all the households.

Since October when the new pipes were laid and spigots attached, Dos Pueblos' water project has been bearing fruit – quite literally – in Ciudadela San Martin. We chose to work in Ciudadela because of their strong community organizing, and an outstanding community-appointed water committee that has been managing the water system for over 345 families without much involvement from the local (Cont. Pg. 2)

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Water in Ciudadela San Martin (Cont.)



government – all in very challenging conditions.

As you might know, things are hardly ever straightforward in Nicaragua – that is why we're very proud of the work that our community organizers do. They make sure that communities like Ciudadela organize and work together in improving their basic needs. This community for

example, was sorely divided between the newly arrived and the long-term residents who saw the new families as a threat to their water system. Through this project, residents realized that their water problems were a supply issue, and not the new residents. This type of collaboration is what makes our work possible even when everything seems stacked against us.

It is so satisfying to see it all come together at the very end, seeing children tending to gardens and playing, while clean laundry dries under the blue skies of Tipitapa. There is, of course, much that remains to be done here regarding health, diet, jobs and education, but a start has been made toward greater self-sufficiency and hope.

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A Warm Hello From Our New Board Chair (Cont.)

that some of the children face hunger, neglect or violence at home. The library is fully committed to providing a safe and supportive space where kids can simply be kids.

Women's Microcredit "Adelante Mujeres" Phase II

The women's microcredit project in Chilamatillo is enjoying great success with its first phase, and is now helping a second group of ten women start small businesses making tortillas, cakes, handbags, cosmetics, and clothing. The Phase I women are successfully paying back their loans, increasing their income which has been a boost to their self-esteem and the wellbeing of their families.

Computer Education for At-Risk Youth

We are partnering with the Mayor's office to provide computer classes and access to youth who would otherwise join street gangs, as a part of a community policing initiative. Dos Pueblos donated 5 computers, adding to their 8, for use at a centrally-located "Kiosk."

Health Center & Potable Water

The water committee of Ciudadela San Martín where we recently completed our 6th water project, showed us their health center that serves over 8,000 people. The conditions of the run-down center are indicative of the high level of poverty here. A nurse and a doctor attend several days a week in a small, sweltering cottage, where pap smears are done next to waiting patients. With local efforts and your support, work is underway to improve the facility. The partnership we have entered into is forging new relationships that will benefit nearby communities where we are exploring how to respond to the most extreme poverty we've seen in Tipitapa since Hurricane Mitch.

As new Chair, I thank you for supporting our work with the people of Nicaragua, and I look forward to many rewarding exchanges between our communities.