

# The Companion

Fall-Winter 2004

Vol. 9 No.1



## Newsletter of Companion Community Development Alternatives

12 years cooperating with communities in El Salvador and the United States

[www.cocoda.org](http://www.cocoda.org)

### "COMMUNITIES FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN EL SALVADOR"

Why CoCoDA's new campaign to fund educational opportunities is so important

#### Communities for Youth Leadership in El Salvador

A campaign to provide opportunities for youth in Santa Marta and Suchitoto, El Salvador to complete high school, obtain vocational training and higher education, and encourage them to become leaders for the future of their communities.



Average cost for a full scholarship to attend high school for one year: \$500

Average cost for a full scholarship to attend university for one year: \$3,000

By Rina Marroquín  
Popular Teacher, La Mora  
Suchitoto, El Salvador

Ana is a young woman who grew up alone with her mother. She did not continue her studies for lack of economic resources, and chose to *acompañarse* (live together) with a man. Now she lives in terrible conditions, she has five kids and her husband, who is illiterate, decided to seek opportunities outside the country and is in the United States.

Left alone, it is up to Ana to see to their kids' education. We have four of them in our school in La Mora (Suchitoto, Cuscatlán), which at least guarantees they will have a healthy snack each school day. Sometimes she also leaves her youngest at the school, too. At least Ana receives some minimal support from her spouse. Most single mothers are left to fend completely on their own, frustrated.

This is why we are working with CoCoDA and the CRC\* (\*see CoCoDA Salvadoran associates, p. 7) to raise money for youth leadership in our communities, to support them with scholarships so they can complete high school, and then have more options, like finding better work in other cities to live in better conditions, to help their family and their community.

I am Rina, and I have been a *popular teacher* since I was 13 years old. Working with boys and girls from such a young age has helped me forge my own future, little by little. With the support of scholarships, I have been studying all of my life. Now I have graduated from the university and I have more opportunities to help my family and my community. I try to help in the orientation and organization of the kids, the youth and the mothers and fathers.

*Popular Education* started in the communities in conflictive areas during the civil war (1980-1992) because of the need to teach kids, youth and adults to read and write. The government did not bring education to these areas because of the danger, and because it is easier to manipulate people for one's own interests if they are illiterate. Under trees, in the open countryside, we began to offer *popular education* with only the resources of the community and nature, like rocks, seeds, straw, etc.

Today, we *popular teachers* offer all the national curricula, and also offer special programs for kids and youth with learning and behavioral difficulties; techniques for follow-up to lectures and writing; and a weekly snack menu for the students.

Most of the popular schools in our region only offer kindergarten through 6th grade, then the students have to travel to other schools outside the community to

(continued on p. 2)

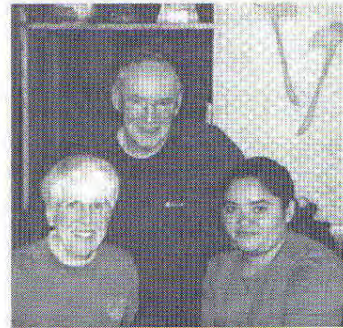


Photo by Wren Villaseca (2004)

"Thank you" -- Rina Marroquín (on the right) is one of 54 "popular teachers" in Suchitoto and Santa Marta, El Salvador who benefited from CoCoDA's Scholarship Fund for Popular Education (1992-2003). In May, she visited groups in the Midwest to say 'thanks' and encourage support for today's youth, her students, to continue their studies. Janet and Dick Lewis (above) of the Portage Area Coalition for Sanctuary in Kent, Ohio hosted her in their home.

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## RADIO YOUTH TOUR IN U.S.

Account of their visit to Brown University

by Deborah List  
Student, Brown University

It was definitely a strange but wonderful experience to see Oscar Beltrán and Vilma Lainez bundled up in hats, gloves, and jackets on the campus of my university rather than my usual image of them behind the microphone of Radio Victoria. I felt very pleased and honored to host my friends Oscar and Vilma at Brown University in February 2004 after they had hosted me in their own educational environment of Radio Victoria for four months of 2003.

During a lunchtime event on campus, Oscar and Vilma talked with a group of over 20 Brown students as well as faculty about their work in Radio Victoria, their experiences with El Salvador's civil war, and the *popular education* that they have received through the Radio and in their hometown of Santa Marta. Their message of how they have gained knowledge of the world through community-run schools and first-hand experience at the Radio despite a lack of resources and the disruptions of war was extremely humbling and inspiring for all of us present who have had the fortune to attend a well-established university.

Everyone seemed very impressed with the eloquence of Oscar and Vilma's words and their command of their own personal histories. Many students were eager to dialogue with Oscar and Vilma in both Spanish and English after the

(continued from p. 1, Youth Leadership...)

continue their studies. Most are able to complete 9th grade, but many are not able to continue on through high school for lack of resources to pay for registration, books, transportation, meals and, often, lodging.

For lack of opportunities, teen boys get involved in gangs. Like all young people, they are curious to try cigarettes, liquor, drugs, prostitution, during their free time after a long day of work. The girls hardly have any opportunity for recreation. After school, they return home to do domestic work. They think that if they leave home, they will have more freedom and at 14 or 15 years old get pregnant, and become mothers at a very young age. And most are abandoned by their partner and are left to raise the child alone.

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Photo courtesy of Josh Waldman and Evelyn Diaz (2004)

**Radio broadcasters with a mission --** Vilma Lainez (on the right) and Oscar Beltrán (2nd to the right) of Radio Victoria in Cabañas, El Salvador, were hosted by schools and universities, radio stations, community service organizations, and other local groups in seven states during their U.S. speaking tour in February, 2004. Accompanied by Wendy Wallas (2nd from the left), who has been a coordinator with Radio Victoria since its start in the early 90's, they spoke about the struggle of young people in El Salvador to access higher education. "The Radio helped me in my dream to be a journalist. I don't want to abandon it," said Lainez. After tour costs, \$4,063 were raised towards scholarships for youth who work at Radio Victoria, part of CoCoDA's Communities for Youth Leadership campaign. Allan Gomez (on the left) of public access CAN TV helped host in Chicago.

presentation, including representatives from Brown Student Radio (BSR) and the Latin American Students Organization (LASO). Students from these groups as well as others took note of the importance of using communication to work toward community empowerment, and there was a discussion of how we, as Brown students, could support the efforts of Radio Victoria as well as apply parts of the station's model here in Providence.

One e-mail I received after the event mentioned how great it was to have "real people telling their own stories." I think that all present, regardless of their prior knowledge of Central America, gained a deeper understanding of El Salvador's history through Oscar and Vilma's

personal accounts about their own lives as well as the life of Radio Victoria.

It was very special for me to see other students learning about the programming and democratic mission of Radio Victoria and to share some of my love and respect for this participatory radio station with the Brown community. I think Oscar and Vilma also enjoyed the experience because they were able to talk with other youth about university life here as well as the barriers to their own university education. Their visit offered a fun and interesting way for me and my peers from both the United States and El Salvador to think about how we can use cultural exchange and open communication to bring about a more just future. ♦

But then there are those examples of hope. One of my students, David, attended our *popular school* through the 6th grade. Then he went to other schools and achieved his goals, even though he has had very sad experiences in his family. This year, he was awarded a scholarship to go to Cuba to study medicine. He is very happy, because he has worked so hard to earn this opportunity. He is a healthy young man, full of aspirations.

It is very important to the CRC and the *popular teachers* of Suchitoto to support all the young people in our rural areas and in that way strengthen their families, their communities and their country. ♦

(translation from Spanish by Tim Crouse, CoCoDA)

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Most of CoCoDA's funding comes from individual members who contribute \$25 or more per year (\$15 student and low-income) and from CoCo Groups, which are independent groups and organizations in the United States that cooperate with CoCoDA in program initiatives. New members and CoCo Groups are always welcome.



## ROTARY FUNDS PROJECT

Reps from Indiana clubs visit the site

by Sally Shutte  
Brazil, Indiana Rotary Club

I have allowed "fear" to rule most of my life. Looking back there were several "missed" opportunities which I now regret not taking. I remember listening intently to Iván's (of CoCoDA staff) presentation to our Rotary club and feeling compassion for the Salvadoran people. It was when Iván issued an open invitation to club members to come to El Salvador and see for themselves the "water project" that I decided to face my fears once and for all.

My husband, Jeff, and I have been married for over a quarter of a century. I knew Jeff would not be thrilled to hear of my decision to travel to Central America and I also knew he would not want me to take our only child (Austin, 17 years old) with me on such a dangerous adventure. I counted on my stubbornness to convince Jeff of my determination to go to El Salvador with Austin at my side. Eventually, Jeff gave in.

Our delegation was small. Besides Iván there was Austin and me, Harriet Bromley (CoCoDA Board member) and Cheryl Gormly (Jasper IN Rotary club).

My journey to El Salvador will never be forgotten. The time spent in the community is my most cherished. For me, meeting with the Mayor of Suchitoto was the first step of personalizing the water project. Isaias Sandoval Alas spoke of having the citizens of Suchitoto being involved in all decisions and taking ownership. He said they developed a 15-year plan and reviewed the plan annually. Isaias stated, "no one believes in hand-outs. Each citizen must be willing to work for what they receive." I knew the money pledged by Rotary to the Aguacayo Water Project was going to be used wisely.

The second step was comprised of many steps...down to the river to get water. There is little comparison between seeing the video version of what it takes to get water into the community and actually walking to the river to get the water.

Afterwards members of the Aguacayo Water Board gathered at Elisio's casa. They each thanked us for the money our Rotary clubs had pledged. Elisio then



### Aguacayo will have water

-- The water board and community council of Aguacayo, Suchitoto, Cuscatlán, welcomed Cheryl Gormly of the Jasper, Indiana Rotary Club (second from left) and Sally Shutte of the Brazil, Indiana Rotary Club (front on left). With them were CoCoDA Board member Harriet Bromley (far left) and Iván Villasboa of CoCoDA staff (center, standing).

CoCoDA/ERIC Photo (2004)

spoke directly to me with tears in his eyes. Iván interpreted as Elisio spoke and continued to wipe away tears. Elisio wanted to tell me how proud he was that I would take the time to come to Aguacayo and walk the trail the women and children must walk daily just to get water. He was deeply touched that someone who was a total stranger would care enough to come to his community.

I am proud to be a Rotarian. Rotary is a service association of business and professional leaders united worldwide

who conduct humanitarian projects, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and work toward world understanding and peace. Our motto is "Service Above Self". Rotary International has focused efforts on eradicating polio as a threat globally. I feel strongly the need for potable water on a global level is a good fit with the mission of Rotary. I am grateful to CoCoDA for bringing the water project to the attention of Rotary. My personal journey with CoCoDA to El Salvador has been life altering and meaningful. ✦

Journal entry - July 26, 2004

Elisio said we were going to follow the same path women and children use each day to retrieve water. The children were all laughing at the idea of Austin walking all the way down to the river to get water and bring it back. We were told the walk to and from the river would last approximately one hour.

We started out easily enough walking over rocks, cobblestones and tree vines working to avoid animal droppings and deep ruts filled with water. Before long we were walking carefully down a steep

**Hard path --** Austin, Harriet and Sally (below) recover after fetching water as local families have had to (right) until this project, which will pump water to their homes.



decline. The only comparison would be a decline as sharp as that on a roller coaster. I seriously doubted that Austin would have more than a cup of water in the 10-gallon jug he would fill and attempt to carry on his head back to the casa. I kept asking my guides who were community members, is this REALLY what you have to do to obtain water to bathe, wash your clothes, drink? Yes.

Since the bombing in the war, water systems were defunct. I then asked WHO makes this trip and how frequently. Women and children at age 5 begin to carry water on a daily basis unless it has rained enough to fill the barrels outside the casas. With the jug filled with water Austin hoisted it to his shoulders and his head and began to carefully climb straight up the steep hill.

My journey was not so easy either. Every 20 or 30 feet my heart was pounding so hard I could not breathe. I did not count the number of times I stopped but it was no less than 12. During one of the last stops where I was forced to sit because I could not breathe Vilma got in back of me and suggested I lean back to rest on her lap. I leaned back and without realizing began to weep. I cried because I couldn't breathe, because I hurt (my knee) and because it is not possible that people should have to live this way.

Photos by Iván Villasboa (2004)

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## THE 'MARIPOSA' TOOK FLIGHT IN EL SITIO ZAPOTAL

Hundreds attended the first art and folk festival at the new cultural center

by Rolando González  
Fundación REDES, El Salvador

The metamorphosis of this mariposa (butterfly) is slower than others, but substantially different, too: it is being transformed with the fruit of love, of many people from two *pueblos*: United States and El Salvador; and in January, 2004 the second phase of the amphitheater was completed; coinciding with the 12th anniversary of the signing of the Peace Accords; and what a better way to recognize both events, than with happiness and hope.

Despite the heat and dust, typical of the dry season in the rural area of Suchitoto, when trees and other plants sleep, waiting for the May rains; that afternoon of January 24, 2004, the people of the community El Sitio Zapotal and others living within a 5 kilometer radius, and many people from San Salvador and other places, began to arrive at the amphitheater better known as La Mariposa; a project begun in 1994 with the support of CoCoDA and always – even at that time – with the participation of a delegation from DePauw University.

Since the signing of the Peace Accords on January 16, 1992, in Chapultepec, Mexico; in this region that was one of the most visible and representative scenarios of the Salvadoran people's *lucha popular* (grassroots struggle); never, until now, has a festival of folk art and music been celebrated; only festivals on anniversaries of each of the communities.

People were very enthusiastic to attend the festival, which was planned and prepared in only two weeks, after the arrival of the DePauw University

delegation to El Salvador, led by Iván Villasboa and his wife Natalia, with in-country support from Daniela Fonkatz and the CRC. And each and every member of the delegation was just as enthusiastic as the local population.

Food and drink sales exceeded expectations; and although the lighting and sound were not impeccable, each musical group or artist gave of themselves without holding back to this special inter-cultural and inter-ethnic crowd: *Son tres cuartos*, *Clandestino 10-4*, *José Peña* (one of the initiators of the Mariposa in 1994), *Yolocamba I Ta* ("seedtime rebellion" in Lenca and Chorti, indigenous languages), the puppet *Guazapito* with his sidekick *Iván V.*; as well as *Samuel and the improvised*

**Laughs that resonate** -- Author Rolando González (below on the right), Manager of Agriculture / Livestock and Ecological Programs for the REDES Foundation, with "Pelúquin" ("Little Toupee" - Carlos Magaña of REDES' Center for Risk Management) pose at REDES' 15th anniversary last July with *Guazapito* the puppet. *Guazapito*, named for the mountain that overlooks the Mariposa Cultural Center, performed at the festival in January.



Photo by Edwin Navarrete (2004)



Photo courtesy of DPU (2004)

to have interaction between this population, as builders of their own history, and artists who sing and write of their daily struggle. Students on the DePauw / CoCoDA construction team (above) work with local residents on the Mariposa site. The Mariposa amphitheater was ready days later (right) as the crowd gathered for the festival.

The organizers of the festival were: CoCoDA; COOPERARTE, the recently formed cooperative of artists and artisans of El Salvador; CRC; and REDES. The vision is to finalize the amphitheater, which will compliment a broader cultural-ecological-tourism project, that will include guest houses and short trips or hikes on the ecological trails of Guazapa Mountain, and to give life to a unique annual folk festival, in these communities, seeking to hold a quality event and



Photo CoCoDA (2004)



Photo courtesy of DPU (2004)

chorus of DePauw University (interpreting a stanza of "Hot Stuff"). All of them entertained and interacted with the audience.

Night fell and the enthusiasm continued, because after the art presentations came the anticipated dance; sales continued, people withstood the dust of the season, and it was a beautiful scene; these opportunities allow us to see, greet and hug many friends that we do not normally see for months or years, *compañeros* from past and present struggles with this pretext to show our collective strength; and this human warmth that strengthens hope and our decision to never stop in the quest for a better life.

By the end I think we all drank again from this inexhaustible fountain of enthusiasm that people with dignity and strength, such as this one, have. The *disappeared* but well remembered Venezuelan singer and author, Alí Primera, said it well in his song "El Sombrero Azul":

"...The Salvadoran people have the sky for a hat, their dignity is so high in their search for a time when the earth will flower for all those who have fallen and when happiness will come wash away the suffering..." ♦



Photo CoCoDA (2004)

(translation from Spanish by Tim Crouse, CoCoDA)



## CoCoDA Student / Youth Delegations 2003-2004

### DePAUW UNIVERSITY 2004

El Sitio Zapotal, Suchitoto

by William Hamilton  
Asst. Professor of Philosophy & History

The primary purpose of our January trip was to provide an educational and service opportunity for DePauw students to work with community members to complete construction of a cultural center and amphitheater in Sitio Zapotal and work with health promoters to provide medical care at a rural clinic in La Mora and mobile clinics in more remote areas.

While both work projects were successful, the cross-cultural educational value of the trip was priceless. It was a smashing success on all fronts.

To set the stage, imagine two faculty members—one an African-American male journalism professor with fairly extensive cross-cultural experience, the other a Caucasian male with a Ph.D. in Latin American history—leading a student delegation of 18 women (15 in sororities) and two men to a remote, impoverished area of El Salvador. Of those 20 students, 17 come from highly privileged white Midwestern households.

From the beginning we had many opportunities to discuss the differences in political, social, and spiritual values between our two cultures. The students heard testimony from a variety of experts in economics, politics, ethics, and religion and generally all the presentations were excellent. From my perspective as a Latin American historian, I felt that the entire educational component was top flight, especially in terms of the students' opportunity in this setting to understand the root causes of systemic poverty by seeing its effects first hand and to hear about the struggles to overcome structural inequity.

Even more important than formal educational opportunities, I want to stress the tremendous value in living with families in the village who hosted our team. For many of the students, sleeping in cramped rooms, some with dirt floors, without flush toilets, telephones, and computers was a big adjustment. I was very proud of our students and their willingness to get to know their host families, help with cooking and cleaning,



**Extended family** -- Staying in homes with families is often the highlight for CoCoDA delegation participants, such as these DePauw students with Salvadoran hosts.

and open themselves to understand their reality.

At the end of the three-week experience, I think all of our team members felt pride in what we were able to accomplish in terms of work as well as in our ability to adapt to a huge change in lifestyle and comfort. Although it felt good to be appreciated for our service, I think we all realized that members of the communities we served made huge sacrifices on our behalf in order to make it a successful experience for us. In other words, we gained much more than we imparted.



The most outstanding event, in my mind, was the community party on our final night in Sitio Zapotal. Team members and people from the community worked hard to ready the stage and dance floor at the cultural center and prepare food and refreshments for guests. That evening up to 1,200 people showed up from surrounding communities and from San Salvador to dance, listen to live music from the country's best known groups, commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the peace accords twelve years earlier, and say goodbye to us. It was an amazing evening.

I really can't imagine a better planned and run trip. We owe CoCoDA and the CRC a great debt in making this trip so brilliantly successful. Team members during nightly group reflection frequently mentioned their appreciation for the hard work of the host families and the CRC, but especially the dedication of Iván Villasboa, Natalia Scatolini de Villasboa, and Daniela Fonkatz, CoCoDA's coordinators, who worked with us every day.



**Despedida** -- Dancing at the Mariposa festival.

Photos courtesy of DPU (2004)

**Washington Ethical Society (WES) International Partners (Washington, DC)** -- CoCoDA/WES delegations traveled to Mazatepeque-Nueva Consolación, Cuscatlán in July, 2003 and August, 2004. The '03 group, including 13 youth and 5 adults, helped renovate a child care center. The '04 group, with 25 youth and 9 adults, helped build a community clinic (right), in addition to another project they were involved with in another community. The CRC sponsored the Mazatepeque visits.



Photo courtesy of WES (2004)



**River Road Unitarian Church (RRUC) (Bethesda, MD)** -- CoCoDA/RRUC delegations traveled to Santa Marta, Cabañas in July, 2003 and July, 2004. The '03 group, including 12 youth and 3 adults, helped paint a mural at the school. Two participants were from Manchester College (IN). The '04 group (some at left with Salvadoran hosts) included 9 youth and 2 adults. They helped build a fence around a hydroponic gardening center. ADES sponsored the visits.

Photo by (Wm Villasboa (2004))



## YOUTH TO YOUTH HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND SEX EDUCATION PROGRAM STARTED

Excerpts of letters from a CoCoDA intern who took her health education experience from Indianapolis to Suchitoto

by Alexis Roth  
Formerly bilingual health educator  
Damien Center, Indianapolis

April 6, 2004

The last week was really great. I gave my first 2 HIV 101 talks in two different communities. The first was in Sitio Cenicero. The people who live in this community were one of the first communities to return from refugee camps and resettle the land during the war.

I gave the HIV 101 talk to a huge group, 75 students, including 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. My biggest treat and surprise was that I ran into one of the health promoters and her husband, he's actually the librarian. They have 2 kids. She is in the 6th grade. I was so impressed by her initiative. It made me feel really great to have been invited by her to share in her educational experience.

My second chat of the week was at the community school for San Antonio, Valle Verde, El Barillo and several other communities. This time I gave the talk to 4th, 5th and 6th graders. It was fun. The teachers allowed me to do a condom demonstration and one little girl was even brave enough to come up and try it herself.

Friday there was another workshop in the Women's House in which we discussed the rights of the woman to live without gender-based violence and the obligations of the State to protect these rights. We studied the document that was published in 1994 from the "Convention of Belem" for a Women's rights convention that took place in Brazil. The teaching tool is a *popular education* magazine. That means it is written in simpler language and with pictures to help facilitate comprehension. The women, though excited about the convention, talked about the disparity between actualizing changes and the reality they live in. It's very empowering to hear them speak about ways to change Salvadoran reality.

**Acting it out** -- At the first HIV workshop, youth act out what happens when cold cells (played by the boy far left) try to invade the body (played by the girl, center) and white blood cells (played by boy closest to the girl) must fight them off - a lesson on immunity. Equipo Contra SIDA led the workshop.

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Photo by Felix Vazquez (2004)

May 12, 2004

There have been three more workshops for the teen peer educators: gender, sexuality and self-esteem, and leadership and organization. They have been great. The last workshop was given by the teen educators I visited at the beginning of my trip, a group called CoCoSI from Santa Marta, Cabañas. It was really cool for the kids and I to see how great, dynamic and informative a group of teen educators can be. I think this really inspired them. Last week they decided on a name for the group, Jovenes Contra SIDA Suchitoto (Teens against AIDS, Suchitoto).

Starting tomorrow, the kids have their first participative evaluation. I'm going to accompany them to different schools and watch them give their first HIV 101 talks. I'm really looking forward to it. Friday night, the kids and I are staying at the women's house to meet with the director of the CRC to look at how the group will continue once I leave. Saturday we head off to the beach and to an international celebration for AIDS awareness.

May 18, 2004

The last week, I split the group into pairs and each pair was responsible for giving their own HIV 101 chat at to a classroom of kids their age. All of the groups did great. They really have learned all about HIV and prevention.



Photo by Alexis Roth (2004)

**Prevention is best** -- From February to May, 2004, CoCoDA intern Alexis Roth (left, with a class in a rural school of Suchitoto) educated and organized on the public health themes of sexually transmitted infections, family planning, and gender attitudes relating to sexuality, with youth and women in rural communities of Suchitoto, El Salvador. Funded by contributions from family, friends and colleagues, and a grant from the H.C. Gemmer Family Christian Foundation, her internship was sponsored in El Salvador by CoCoDA's associate NGO, the CRC, as follow-up to the Columbia U. '03 trip (see below).

Friday and Saturday we had the closing sessions. The kids elected a board of directors from among themselves. We passed out diplomas, teaching materials, awareness-raising t-shirts. We also did an education session in the park and spent the day at the beach. It was great. On their own, the kids asked me if we could meet this week to work on a project work plan and budget that they could submit to the CRC and CoCoDA to be able to continue their work and have funds for further workshops and to purchase supplies, etc.

I'm really excited that they want to keep working! They also decided they would meet as a group every other weekend to review their work. I really hope they stay motivated. They are really smart and neat kids. I think they just need a little support and follow up. I have a meeting with the CRC Thursday to see what the support will look like. I have faith. ❖



Photo courtesy of Kelly Lubeck (2004)

**Columbia University Public Health Trip** -CU Public Health Students did a service trip to El Salvador with CoCoDA May 23 - June 10, 2003, with the purpose of sharing newly learned public health knowledge and skills in benefit of rural communities, and of learning about health and health care in a developing world context. The student-run trip was organized by a committee of the Black and Latino Student Caucus (BLSC). ADES and CRC sponsored the trip, Kelly Lubeck was CoCoDA coordinator.



## CoCoDA SPONSORS PARTICIPATION IN CONVENTION

Representatives of NGOs and immigrant communities attend Salvadoran event

**O**n the weekend of September 26 and 27, 2003, CoCoDA sponsored the participation of four Salvadorans in the First International Convention of Salvadoran Communities Residing Abroad, held in Los Angeles: Manuel Ortega, then Director of the CRC in Suchitoto, El Salvador; Antonio Pacheco, Director of ADES in Sensuntepeque, El Salvador; and Francisco Ramirez and Rafael Rivera, representatives of immigrants from Santa Marta, Cabañas, El Salvador who live in northern Virginia.

"Our reason for participating was because we are promoting a mutual support committee with Santa Marta," said Ramirez and Rivera in their report after the convention. "Considering this was the first time for an event of this nature, we think that a good number of participants came, and a good number of themes were discussed as well."

Ortega was also impressed by the turnout, and the potential political impact the gathering could have. "This initiative surprised officials of the Salvadoran government, people from the private business sector, the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) and its

supporting organizations, and others in the national life of El Salvador who in one way or another invest resources to maintain a position of influence in the international realm."

According to David Hernández, a contributor to the internet magazine *El Faro* who covered the convention, an estimated 3 million Salvadorans reside outside El Salvador, close to 2.7 million of them in the United States, and the money they send back to family in El Salvador reaches close to 2 billion dollars per year -- a lifeline for the country's economy.

There were 403 participants at the convention who came from all over the United States, as well as from Sweden, Germany, Japan, Canada and El Salvador. There were 23 panel discussions, on themes including: The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA); voting rights for Salvadorans residing abroad; human rights for immigrants crossing Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico border; forming Salvadoran business associations; how Salvadorans residing abroad can support development back in their home communities; and many other topics.

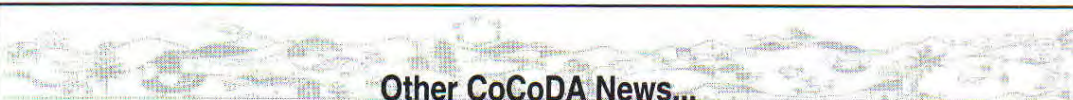


Photo by Ivan Villalobos (2004)

**Salvadoran unity** -- Santa Marta, Cabañas immigrants to Virginia, Francisco Hernández (left) and Rafael Rivera (right), share ideas with Antonio Pacheco, Director of ADES (center), about how immigrants in the U.S. can support community development back home in El Salvador. CoCoDA made possible the participation of all three in the historic 2003 convention in Los Angeles.

"We think the many discussions that were held at the convention can serve a great deal," said Ramirez and Rivera in their report. "Still, though, we think more could have been done to exact commitments from the government agencies of our country. Also we suggest that future events have more objective proposals on the table as a means for getting tangible commitments from the panelists."

Ramirez and Rivera served on the planning committee for the second convention, held in Washington, D.C. October 8-10, 2004. Learn more at [www.salvadorenosenelmundo.org](http://www.salvadorenosenelmundo.org). ❖



### Other CoCoDA News...

❖ **Aguacayo Water Project** - Six Indiana Rotary Clubs have pledged a total of \$14,000 towards CoCoDA's \$20,000 goal for this project (see p. 3): Greencastle, Vincennes, Evansville, Brazil, Jasper and Brownsburg. In mid-November families in Aguacayo were installing pipes for home connections to the water system.

❖ **Santa Marta Computer Center** - In November, the Center connected to the internet via parabolic antenna, purchased with a 2004 CoCoDA grant, which also supported classes and operations. The grant was funded by River Road Unitarian Church (Bethesda, MD), The Wessel Foundation and Sisters of Providence.

❖ **2004 CoCoDA Encuentro** - The Greencastle/DePauw CoCo hosted the 2004 CoCoDA Encuentro in Greencastle, Indiana on April 24. Twenty-five people participated.

❖ **Election Observers** - Five CoCoDA delegates joined 270 international observers with the Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS) for El Salvador's presidential elections in March, 2004. Voting went smoothly at their polling location in Sensuntepeque, Cabañas (right). Their most serious concern was the pre-election influence of Bush administration officials and congressmen Dan Burton (R-IN) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), who made statements warning Salvadorans that electing the opposition FMLN candidate would threaten the immigration status of Salvadorans in the U.S. Afterwards, two CoCoDA observers met with Burton's staff, criticizing these coercive politics.



Photo by Nathan Boone (2004)

#### CoCoDA Associate Organizations in El Salvador

**ADES:** Asociación de Desarrollo Económico y Social, Santa Marta

**CRC:** Comité para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo Socioeconómico de Comunidades de Suchitoto

**REDES:** Fundación Salvadoreña para la Reconstrucción y el Desarrollo



We envision  
a global  
community  
founded on just  
relationships  
among people  
and nations,  
rooted in the  
democratic  
sharing of  
resources for  
sustainable  
social and  
economic  
development.

CoCoDA  
Vision Statement



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## The Companion

Newsletter of Companion Community Development Alternatives

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"Thank you" to all who hosted CoCoDA's November, 2004 U.S. speaking tour with Salvadoran "Popular Teacher" Juan Ayala Argueta (left, speaking at the Dumbarton United Methodist Church in Washington, DC), ADES Director Antonio Pacheco, and CoCoDA coordinators DeAmon Harges and Iván Villasboa. They spoke in churches, universities, meeting halls and homes in 8 states in the northeast and midwest. The aim of the tour was to educate about the history of "popular education" in El Salvador, update on the status of education projects in Santa Marta, Cabañas, and seek support for higher education opportunities for youth in rural El Salvador.

### Do you have a reliable used vehicle that could keep CoCoDA rolling?

Over the years, members and friends of CoCoDA have donated used vehicles to CoCoDA, which have made possible our many affordable speaking tours, and other program travel. CoCoDA is now without a vehicle!

Please contact us if you want to make a tax-deductible gift of a vehicle to CoCoDA (or a combined reduced price sale and tax deductible gift)  
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