



Newsletter of Companion Community Development Alternatives

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

www.cocoda.org

FORTY-ONE STUDENTS RECEIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

Motivated, talented youth face more obstacles than opportunities in the rural Salvadoran communities of Suchitoto, Cuscatlán and Santa Marta, Cabañas. Many assume costly risks trying to migrate to the United States, even though they cannot get a visa, because they see few other hopeful options for their future.

The first post-war generation from these farming communities began graduating from high school in 2004, which was unprecedented. Most of these kids' parents, if they survived the war, were either illiterate or they learned to read and write in adult literacy programs during or after the civil war (1980-92).

These new high school graduates received elementary and secondary education in *escuelas populares*, under-funded schools built amidst the ruins of war by the communities themselves, led by local volunteers, *maestra/os populares*, who are now certified, salaried teachers.

To open more doors of opportunity for Santa Marta and Suchitoto youth, CoCoDA began the Youth Leadership Campaign with our partner NGOs (non-governmental organizations) in El Salvador in 2004. Thanks to the contributions and dedicated fundraising of many, the cam-

paign has helped the NGOs ADES (Santa Marta) and the CRC (Suchitoto) begin high school and university-level scholarship programs. The students who benefit have maintained good academic performance and have shown a commitment to participating in the betterment of their community.

In this issue, we introduce the scholarship beneficiaries during the first two years of the ADES and CRC programs, 2005 and 2006, and provide an overview of the two programs. Both face the ever-growing demand of worthy students seeking financial assistance to study.

This first section introduces seventeen students from Santa Marta who are attending the University of El Salvador (UES) in San Salvador. All but two of them were born in the refugee camps of La Virtud or Mesa Grande, Honduras. They were brought to El Salvador as babies or toddlers while the war was being fought around them. They explain that their determination comes not only from personal ambition but also from an appreciation of the sacrifices made by earlier generations, so they might have opportunities their parents did not; so they might be well prepared to lead their communities forward. ❖

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Julio Cesar Zavala Pineda
21 years old
University
Year 1
Sociology

Many compatriots gave their lives to see a better El Salvador and so we would have a better destiny than what they had to live. I want to work with people in my community, especially the youth, and apply all that I learn to fulfilling my dream of our community progressing forward. My pastimes are table tennis and volleyball.



Marcos Tulio Torres Méndez
19 years old
University
Year 1
Philosophy

In 2003 I joined the Committee Against AIDS, CoCoSI. In 2004 I joined the group for recuperation of historical memory of Santa Marta. I want to return to Santa Marta as a professional and perform my career there, doing whatever I can to reproduce my knowledge. I want to work with the groups that are organized and strengthen them. I want to pay back the community for all the efforts they have made for us, and do everything possible so that our history is not lost.

I am a creative person. I have learned quite a lot about the reality of our country.



Ana María Hernández Alemán
18 years old
University
Year 1
Sociology

My favorite pastime is reading. This scholarship is important for me because I need assistance, like all youth from the rural area who decide to study at the university. I've realized how difficult surviving in the city is. It is so different in every way from our beloved community. After graduating I want to put what I've learned into practice in my community, that is why I am preparing myself.

While in high school, I worked at Radio Victoria as an extra-curricular activity in the area of journalism and learned basic skills for news programming, reporting and public polls. The scholarship will provide me with more possibilities for my studies and then in the future to help my community raise more funds to benefit other youth who are in conditions identical to my own. I want to teach all I learn in my community.



Leydi Carolina Recinos Rivas
18 years old
University
Year 1
Psychology

(continued on p. 2)

Photo not available

Yunior Medardo Alfaro
21 years old
University
Year 1
English, Teaching

My father died in the "Final Offensive" of 1989. My mother is a humble woman who works at home but she is very much a fighter. I participated two and a half years as a volunteer in the Committee Against AIDS, CoCoSI. I have also been part of the Santa Marta youth editorial group "Rebelión", and I participate in the newsletter "Abriendo Brecha". On weekends I continue to support CoCoSI giving workshops about HIV/AIDS prevention. Like the others, I don't have the resources to pay the cost of university study, so support helps us a lot. I also believe that "the only way to be free, is to be educated" and those of us who have the opportunity to educate ourselves need to be the liberating light of those who don't have the opportunity. After getting my degree I want to teach English at the school in Santa Marta.



Araceli del Carmen Torres Méndez
22 years old
University
Year 1
Social Work

I want very much to put my studies, my career in practice working with my people in my community since that is where I was formed. I want to return there as a professional. In our country they are always putting up obstacles to keep the poor from developing ourselves and in that way keep us from understanding the harsh reality they have us in and to keep us from confronting them. Support from people in solidarity with us is the only way youth like us without money can continue on with our studies and, in this way, with the development of our community -- and why not say it -- of our country, too. If there is opportunity, much can be achieved.

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Most of CoCoDA's funding comes from individual members who contribute \$25 or more per year and from CoCo Groups, which are independent groups in the United States that cooperate with CoCoDA and Salvadoran partners in program initiatives. We hope all who read *The Companion* will become members of CoCoDA.



Merlin Carolina Rodríguez
18 years old
University
Year 1
Medicine

In 2002 I completed a computer course in which I learned only basic skills but it was a beautiful and important experience. I learned sewing when I was 12, and participated in other workshops. I spent last year working in the Santa Marta Health Center, which was perhaps the most important experience of my life because it helped affirm my choice of vocation. I like to read, especially history books, every now and then a novel, but my favorite book is Harry Potter. I like to care for animals and, logically, everything relating to my career (stitches, injections, pharmacy work, anatomy, etc.). My family is very poor and

not able to pay for my studies, especially considering that in our country medicine is a very expensive field of study. My mother is a widow, she is almost seventy years old. I do not have a father. My mother does not have any paying job. For this reason, we've sought the help of ADES' scholarship program, which at least pays the rent and helps cover minimal living expenses. After I get my degree I want to return to my community to perform my career. I want to work in the Santa Marta Health Center and advance solutions to the health problems of our people, to improve the living conditions of all the population, and, of course, pursue the purpose of all medical doctors -- to help alleviate the ills of others.

I think the career I am studying will give me tools to understand the agendas of international agencies, which will make it relatively viable to get funding for projects in the community. The knowledge I acquire at the university will permit me to return to my community and seek alternatives to solve old problems and also propose development strategies to meet challenges that will come with new times. The study program of my major will not be limited to one area but rather will allow me to learn in fundamental areas such as economics, jurisprudence, politics, sociology, philoso-



Jaime Armando Sánchez Rivas
20 years old
University
Year 2
International Relations

phy, and methods of social investigation. This will permit me to contribute broadly to the community's different areas of organization. Although education is recognized in our country's constitution, it has become a privilege, not a right. Having the means to access this fundamental asset has become a dream. The conditions of poverty in which families in our country live obligate youth to emigrate to the USA, which diminishes possibilities for building a better country, one developed not only economically but also intellectually. This scholarship program will help me achieve my dream of graduating with a degree in International Relations, and thereby give a little back to my community for all that she has given to me.



Merlin Carolina Velis Lainez
19 years old
University
Year 1
Letters

As a child when I saw Los Compas (guerrilla soldiers) passing by, I didn't understand why they had guns. Sometimes my grandmother told us to hide and this was when government soldiers came. I never understood any of this; only now do I understand what really happened in those years. We were more poor, I almost always was without shoes. I like to read books about history and testimonials of war, as well as poetry. I love doing interviews and surveys about problems that afflict our country and broadcast them through Radio Victoria. I have worked at the Radio in the news department for three years. I also worked on a Santa Marta youth magazine called "Abriendo Brecha" (opening the way). It is called this because through knowledge and our art and culture we are opening the way that leads towards a country with social justice.

I participate in the organization of my community, El Zapote, Cantón Santa Marta, on the board of youth and adults. The economic situation of the families in the community is not sufficient to maintain a child at the university and also survive from agriculture if you do not have a salary. My family consists of nine children and my parents. We are no exception to the other families in the community, because no one has the resources to cover costs of studying at the university. Participating in this scholarship program, I can study and improve myself in order to serve my community and also help more students to study, either from my family or from my community. I am who I am because of what I learn daily from my community, which has been the motor of our development. Getting a university degree will help me and the other students to better serve her.



Ana María González Escalante
24 years old
University
Year 1
History

EXPANDING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR YOUTH LEADERS IN SANTA MARTA

The *Asociación de Desarrollo Económico y Social, Santa Marta*, ADES, first provided financial assistance for students graduated from the Santa Marta high school to attend the University of El Salvador (UES) in 2005. That year ADES spent \$5,207 (\$2,000 from CoCoDA) to provide minimal support for 8 students with rent of a house in the city, tuition and transportation expenses, and a small allowance for food, supplies and daily expenses.

"The idea (of the scholarships) is a continuation of 'the embryonic seeds' project, which the community of Santa Marta and ADES have been developing over the past 20 years," reads ADES' proposal for building a long-term, sustainable scholarship program. "These seeds address areas such as health, economy, environment, youth organizing and, above all, education, which is where we have concentrated the greatest part of our efforts."

For 2006-07, ADES set about seeking funding from international friends and agencies, with the goal of financing scholarships for 20-30 Santa Marta students at the UES, and designing the framework for a viable, long-term scholarship program. The criteria ADES assesses for eligible students are:



Santa Marta students live in a group house in San Salvador.

- * Graduated from high school and passed the PAES (exam)
- * Participates in youth organizations of Santa Marta
- * Of limited financial resources

At least half of the beneficiaries must be female. The students are required to attend workshops on a range of themes relating to personal and community development and world awareness. The students themselves manage the upkeep and finances of the house in San Salvador, with ADES administrative personnel.

Ideally, a full one-year scholarship to the university for a student would be \$2,500, which would allow for two houses in the city (for a group of 20-30), cover costs of the life skills workshops, and more adequately meet the needs of the students throughout the school year. In 2006, with 17 students receiving support

to study at the UES (two students withdrew due to family and financial issues) ADES' budget fell far below the ideal, averaging less than \$500 per student and limiting the group to crowded, minimalist living conditions. Funding sources for the ADES program in 2006 were CoCoDA (\$10,000 - 71%), Doctors for Global Health, CRISPAZ and Sarah Bishop. ADES spent just over \$4,000

to fund classes at the Santa Marta Computer Center in 2006, a vital part of pre-university preparation.

Four Santa Marta students have completed their second year at the university and eleven their first. Their progress is felt by all their family members, which total 89 people.

"The scholarship program is a door to personal development, and also an opportunity to form professionals capable of demanding their rights and contributing to the development of the country," states ADES.

CoCoDA will be seeking local organizers for an upcoming U.S. speaking tour with ADES, to promote the Youth Leadership Campaign and to find more partners for building the long-term viability of the scholarship program in Santa Marta. ❖

I was born in Santa Marta four months after the first return from Mesa Grande, Honduras. My father is a farmer, my mother a homemaker, and I am the sixth of eight brothers and sisters. I like to play soccer and study my major at the University of El Salvador. After graduating I will try to find work, but I would like even more to continue learning, and sometime I would also like to travel. And more than anything I am interested in helping my family and my community with my knowledge and my work.



Maria Carmela Leiva Hernández
18 years old
University
Year 1
International Relations

I want to put my education into practice in my community, specifically in the school since my major is to work in a library. The community school needs a librarian, and in this way I would be contributing to community development and fulfilling my dreams of being able to help and be part of community development. I was born in Santa Marta, but we had to emigrate to Mesa Grande, Honduras when I was nine. Part of my basic education was in Santa Marta and part in Honduras. At 16, I taught pre-school, then first grade, then adult literacy for three years.



Maria Hilda Mijango Laínez
34 years old
University
Year 2
Library Sciences

I want to teach English because our community needs an English teacher. So, after getting my degree I will return to the community and put my education into practice with the boys and girls of our school, and in this way contribute to our school's development. It will be a way to thank our teachers, the community and people who have given us support so our dreams could become reality, and helped us to believe in ourselves. I was a member of two youth organizations, and served on the community council. I taught in the school, grades 7, 8 and 9. I continue to participate in recovering our art through the community's ceramics shop.



Marta Milagro Mijango Laínez
25 years old
University
Year 2
English Language

The student profiles in this issue of *The Companion* were provided by the *Asociación de Desarrollo Económico y Social, Santa Marta* (ADES), the *Comité de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Económico Social de Comunidades de Suchitoto* (CRC), and *Radio Victoria*. Translations to English by Tim Crouse and Sarah Bishop, editing by Tim Crouse.

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SUCHITOTO STUDENTS NEED SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDY

Suchitoto is an emerging tourist destination in Central El Salvador, with picturesque architecture, natural beauty, and historical significance. But young people from Suchitoto and surrounding communities have limited education opportunities and few career options.

The *Comité de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Económico Social de Comunidades de Suchitoto (CRC)*, CoCoDA's associate organization in Suchitoto, works with 26 rural communities, most of which began repopulating in the late 1980s during the civil war. The CRC provides training and facilitates development efforts with these communities, and on a regional level with sectors of the population such as women and youth. The CRC's approach is to help them analyze their situation and then set goals for their own development.

At a regional youth meeting organized by the CRC, a Suchitoto Youth Platform was created. A central point in the platform states the goal of "making basic, superior and vocational education accessible to the Suchitoto population, by means of different youth scholarships."

The CRC began a scholarship program that supported high school-level scholarships for 22 Suchitoto youth (13 male, 9 female) in 2005-06. The scholarships mostly helped pay transportation costs, as

there are only 6 high school-level institutions serving 40 communities in the Suchitoto area. These first two years of the program were funded by CoCoDA (\$4,060 - 62%), Yohni Bell, and the Atlanta Friends Meeting.

The CRC says their scholarships are both "academic and organizing" because the beneficiaries are required to participate in leadership training and in community projects where they live. Eligible students are selected by local community councils. The students form what the CRC calls their "School of Leaders."

Beginning in 2007, the CRC has set ambitious goals of supporting 30 high school students (ideally \$700 per student/year) and 15 university students (ideally \$1,600 per student/year). For this to be possible, the CRC will have to raise tens of thousands of dollars more for their scholarship program than they did in the first two years.

CoCoDA is looking for more individuals and groups in the U.S. to help us support the CRC's program. In this section, we present profiles of ten of the Suchitoto students who benefitted from CRC high school scholarships in 2005-06, most of whom are candidates for university-level scholarships, if the funds are raised to help make their dreams possible. ❖

I was born in Zacamil and I've always lived with my mother and two brothers. I got my basic education at the Centro Escolar Zacamil, and now am in high school at the Instituto Nacional Suchitoto, "INSU". It would have been very difficult for me to do this without financial help. I want to go on to the university to study medicine, and in this way support not only my community but my country. I like to play soccer and other sports, but studying is my favorite pastime.



Wilson Salomón
Hernández
16 years old
High School
Year 2

I was born in Rosario de Mora in 1986. I'm the first in my family to reach high school. My father works in agriculture for survival, he does not make any money from the work. My mother cares for the home, so does not have any income, either. I'm glad to be in this scholarship program because it is helping me continue my studies. I want to go on to the university so I can develop myself and become a professional. I like to play soccer and have skills in arts and crafts, carpentry and electrical work.



Carlos Antonio
Murillo Montoya
20 years old
High School
Year 2

I would like to study to be a professional and to learn many things to then be able to help my family economically. I was born in Soyapango, then we came to the community of San Antonio. I live with my grandmother, three cousins and sister. I've worked the fields since I was 12, planting and fumigating the corn. My mother is not with me because she is working to help pay for my studies and our food. My dad left us when I was 6. I like to listen to music, study, and dance.



Flor Beatrice
Galdamez Landaverde
20 years old
High School
Year 3



Lidia Rubenia del
Carmen Alvaorenga
18 years old
High School
Year 2

I live in El Sitio Zapotal and study at the Centro Escolar in El Barillo. I live with my mom and stepdad and four brothers and sisters. I'm the second to study high school, my older sister was the first. She is working now because we didn't have

the means for her to continue her studies. I want to participate in the scholarship program to advance myself and to help my mother and my brothers and sisters so that in the future we will be able to manage for ourselves. If I'm able to continue studying with support of the CRC, I would help the community with projects they determine, such as with economic support, because the community does not have the resources necessary to continue in many constructions they want to realize. I want to continue on to the university. If I don't get support, I will look for work and maybe later go on to study.

I was born in San José Guayabal. I studied basic education in Aguacayo and C.E.L.R.A. I'm the first in my family to attend high school and I want to go to the university. My father does farming and many other things such as bricklaying and carpentry.



Uris Armando
Mejía Ramírez
17 years old
High School
Year 2

My mother is a homemaker. Apart from school, I am learning from the (leadership) workshops that are part of the scholarship program.

I was born in Santa Lucia, El Carmen. I studied basic education in Aguacayo and C.E.L.R.A. My mother is a homemaker and cares for my brother; my father works in agriculture and other things. I'm the first in our family to go to high school and I hope to go on to the university.



José Domingo
Hernández
17 years old
High School
Year 1

This scholarship program is helping me complete high school at the Instituto Nacional de Suchitoto and pursue my university education. I want to get a degree in education, and also study journalism, engineering and information systems. I am from the town of Suchitoto, Barrio Concepción. I live with my grandmother. I received basic education at the Centro Escolar Isau Ruiz Araujo. I am a broadcaster at the Radio Suchitlán community radio station and am experienced in radiophonic production.



Carlos Alberto
Lara
23 years old
High School
Year 3

My father is a farmer, my mother a homemaker. I'm from Cantón Santa Marta, Cabañas, but came to Suchitoto with my parents when I was young. Now we live in the community of Hacienda El Sitio. I received basic education in the Centro Educativo El Barillo, where I am now. I have abilities working with youth leading discussions, and I am knowledgeable with computers. I went with a group to Guatemala, where I learned about working as part of a team and also learned that I am not the only one in poverty. I want to be a medical doctor if support is available. I'm participating in this scholarship program for personal advancement and for my community, to have a better future.

José Walter
Mendoza Calleja
20 years old
High School
Year 2



Since I was 15 I've participated in organized groups like the Unión de Jóvenes Monseñor Romero, and still now I participate with the youth group that produces the magazine called Abriendo Brecha. I would like to work, putting what I've learned at the university into practice in the community. If in some case I could not work in the community with my career, I would like to support it in the area of organizing. I want to participate in the scholarship program, then help my brothers and sisters study to help the family move forward.



Yessenia Leonor
Cerritos Membreño
18 years old
University
Year 1
Letters

I was born in the refugee camp, Mesa Grande, Honduras. I lived part of my childhood in that camp. I have just a few memories, but it was a very happy time. Although the adults didn't see it that way because the situation was harsh. Many times as kids we don't see things in their total reality. Among abilities I've developed are social skills, which have helped me better reflect objective reality. I don't have any particular pastime, but I love to dance and talk with people, regardless of their age. My dream is to work with children and adolescents in my community, drawing from what I've learned in psychology.



Yeni Leticia
Romero
20 years old
University
Year 2
Psychology

The scholarship program is a good opportunity to achieve something that will improve our future and help us to achieve what we want to become as a person, to be a professional, which is what we want but is nearly impossible to achieve.



Rafael Alberto
Orellana Lopez
20 years old
High School
Year 2

want to become as a person, to be a professional, which is what we want but is nearly impossible to achieve.

I was born in Aguilares and grew up with my family and studied in the community of Valle Verde. I have abilities in drawing and literature. I like to play soccer and basketball. In my free time I work at home, such as farming, and primarily studying.



Simón Argueta
Ayala
21 years old
University
Year 1
Physics

I was born in the camps in the sister republic of Honduras. My family was forced to leave at the point of the cannon and gun by the government army and the imperialists of this country with the help of the U.S. government. The primary reason I want to participate in the scholarship program is because I'm poor, my family doesn't have enough to pay for my studies. Afterwards I want to be able to help my family economically and help my other brother study at the university. My biggest dream is to work in the community in the field of natural sciences, as a professor in the high school, so that my students excel very well in this area.

I was born in the community of La Mora, where I still live with my family. My father works in agriculture to be able to survive, my mother is a homemaker. My childhood was hard, it's been difficult to get where I am today. I studied basic education in various schools: Rosario, La Mora, San Francisco, and now am in my second year of high school. I'm the second in our family to reach high school. I have carpentry and art skills, and I enjoy playing soccer. My goal is to attend the university and be a professional.

Marvín Antonio
Landa Verde Rivera
17 years old
High School
Year 2



I want to formally study mathematics and continue learning-teaching. But beyond that I have a more profound concept of 'Why study?' I do not study thinking, 'Will I live my profession or not?', but rather I think about how a new generation of students at the university will form one more opportunity for the community. Before all else, we have a historic commitment to our parents, to ourselves, and to the future of our community, to our little brothers and sisters. I have the hope, and I even will guarantee, that we will know how to ensure our more matured contribution to our community.



José Leonel
Hernández Rivas
21 years old
University
Year 2
Mathematics

RADIO VICTORIA SCHOLARSHIPS

CoCoDA granted \$3,048 to ADES for two scholarships benefiting leaders at the Radio Victoria community radio station in Victoria, Cabañas. The funding came from contributors on a 2004 Radio Victoria U.S. speaking tour, and from friends of Radio Victoria.



Vilma Patricia Laínez
23 years old
Jesuit University (UCA)
Journalism

In 2005 I took a course offered by the Jesuit fathers at the UCA for individuals of limited economic resources. It facilitates understanding of the content taught at the university, and also helps socialize upper-level classes with people wanting to study. This course is only offered to persons recommended by churches or organizations working for human development. This course was very useful for me, and because of it I will be able to attend the university. (Vilma began studies in journalism at the UCA in March, 2006, with an UCA scholarship and support from friends. - Ed.)

This degree will serve me greatly, first in my work at Radio Victoria, where I am presently the Coordinator of Administration and Finance, and second in my personal development. Both of these aspects are important to me. I've been putting my learning into practice in essential and vital ways for improving the accounting operations of radio station. Most importantly, I have a better understanding of how we are doing, what things we need to improve, and what direction we in the radio should take, making use of this new knowledge.



Edward Manuel
Renderos Lara
32 years old
University
Year 2
Financial
Administration

THANK YOU CAMPAIGN SPONSORS!

- Contributors of \$1,000 or more to the Youth Leadership Campaign
- River Road Unitarian Church - Latin America Task Network (Maryland)
 - Portage Area Coalition for Sanctuary (Ohio)
 - The Brook Family Foundation (Maine)
 - Dumbarton United Methodist Church Inter-America Committee (DC)
 - Laura Lechner & Daniel Ginsberg (Massachusetts)
 - Nancy & Ed Murphy (New York)
 - Stephen & Barbara Peterson Family (Maryland)
 - Patchwork Central (Indiana)
 - Michael Snodgrass (Indiana)
 - Mary MacGregor (Indiana)

WE FIND OURSELVES THROUGH CONNECTIONS ABROAD

By Harriet Bromley
Richmond, Kentucky

Berea/Madison County, Kentucky has had a longstanding relationship with CoCoDA, El Salvador and especially the community of Valle Verde, Suchitoto since before 1990. A number of delegations from the community and Berea College have been to El Salvador. When we go, we renew our relationships with friends who have stayed in our houses when they came here to talk with us.

We were with Valle Verde folks during the signing and celebration of the Peace Accords in 1992. The Berea College Country Dancers were there in 1993. Ann Butwell and John Capillo of Berea have been long term workers in the country. Several members of the community have been there many times. It is amazing how this interchange has grown and enriched our community.

In 2004, Union Church in Berea sent down a delegation from the congregation. We visited Valle Verde again. We talked with the members of the *Directiva* (community board). We wanted direction from them as to how we could do something constructive with them. This question resulted in a rather literal response as we learned how badly they needed a community center. It could serve as a place to meet when it rains; classes could be held in it; there would be a place to do health examinations and a locked room to store medicines and tools for the community. The *Directiva*, with guidance from the CRC, suggested that we help to con-

struct a *Casa Comunal*. The cost would be around \$18,500. Gulp.

We are a small community, less than 70,000 in the whole county. But, we are idealists and gutsy so we accepted the challenge. We reached out to other churches and organizations for help. We got a committee together from throughout the community. We sold pupusas at bazaars. We talked to clubs and the city council and other churches. We met with the weekly newspaper staff. We sold LEGO 'bricks' at the alternative Christmas market for \$20. We served a Salvadoran Dinner one evening and had speakers from El Salvador and the 2004 delegation. We showed photos of our trips and spread the word to all we knew.

The response was incredible. We raised the funds needed to build the *Casa Comunal*, and enough to aid five people to join last summer's delegation of fellow citizens, some seventy years of age and others as young as fifteen.

At the end of October, we presented a home cooked meal to say thank you to all who facilitated our journey. Over a hundred stayed three hours on that Sunday after church to share and learn about Valle Verde and El Salvador.

We consider our trips as pilgrimages which actually start before we go. We reach out to the wider community for help financing the trip. This results in raising their awareness through explanations of the reason for the journey. As a result of our journey, we learn about how Salvadoran lives are affected by United States policies; truths that do not come



Photo by Harriet Bromley (2006)

Valle Verde's younger generation welcomes the Berea/Madison County 2006 delegation.

out normally in our news; that the guerrillas were not Marxist terrorists but rather deeply caring committed members of families and communities working to bring some dignity into their lives.

Part of our work is sharing what we have learned with the rest of our community in Kentucky. The young people speak at their schools. The city commissions and clubs learn how to respond to the different needs of a different culture. We all get taken out of our comfort zone and tangibly interact with a different view of life. It awakens in us a deeper appreciation of what we can accomplish when we reach out to the members of our own community. It changes the lives especially of the young people who go with us. They interact with a freedom that we older folks may not have. They dance a lot better and longer, too.

Perhaps the most significant effect of our experience is that we have a much deeper understanding of the complexities and ramifications of our government's policies in other countries. We cannot continue living with our unexamined attitudes. We come back different people. Different decisions and actions are the result. ❖



Photo by Alfonso Rivas (2006)

Residents attend a workshop in Valle Verde's new community center, or *Casa Comunal*.

CoCoDA ENCuentRO

"Full human development depends on a balance between self-interest and commitment to community," is one insight shared at CoCoDA's Encuentro May 12-14, 2006. The Columbus Peace Fellowship in Columbus, Indiana hosted the weekend gathering. Nineteen people from nine communities participated.



Photo by Tim Crouse (2006)

Other CoCoDA News...

EQUITY TRUST LOANS PAID

Equity Trust (ET), a non-profit organization based in Massachusetts, operates an Equity Trust Fund that "combines responsible investment with a voluntary land reform initiative by socially and environmentally concerned property owners." In 2001, Equity Trust made two loans to CoCoDA for property purchases in Cabañas, El Salvador, both of which were paid off in 2006.

ET made a \$19,000 grant and \$10,000 loan at 5% interest to CoCoDA to allow the NGO ADES and its community radio station, Radio Victoria, to purchase the property where the radio had been renting and operating for a decade. The grant portion also included funding for building improvements. In May, 2006, the loan was paid off. The radio itself paid \$2,400; ADES paid \$6,900; and CoCoDA paid \$1,986 with funds contributed by friends of Radio Victoria. A grant from Paz y Solidaridad de Euskadi (Pais Vasco) funded construction of a completely new building on the property, for Radio Victoria and other ADES youth programs. The

100-MILE FUNDRAISER



Bernie Whitton and Iván Villasbôa walked 100 miles from the Kennedy-King Memorial in Indianapolis to the Ohio River border with Kentucky in Madison, Indiana last March. Their walk, timed to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the assassination of Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, took six days and raised \$4,197 from 61 sponsors. The proceeds went to the Youth Leadership Campaign.

NEW MAYOR, FAMILIAR FACE

Many involved with CoCoDA have benefited from insights and analysis by Javier Martínez, former Executive Director of the NGO REDES. In March, 2006, he was elected to a three-year term as Mayor of his home municipality of Suchitoto. He won with 67% of the vote.



new house was inaugurated on February 11, 2007. The property will be titled in the name of ADES.

ET also made a \$12,000 loan at 5% interest to CoCoDA for the Santa Teresita Catholic girls' school in Sensuntepeque to purchase an adjacent lot for expanding classroom and playground space. The school made their final monthly payment on the loan in March, 2006. ❖

HERNDON IMMIGRANT EFFORTS

The Santa Marta immigrant community in Herndon, Virginia has been raising money for projects back home by holding dinners, raffles and dances. According to organizer Francisco Ramírez, their funds recently were multiplied by support from the Pan American Development Foundation (FUPAD) to complete the construction and equipping of a new science lab at the Centro Educativo de Santa Marta. Faced with increased hostility from anti-immigrant groups, the Herndon Santa Marteanos are also active in immigrant rights organizing in the Washington DC area. Ramírez and Rafael Rivera participated in the 2006 CoCoDA Encuentro. In 2004, CoCoDA sponsored the participation of both these immigrant leaders in the International Convention of Salvadoran Communities Residing Abroad.

NEW WATER CAMPAIGN

Rotary Clubs from Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and El Salvador are partnering with CoCoDA, ADES, and the CRC to fund water projects in the communities of Zacamil II, Suchitoto and El Zapote, Cabañas. Patchwork Central (IN) and Portage Area Coalition for Sanctuary (OH) are initial sponsors of the campaign.

FELSEN MEMORIAL GIFT

A \$25,000 gift in memory of Leopold and Sima Felsen was made to CoCoDA by Michael Felsen and Tolle Graham of Massachusetts in December, 2005. The gift was designated to support Radio Victoria in Cabañas, El Salvador. The money was used to purchase new equipment, including a 1000-watt transmitter, an upgrade from 150 watts! The funds also paid for local labor on construction of the new Radio Victoria house.

LAND DISPUTE IN SANTA MARTA

Last October, Santa Marta was threatened by a dispute of ownership for land they purchased in 1994. CoCoDA sent \$3,000 for legal defense and a support letter with 272 signatures. The case will be tried by the Salvadoran Supreme Court.

DELEGATIONS TO EL SALVADOR

2006

Somos Amigos - University of Southern California (March)

River Road Unitarian Church Youth (June-July)

Berea-Madison County Kentucky (July-August)

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2007

Suffolk University (March)

University of North Carolina at Greensboro (June)

River Road Unitarian Church Youth (June-July)

Latin America Parents Association (July-August)

For information about CoCoDA delegations to El Salvador, contact cocodaindy@igc.org -- 317/920-8643.

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



609 E. 29th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46205-4160
Email: cocodaindy@igc.org
Tel: 317/920-8643 • Fax: 317/920-8649
www.cocoda.org

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Photo by Scott Wight (1990)

In Loving Memory

Rufina Amaya

Survivor of the massacre of civilians in El Mozote, El Salvador in 1981 by the U.S.-backed Salvadoran army, Rufina gave testimony to the world of what happened. Her husband, Domingo, and four of her children, ages 9, 5, 3 and 8 months, were among those whose cries she heard as they were killed by the soldiers. Her youngest child, Marta (with her in 1990, left) and her oldest, Fidelia, survived the war.

Reagan administration officials, fighting in Congress to prevent cuts in military aid to El Salvador, claimed to be unable to corroborate evidence of the massacre. After the war, remains of 809 men, women and children were found.

Rufina passed away on March 6, 2007 at the age of 64.

(Information drawn from reports by Voices on the Border, EPICA and The New York Times)