



El Maestro en Casa, Inc.
ADULT OUTREACH EDUCATION
Ciudad Cívica, Intibucá, Honduras
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<http://lencaeducation.org>
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Dear friends and generous supporters,

The holidays have ended, the grandkids are back in school, so once again I begin to mentally prepare myself to return to Honduras and begin another school year. An important part of that process is this newsletter, which forces me to reflect, from a more objective distance, on the accomplishments of 2012. And thank heavens there were some, quite a few, in fact!

I want to begin with our volunteers, because it still amazes me that not only do they somehow find us, but they're also so awesome. Andy and James Watts arrived in Oct., mid-way through their Latin American travels. Since they're from



Our Australian volunteers

Australia, I immediately recognized them by the surf board James carried as they stepped off the bus. They decided to take on the task of painting the roof trim on our school, which was a horrendous job because of all the scraping involved. Determined to finish the job, they extended their 2-week stay by an additional week, and they even paid for the materials! James also left us a design for a fake roof, to resolve out leaky-roof problems, in case we ever found the funds to build it.

Next came Marion and Rodolphe, a French couple also traveling in the area.

They decided to paint the exterior of our school, but they also created a donation website and collected enough donations to build the roof

James had designed, all in 2 weeks! Hence the term "awesome" to describe our volunteers.



Our French volunteers

Next, a Canadian woman will be arriving the end of this week to

teach our English classes until the end of February. Then in March, a good friend and ex-Peace Corps volunteer will be passing through to lend a hand. And who knows what else the New Year might bring!



Building our new roof

Another reason for celebration was finding the funds to develop our computer lab and design our information technology program. The Tarsadia Foundation, (<http://tarsadiafoundation.org/>) has generously provided us with the funds to buy 10 new computers and a digital projector, connect wirelessly to the internet, plus hire a part-time lab technician and an expert to bring us all up to speed. Although we have long been providing quality education to the marginalized rural population of Intibucá, it is also now necessary to provide information technology so that they can participate, and compete, in the increasingly global society that is infiltrating

even the most remote corners of our mountains. The first class has already begun, and we expect that the revenue from extra –curricular classes and lab use by our students and the community will make the tech program self-supporting.

More good news is that once again we are indebted to Cup for Education (<http://www.cupforeducation.org/>) for sponsoring one of our teachers for 2013. This will be their third year of support, but this year they also threw in a motorcycle! We have been plagued by breakdowns because our 4 teachers must rely on 2 motorcycles, both old, and one of them with one wheel in the grave. Breakdowns mean trying to hitch a ride on isolated back-country roads, and arriving late to a group of students who have left before dawn to arrive on time to their class. So we are ecstatic about a brand new motorcycle.

We've also made some progress on our social enterprise: building 2 huge greenhouses to commercially produce tomatoes and strawberries. Thanks to the help of a local politician—the only way to get things done in Honduras—we were able to get a written agreement with the Secretary of Agriculture for the use of a manzana of land (about a city block) near our study center. It guarantees that we will have the land for a minimum of 10 years, no matter which political party is in power. Our greenhouses are good for about 10 years, and it's possible we could negotiate more time when the agreement expires. We're also waiting for an answer from USAID about buying our construction materials. They have initiated another agricultural project in our area, providing local farmers' groups with materials to build greenhouses, and they are considering including us as one of their groups. We've also presented our project to a Honduran Rotary Club in a neighboring department. They're very excited about it and want to support us. Now we need to engage a Rotary district in the US in order to qualify for matching funds from Rotary International. So funding possibilities exist. It all just takes time—and patience.

Our biggest accomplishment of all we celebrated right before I came home for the holidays: graduation 2012! As usual



Our high school graduates

we had a crowd that overflowed our salon, as friends and family came to honor the 9th grade and high school graduates. Each year we see more and more of our past graduates arrive to congratulate their sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, which affirms the value of our program while it also demonstrates the continued failure of the public school system to adequately serve the rural indigenous population. Logic tells us that the need for our program should slowly be diminishing as public school coverage increases. Instead, our registration is stronger than ever. What is slowly diminishing is the number of students able to complete our program. In past years, about ¼ of our 7th

graders dropped out. This past year, nearly half of the 7th graders dropped out or need to repeat. Our complaints about the public schools were confirmed when Plan International conducted a survey of 9th grade public school students and found the average math and Spanish abilities to be 3rd grade level. So while we're struggling to bring our students up to grade level, the public schools continue passing students with ever decreasing academic performance. The government has passed yet another law "reforming" the national curriculum. But the basic problem is that the public school teachers are either unwilling or unable to comply with the existing curriculum, so we can't expect any real changes in the quality



Laura and her family--her dad and brother are also recent graduates

of public education any time soon.

This does mean, however, that the institute we work with will be revising their materials, and we're hoping to have some input into the content. Better quality materials from the institute means we can reduce the number we design ourselves, and save the costs of photocopying for 450 students. Meanwhile, we'll keep doing what we're doing, providing the tools that will allow our students to visualize—and realize—a better future for their families and their communities. After all, isn't that what education should do?

As always, we are indebted to all of you, our friends and supporters, for your interest and your encouragement.

We wish you a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Susan