



El Maestro en Casa, Inc.
ADULT OUTREACH EDUCATION
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Dear Friends and Generous Supporters,

As usual, the summer is flying by much too fast. And as usual, I'm already thinking about how much is waiting for me back in Honduras. No matter how much I enjoy my life in Vermont—and I truly do enjoy it—I can't seem to completely separate myself from all that still needs to be done.

However, I have decided to spend less time in Honduras, so I most likely spent my last Good Friday in La Esperanza this past April. Like all of Latin America, Honduras is rich in Catholic rituals, but Good Friday is the most elaborate—far more than even Easter Sunday. An enormous procession of town people and villagers, led by local priests, reenacts the 14 Stations of the Cross, from condemning Jesus to death to placing him in his tomb. At each station, the priests relate the history then make political comparisons to present day, usually bashing the current government. The stations are designed and decorated by various local groups and include elaborate rugs of colored sawdust that are eventually walked on by the bearers of the statue of Jesus. For this one day, the entire country comes to an abrupt halt and a sense of real community descends. It's very inspiring. But unfortunately it doesn't last past Sunday.



Good Friday procession

Although we'll be winding up the school year by the time I go back, we implemented some changes right before I left that our teachers have been trying out and perfecting. Our Canadian angel, Wendy Elliott, researched and designed a program to improve the psychological well-being of our students, which in turn will allow them to get more from their education. Our drop-out rate had begun to increase suddenly, and since we can't change the contributing factors, such as the deteriorating public education system and the worsening economy, Wendy showed us how we might be able to change our students. Since classes had already begun when we received the program, there wasn't time to implement all the activities, but next year you can bet that we'll use it from day one. Curiously, when I got home to Vermont, I discovered that a very similar program is now in all our local schools, with terrific results. We are so on the cutting edge!!

Wendy also designed new English materials for our 8th grade, which we did try out this year. The materials include a text book, student work book and teacher's guide, complete with graphics. They are truly beautiful



Sawdust rugs which end at the steps of the Gruta, where Christ is entombed.

were installing our lab, a nearby private university was robbed of all their computers so we were understandably nervous. The lab has not just benefitted our students. Our teachers have learned more than I will ever know about computers, and are constantly updating their classes with information from the internet. School has become so much more interesting, for students and teachers alike.

If all that weren't enough to keep four teachers very busy, we also began the construction of the greenhouses. USAID came through with the materials, so even though we still don't have the funding for the plant materials, irrigation system or salaries for the foreman and laborer, we had to begin building. So far one of the giant greenhouses is almost completed, and the second one will be started soon. Now it's time to get really creative with our fund raising. I just received some very generous donations from a friend and our local Congregational Church, so that's a start. Hopefully the teachers have some ideas.

And here's the absolute latest news. Cup for Education (<http://www.cupforeducation.org/>), which annually sponsors one of our teachers, turned me on to a new non-profit, Teacher2Teacher-International, which provides professional development to schools in underdeveloped areas (and La Esperanza definitely

materials—we are so lucky! When I get back, my teachers and I will analyze the materials, make any necessary adjustments, and Wendy will start on the 7th and 9th grades, and eventually the high school grades.

Meanwhile, our 4 teachers are rapidly improving their own English. They've been studying on their own for some time, but when Kristen Trenholm, a volunteer from Canada, arrived, she was able to give them almost daily English conversation classes, in addition to teaching our high school English classes. When she left, a retired doctor, John Tucher, arrived in La Esperanza and John soon took up where Kristen left off. Deb Kritchels, an ex-Peace Corps volunteer who worked with us years ago, also filled in a few days. It's really important that our teachers improve their English, to make them better English teachers but also to be able to help visitors and volunteers who don't speak much Spanish.

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, we were finally able to set up our computer lab. We had to make a few adjustments first, like rewiring the lab to support 13 computers, and put bars on the windows and build a metal gate for the door for better security. Just as we



Construction of first greenhouse

qualifies!) by partnering classroom teachers with experienced teachers and coaches from the US. I just spoke with the president and it looks like they'll be paying us a visit soon! This is very exciting to us, especially since they emphasize mathematics, precisely the area that gives us the most problems. Just consulting with experienced, successful educators will be awesome.

And there's more. Visual Learning Systems (<http://www.visuallearningsys.com/>), a producer of educational science videos right here in my home town of Brandon, has just donated all the middle school videos that they have translated to Spanish! This is an incredible help to our program, not just because our science materials are scant and outdated, but our classes are 2 hours, so an occasional 20-minute video will add a ton of interest for the students. We are indebted to Brian and Stephanie Jerome for this very generous donation.

Once again, our heartfelt thanks to all of you for your continual interest and support.

Susan