

MRS FLOWERS' EXCELLENT ADVENTURE # 11 MARCH, 2010

Last October, Mrs. Flowers arrived back to her adopted country of Honduras....a country which if you listened to the international press was the victim of a “military coup” condemned by the entire world! But wait a minute, there WAS no “military coup” ...just the ousting of a corrupt president (who if he had been left to his own devices planned to enact a law the very next day which would have given him unlimited time in office...not to mention a few other percs). The man who took over until the planned legal elections in November was the Vice President who never had any intention of staying in power. So every day activities went on as per normal with few exceptions....the main one being that teachers didn't show up most days at the schools and the students had a spotty four months of classes. But in true Honduran fashion....everyone passed anyhow!! Unfortunately, this left the children way behind in their studies and they are scrambling to play “catch up” this year. The elections went off without a hitch and life went on.

In El Porvenir, Casa Fowler has acquired some new residents. It seems that the local bat citizens are enjoying the accommodations of Mrs. Flowers' attic. In spite of Joaquim (the watchman) and Iris' solutions of stringing attic lights (to be turned on during the day when bats sleep) plus MANY strings of garlic cloves....the bats party on! Walter Bush (my original builder) has promised to come before I leave to solve the problem by screening over the attic vents. The question is....what about the bats that are already inside? I don't want to know!

And for those of you who have enjoyed the early morning window tapping of our local birds, you will be pleased to know that a pair of red headed woodpeckers have joined the team! Mrs. Flowers prays that since she is not here during the summer to swear and scream at them (which “sometimes” makes them cease their drilling....depending on their mood_)...she will not return in October to find the giant mirrored window in the hallway shattered and the bats now residing in her house along with a variety of other critters. But enough about the wildlife, here is a recap of this year's activities.

THE HEALTHY LIVING EDUCATION PROGRAM

We now have six core schools (averaging 750 students each, Gr 1-6) on a staggered program which has been streamlined to a four year rotating cycle

- Year 1 2 schools receive “Visiting the Dentist”, fluoride, tooth brushes, HIV education, eye acuity testing
- Year 2 Those same two schools receive “Picnic in the Park, an environmental program, eye acuity testing
- Year 3 These schools receive a review of all the programs
- Year 4 Start the cycle over

A list has been kept of the children requiring glasses or further eye treatment and they are going to the clinic in Progreso the first week in May. There are also a few “smaller” schools/orphanages that we fit in.

This year during March break, we had “Team Rombough” (Pastor Michael Kooiman, sisters Elaine Kyne and Linda Brown, Taye Madison and teens from the Youth Group: Emily Putnam, Randy Agyeman, Katy Osther, Leanna Brown... from Central United Church in Weston, Ontario plus a return visitor(2008) teen, Holland Philpott). The team is named after John Rombough who died a few years ago and who had spent “many” years travelling to Honduras with Dr Jim Rodgerson’s medical teams. The group did a FABULOUS job performing Visiting the Dentist and the HIV skits, administering blue rinse , showing the kids how to brush/distributing toothbrushes and the ever popular “who can spit the furthest” contest following the fluoride “swish”! The team did however have their challenges with our unpredictable Honduran weather which sent torrents of rain to flood the schoolyard and necessitating “building a bridge” to get the little ones into the library.... (the pictures attached will bring back memories for Mary, Carol, Chris and Cristina who were here during a similar rain storm a few years ago)

For the first time, we did a small dental presentation for Charlie and Amalia’s little pre school children right here in Mrs. Flowers’ living room... picture is attached. The team also participated in an environmental day with the students of our local high school....doing a trash cleanup. But it wasn’t all work...they swam, went zip lining and horseback riding. Michael is an accomplished photographer, who if he ever decides to give up the ministry could clearly make a living on his talent..... and Elaine is going to take over the Honduran government and show this country “how it should

be done”. I have suggested that I would PAY HER to come and live here in Casa Fowler to run the programs so that Mrs. Flowers could sit back, spend her days in Joaquim’s hammock drinking Port Royals..... but I don’t think Elaine’s family will allow her to do this even though it would CLEARLY benefit the country!! They are SO selfish!!!!

And it is rumored that Taye is planning to become the leader of a local biker gang down here.....enough said!!!

PHASE TWO HEALTHY LIVING , THE DENTAL PROGRAM

Team Crazy Cannucks returned for a second year led by dentist Dr Bill Kerr /Lisa Stoughten and their fearless team.....Bernt Fibigger (2nd year), two new hygienists...Cathleen Johnson and Stacey Armitage and Bill’s son JJ.

Two hundred and seventy three Grades 4,5,6 El Porvenir students had their teeth cleaned(each patient had their own IPod attached to them with “their choice” of music!!!). This year we had recruited seniors at the local high school to conduct “charlas” on dental health and the environment for the children waiting for their cleaning. Students from Mazapan bilingual school once again did a great job of providing translation services for the hygienists and helping with sterilization of instruments etc.

This year, the 23 children from David Ashby’s orphanage also had their teeth cleaned. Dr Bill and his “personal team” (Bernt, JJ and Iris) were again welcomed at Clinic Salud Total where they worked on the most urgent cases referred by the hygienists and performed root canals, fillings etc. This year Dra Olga, the dentist from Centro de Salud in El Porvenir also worked with Bill went she was “off duty”. I wish I had a picture to show you of the record number of people squashed into Mrs. Flowers ancient Nissan (Mrs F was the designated driver back and forth from the clinic) on one of our late return runs to El Porvenir....13 people!!!! This brings me to the next project.

NEW DENTAL CLINIC IN CENTRO DE SALUD, EL PORVENIR

As I have mentioned before, the clinic in this government health centre has NO equipment and all the dentist can do is extractions. This year I am pleased to say that I located a donation of two complete dental setups from

the States. The equipment has now been loaded and ready to come to Honduras from Wisconsin via overland freight/ship etc. Karl Rallen has worked non stop for months trying to “make this happen” and we are grateful to him for his work and appreciate the frustrations that he had to endure! In true Honduran fashion.....it WILL get here but just not in the time frame we had all hoped for. I am imagining that it will get here before I leave but I think that is only “in my dreams”!!! Once the equipment is installed, El Porvenir will have a modern dental clinic able to provide complete dental service for the community. Dra Olga is an excellent dentist who is anxious to assist in our programs. And, next year Team Cannuck will not have to make the commute up to Salud Total! Having a local facility will also enable me to recruit other dental teams to come and help out with the school program

HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY

The February grand opening ceremony had much fanfare and many speeches! As you know, former Peace Corp volunteer Johnice Moore and I started this project more than two years ago, and we faced our share of “challenges”. But with the financial “rescue” of Dr Dean Harms, his Rotary friends and members of the Ames Iowa community, the dream became a reality. Local businessman and high school teacher Oscar Funez assisted by current Peace Corp volunteer Jessica Dillworth, did the work of obtaining all the furnishings, books, computers etc needed to complete the project. Now not only the high school students but the community at large, are enjoying their new library (the elementary school library which we built two years ago is only open to their students).

THE UNIFORM PROGRAM

Continues to be a success and this year we provided 24 new uniforms (largely funded by profits from the Bee Bag program), notebooks, pencils/pens (provided by Team Rombough) and back packs (donated by Jane Mangat).

EYE SCREENING TEAM AT STANDARD FRUIT COMPANY

Every year since I moved to El Porvenir, we have been able to hold an eye screening clinic (and blood pressure check provided by Dr David Black) for the field workers and plant packers. This year’s group, headed by lawyer

David Pruessner of Dallas, Texas, was a highly organized event. These folks, who are not ophthalmologists or optometrists, have taken sufficient training to permit them to do a basic screening, recognize common eye problems (who are then referred to the clinic) AND they came with SO MUCH equipment that allowed them to fit almost all prescriptions!!

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

The Bee Bag program has turned into a lucrative cottage industry (sold over 250) and the orders keep coming! The quality of work and art design have improved 500%!!! Most orders are now customized by the customer and can include many animals both domestic and wild. There are several benefits to this project....

- . for two Honduran women, the provision of an income
- . an environmental message is being spread
- . profits provide a portion of the funding for our school uniform program.

A newly created project this year was inspired by one of Mrs. Flowers' hats!! A pattern was made by a local sewing school run by INFOP, a government organization who provide a variety of free training programs. My son and his wife provided some seed money to get the "hat business" started and several women in the school are learning to make a Mrs. Flowers hat. Our goal is that these women can go on to create a business as successful as the Bee Bag program.

THE ESL SCHOOL PROGRAM

I consider this my greatest accomplishment this year. For the past four years, I have struggled to find a way to get English into the elementary school here in Porvenir. My goal: to give the children a chance to obtain more job opportunities after they finish school. I have hired Iris as a fulltime teacher and director of the program. American Eve Horowitz has a foundation which supplies long term (2-4 months) volunteers to work in Honduras. She has set up a schedule of ESL volunteers from Canada, Britain, Spain and the US who will come to assist Iris in the project. This year's program will be voluntary and held during "opposite hours" from when the children attend regular classes. Here in Honduras they attend school in two groupsmorning and afternoon. As I mentioned previously, the students are behind in their studies due to last summer's political situation. Therefore it

was felt that adding “another” subject as part of the compulsory curriculum would be unwise.

However we, and the teachers, hope that next year English can be made part of the regular school program. Forty minute classes will be held in the library that we built two years ago and will be offered to Grades 2 through 6. We anticipate a participation rate of 50% with a further falloff of 25%. This would make the classes “manageable” with about 250 participants plus any of the teachers who want to attend!!!! (regular class numbers average 45 students each). The curriculum is based on the well known program Side By side and the cost of photocopying the “workbooks” for the program is \$4.00 per student. Iris is an excellent teacher with a university degree, five years experience in teaching private English classes and if anyone can make this program a success....she can! I know that those of you who know her wish her every success.

That pretty much sums up what we did this year. Plans underway for the future include:

- expansion of the HIV education program to include discussion groups among the kids
- introduction of a self esteem program in the elementary schools
- expanding Phase 2 of the H/L dental program to include more dentists

I think there is more but can't remember it right now and I am getting writer's cramp and blurry vision! This week all businesses and schools shut down for Semana Santa (Easter week) and I am entertaining Melvin (director of the clinic in El Progreso) who is my “adopted son”, his family and friends for their annual Easter week vacation at Casa Fowler. Lorena (the kitchen Nazi and I say that with great affection) has as usual taken over all kitchen duties, cooking etc and given me time to rest and catch up on the things I have to do before leaving. And Melvin is now attempting to repair the wonky dining room chair that almost killed a couple of you!!! The music from the beach has not yet reached ear shattering levels but the little stands/booths/food huts that have been set up are stealing electricity and we are operating on half power. The hordes of people will arrive as the week progresses

I'll be heading back to Toronto April 22 and look forward to spending some time with friends and family during my six month stay and getting in some golf.

Happy Easter to you all
Anne Fowler
<http://anne.honduranhope.net>
(this is my new web site)

Many thanks to the following for their donations and help in making our programs possible

St. Pauls Anglican Church, Bloor Street, Toronto

St. Georges Anglican Church, Haliburton

Rotary Club, Haliburton

Carol Mayer, Le Moyne, PA

Karl Rallen

Dr. Dean Harms

Rotary Club, Ames, Iowa

Team Rombough and Central United Church in Weston

Team Crazy Cannucks

Mazipan Bilingual School

Merphran Irias, Clinica Salud Total

Dr. David Black

Jane Mangat

Cristina and Chris Fowler

Maxill Toothbrushes