

The Mission CONNECTION

Newsletter of the Capuchin Overseas Missions Association

Summer 2008

Fox Valley Mission Group Dedicates New Mission Building



“The ten disciples of Padre Glenn: Bottom row –Lori McCarthy, Dennis Halbach, Paula Loepfe, Bob Kalota, Paul Russo and Kay Small. Top row –Ron Siebers, Pat Ryan, Gary Wolf, Fr. Glenn’s handyman Chiano, and Stephanie McCarthy.”

January 27th was a day of celebration in the remote village of Ayote, Nicaragua. Ten members of the group had worked to complete the clinic which was begun the previous year. The Schmidt Family Foundation funded the building.

Before Mass, the dedication plaque was installed without the knowledge of Padre Glenn Gessner, the Capuchin pastor who has served the community for many years. After Mass, the padre pulled the string to reveal the plaque dedicating the building to him.

Gary Wolf, who headed the project, notes: “I wasn’t sure what kind of reaction he would have because he is so modest. But he did seem very much overjoyed.”



In addition to the clinic, the group started building a new laundry facility for the medical building that will be equipped with donated washers. They also erected facilities for a generator and engaged in many other small projects.



“The people rejoice with Padre Glenn since they now have medical facilities.”



The Fox Valley Mission Group, Inc (FVMG) began in the early 1990's when a small group of men volunteered to help a Capuchin missionary priest friend with a building project in rural Nicaragua. Through

the years, news of the group's work spread and so did the number of its projects and mission lands.

In addition to the ten volunteers who worked at Ayote, nine men and five women went to Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. This is the city on the Atlantic coast that suffered the direct hit of Hurricane Felix last summer. Its winds of over 160 mile an hour caused not only



Marlene and Gerry laying tile

heavy physical damage, but also took the lives of about three hundred people in the region.

Capuchin Bishop David Zywiec met them and the Carmelite sisters provided meals and accommodations. During the school year, the nuns house and care for over seventy children. The

FVMG made friends with many of the children and give them backpacks and school supplies. There were many tears from the volunteers and the children at departure time.

The project chosen was to repair an old three story Agnesian convent. Bishop David selected this site



Carl, Marv and Mike pouring concrete countertop to foil the termites

since he wished to use the building as his headquarters for disaster relief. It had lost its roof in the hurricane and suffered much water damage. Between the date they left USA, January 19th and returned, February 2nd, the workers repaired some damaged concrete columns, got the plumbing working, installed new light fixtures, removed the



Ivette, Marlene, Mary, Jenny and Gerry taking a break



Former Agnesian convent after it is restored as the hurricane relief center

old vinyl floor tile and installed 2,000 square feet of ceramic tile.

Some of the members refinished the doors, made new screens, repaired cabinets and formed and poured new kitchen counters. Not all the work was completed when it came time to leave, but much of the building was made ready for directing further relief efforts.

The volunteers found the work physically challenging, but emotionally and spiritually fulfilling. They indeed exemplified their motto, "To be the greatest, be a servant."

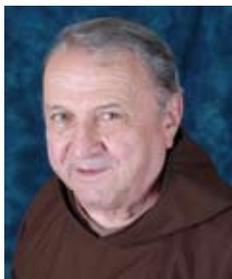
FVMG That Labored in Puerta Cabezas



Bottom row – Carl Boucher, Marlene Boucher, Geraldine Frank, Jenny Schaumberg. Middle row – Marv Vosters, Dave Arnoldussen, Del Schwaller, Dan O’Neill. Top row – Mike Cook, Brother Isidore, Denny Arnoldussen, Ivette Babuca, Dan Danforth. Missing – Bob Haasl and Mary Arnoldussen

The BAER FACTS

This issue of THE MISSION CONNECTION is dedicated to you, the men and women who have helped our Capuchin missionaries these past seventy years. We realize that our mission ministry would be impossible without your prayers, sacrifices and financial assistance. You are indeed our co-missionary partners.



Fr. Campion Baer

In these pages you will find the stories of other people who have had the experience of spending some time assisting in our mission ministry. They are all volunteers who made the sacrifice of financing their trip and donating their time and talents to serve their sisters and brothers in the overseas missions. It is because of their zeal that great things are happening. Their labors enable us to utilize your monetary donations to the fullest extent. The combined effort of the Capuchin friars, the volunteer mission workers and you, our faithful benefactors, allow us to spread the good news of Christ to others.

Ripon Town and Gown on Mission Trip to its Sister City



The Sisters house becomes a reality

Peter Kasuboski, the younger sibling of Fr. Wally Kasuboski, had traveled numerous times to help his brother in the rural Panamanian villages of Wacuco and Torti. He didn't know exactly what to expect on this year's ten day trip from Ripon, Wisconsin. The March visit included a couple of firsts: the largest group ever to visit (22) which included the first group of Ripon College students (10) and two advisors. Alderman Bill Boesch of Ripon who was making his third trip had a little apprehension with the inclusion of the college students. But Ian Stepleton who covered the event for the Ripon Commonwealth quoted him at the end of the experience: "I am happy with the production of everyone, those were some great projects." The Alderman also presented Fr. Wally with the proclamation passed by Ripon's Common Council declaring Wacuco a sister city.



"College didn't prepare us for this"

In the course of seven work days, the diverse group completed multiple projects. When the group left U.S.A, they thought they would be building a dam to improve the water system in the Wacuco/Torti region.

Instead, Fr. Wally (or Padre Pablo as he is known there) announced several immediate pressing needs. The most significant was the future home of local nuns. The house was a shell cement box when the volunteers arrived. When they left, it had a second floor and a roof. In addition both water and sewer lines were dug and installed, electricity was hooked up, doors were hung and it was cleaned and painted. The new convent will open the opportunity for local women to join the religious community to serve their people.

Another project included work on a road that gets washed away each rainy season. The college students formed an assembly line of collecting and passing rocks to create culverts to control the river's flow. Older members mixed the cement. The temperature was close to one hundred degrees. Although during every break, the workers would stumble over to the water jugs, "the sweat came out as fast as you can drink it - literally."

One of the last days, the students poured a cement foundation for the family of Jose Gomez. His wife had cooked for them several times. Their wooden house was badly damaged by termites. To last, a house must be made of concrete. So the collegians, experts at trench digging after working at the nun's convent, dug and leveled the trenches, mixed the cement, and added it to the trenches that they had lined with rebar. They made it possible to start stacking the cinder blocks once it was dry.



Group performing native dances

Padre Pablo took the group to the site where the dam is planned. The dam would help provide water to people's homes during the dry season. Another day, the trip was to visit the Kuna and Choco Embera Indians. The former have been in this district for generations. The Emberas arrived in the 1970's and maintain many of their customs. They demonstrated traditional basket weaving and both the adults and children performed native dances, inviting their guests to participate.



Bottom row: George Infantado ('10); Molly Breitbach ('10); Kristine Jansen ('10); The Two Nuns; Kassondra Meyer ('10); Lindsey Keough ('10); Theresa Kedinger ('10). On the Floor: Vanessa Arboleda ('10). Middle row: Paul Ebben (Milwaukee); Bernadette Krenz (Berlin WI); Jessica Joanis (Ripon College Ass't Director of Residence Life); Fr. Wally Kasuboski; Katerina Youngberg ('10); Jessica Solverud ('10); Hanna Wendlake ('10). Top row: Brian Smith, Ripon College Professor; Rollie Alger (Phelps WI); Peter Kasuboski (Ripon); Denise Krenz (Berlin WI); Jack Powell (Gray's Lake IL); Tygh Walters ('09); Robin Wallengang (Green Lake WI); Kim Holliday (Ripon); Bill Boesch (Ripon).

Vanessa Arboleda



It has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have not ever been so involved with people outside my comfort zone and in a country that reminded me so much of where I came from (Ecuador).

Tygh Walters



First hand exposure to such a different culture was very rewarding. Surviving humbly and living close to nature was an experience that I think every young adult should have. While in Panama, I acquired a new sense of social and environmental responsibility. Within a situation where

amenities rarely come in surpluses, I was conscious of my once ignored wasteful actions.

Hannah WendLake



We were asked to dig a trench for the water line. It sounded pretty exciting. I had no idea how physically strenuous it would be to pick axe and shovel all day long. . . . To give running water to a home is an amazing accomplishment. I found that the Panamanians respected me for attempting to use their language. Leaving Wacuco, I believe I am a different person than when I arrived.

Kassondra Meyer



I'm just completely amazed by everything he's (Fr. Wally) done. He's built the economy, he's built roads, he's solved disputes between cities. I know I'm going to appreciate everything more. I know I want to keep helping people.

Jessica Solverud



Being deeply immersed in another culture is something that cannot be replicated in any other way than travel and combining an amazing travel experience with volunteering is just icing on the cake. I feel so privileged to have been granted this opportunity.

Reverse Mission to La Estrella

Using Google is no help to find your way to this small community in Nicaragua. The twenty missionary volunteers from Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota reached it only after an hour and a half horse ride beyond the last road vehicles could travel. No luxury accommodations greeted them. They slept in hammocks or wooden benches. The community has no running water, so it was necessary to go down to the brook to bathe, to obtain drinking water and do laundry.

Why would these people from 18 to 73 engage in such an activity? Their occupational fields included medicine, construction, law enforcement, agriculture, business and students. Some were seasoned veterans while others were novices. Their purpose was to help the veteran Capuchin Fr. Ted Niehaus in one of his many mission stations. Together with native community members the group worked to rebuild and roof their church. In addition they provided space for a sacristy, storage shed and a sleeping place for Fr. Ted. The old church was filled with termites.

The volunteers also ran a clinic. Although time and supplies were limited, people walked for hours to



Third World operating room in La Estrella



All members wear shirts dedicated to the memory of Sister Agnes "Aggie" Soenneker. She started the Reverse Mission project nine years ago and passed away December 2007

be seen. Dr. Ron Brown cared for 340 people in three days. Almost all were treated for malaria or termites. Many needed vision correction but only a limited number of glasses were available. Others worked with the women and also ran a "daycare" for the children.

The work culminated in the dedication of the newly remodeled church. Fr. Ted celebrated 9 baptisms, 16 1st communions, 12 confirmations and 1 wedding.

A special Mariachi band performed during and after the ceremonies.

Next year the group hopes to visit another isolated community that Fr. Ted serves. It is called "Doris" and can be reached only by a two hour trip in dugout canoes. The trip roster is full with a waiting list.



Kari with new friend

Kari Zenzen has made 2 trips.

This college graduate now serves as an Armed Corrections Officer and is working on her Spanish degree so she can translate on future trips. She observed: "Even greater than all the things that we did, were the Connections we made. The community of La Estrella accepted us as family, as their brothers and sisters in



Father Ted preparing for dedication Mass

Christ. . . We saw that the people of Nicaragua are the same in Christ as we are. We learned that God truly has one universal church and that in the end, that impact on our group was truly why it is called "A Reverse Mission."

The Second Time Around



Doctor Millert uses number chart instead of letters many people are illiterate

Dr. James Miller, an optometrist from Washington MI lives within walking distance of the Capuchin Retreat Center, where his friend Patrick Forton, a former missionary in Nicaragua, now resides. They joined



Main street scene

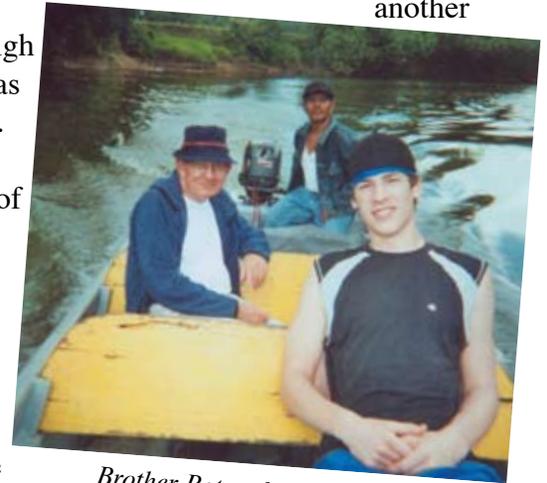
forces two years ago to visit Pat's former mission field aptly called "The Rivers of Bluefields." The parish is composed of fifty-five communities spread over 3,500 miles, each with its own chapel.

Again this February, the two of them spent ten days to help the natives with their eye problems. They set up their headquarters in a new mission chapel in San Francisco, which has about five hundred inhabitants. The chapel serves as the main gathering place for various parish activities. Many people came for miles to have an examination and to receive glasses furnished by Dr. Miller.

The primary means of transportation (and the only way in the six month rainy season) is by boat. The trip to San Francisco required a four hour ride on the Cukra River.

An older son of Dr. Miller, Alex, accompanied the two on their first trip. The college student found it to be an enriching third world cross cultural experience. This time, another

son Andrew, a high school junior, was their companion. The friendliness and the poverty of the natives impressed him and he marveled at the size of the cockroaches! What impressed the people of the Rivers of the Bluefields parish was that their beloved Capuchin who had ministered to them for so many years had not forgotten them and had brought the "eye doctor" back again.



Brother Pat and Andrew Miller

Dear Father Champion,

I have enclosed \$ _____ in the envelope provided in this newsletter to further the Capuchin Overseas Missions to serve the poor and needy. My name and address are on the reverse side of this mail-in response.

I prefer to charge my gift to my credit card: Visa Mastercard Am Express Discover

The prayers of the entire Capuchin Order are joined with yours as we pray for your special intentions.

Schlaefer Mission Continues



Seated - Dr. Charles Weber Middle row: Sr. Rose, Sr. Cecilia Schlaefer, Dr. Ann Schlaefer, Randy Aiello, Matt Wright. Top row: Joanne Silbernagel, Dr. David Wright, Jim Putzer, Carol Schlaefer Putzer.

Bishop Salvador Schlaefer loved his Mesquito Indians. As a Capuchin missionary, he learned their language and customs. For twenty-three years, he was the head of the Bluefields Vicariate in Nicaragua. Two years after the bishop's death in 1993, his brother Dr. Tony Schlaefer visited his gravesite. In addition, the doctor employed his optometry skills by attending to the eye needs of many natives.

The Schlaefer mission ministry has continued. It is now led by Dr. Tony's daughter Dr. Ann and her husband Dr. David Wright. Others who have made several trips include Ann's sister Carol and her husband Jim Putzer. This February, the above along with other volunteers chose the Indian village of Waspam

as their headquarters. For the second time, a dentist who is Ann's uncle, Charles Weber, taught basic dentistry prevention while delivering tooth paste and brushes.



Doctors David and Ann with patient

Sr. Cecilia, the blood sister of Dr. Tony and Bishop Sal, has made every journey and teaches music.

Each had a role to fulfill. Joanne collected history information and did pre-testing with Matt, Ann and David's son. Randy worked with Carol and Jim dispensing and fitting glasses. Dr. Tony continued his mission effort by examining and labeling each prescription pair. Approximately 400 patients were examined, 275



donated prescription glasses were dispensed. Another 101 pair of glasses were ordered and later sent down to Nicaragua. An additional 2,000 pair of glasses were left for distribution at the clinic and at other communities up and down the Rio Coco River. One young man had a severe puncture wound to one eye. The group paid his air fare to Managua for treatment.

Capuchin Mission Association
1820 Mt. Elliott Street
Detroit, MI 48207-3485

FOX VALLEY MISSION
GROUP

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