

A Chill in the Hills; Mission Projects Warming Up

13.06.13

Greetings! Sorry for the longish interval between the last newsletter and this one. We've been busy, sick, and battling the elements. And in recent weeks, we've also welcomed two long-term volunteers and one short-termer (more details below).

In the past three weeks a local cold-like flu sent about half the population of Copacabana, including both of us, to bed for three to five days. A local water shortage forces us to devote about 45 minutes of each morning to catching water while it's available; grass and dirt in the daily allowance indicate it's no longer potable, so we give extra time to purifying our drinking water. The constant stream of debris in our shower head rendered it useless about five weeks ago. Normally a 220-volt heating element in the shower head warms the water, but when the holes plug up, the effect is a scalding, high-pressure steam bath. The



last time I tried to shower at home – in the first week of May – the shower head glowed red. Since then we get by with splash baths, bucket baths, and an occasional “real” shower at our landlord’s hostel across the street, or the John Wesley Guest House when we’re in La Paz.

Somewhat ironically, in the past week we've had a lot of freezing rain and more flooding in town and our house. With the onset of winter here, the mountains around Copa are glazed with ice. Inside our unheated house, it's about 35 degrees at night. As I write, the lambs next door have clots of ice stuck in their wool.

Mission Projects

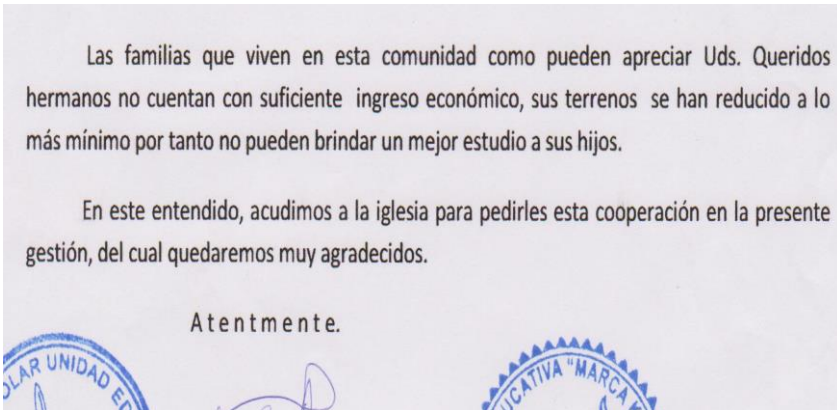
Mision Fronteras is investing in more service and sustainable aid projects than ever. At the same time, as we get more efficient and the local folks become more self-sufficient, the cost per *afectado* (a person the mission aims to help) in all our projects is decreasing.



Here's an update on our current projects, followed by two tables outlining funds needed to support local requests and proposals for 2013 projects. Please consider making at least a small donation – just \$30 will buy school supplies for every student in a small, rural school.

School Supplies & Toothbrushes

This year 11 rural schools and one high school submitted requests to the mission seeking basic school supplies, dental hygiene demonstrations, toothbrushes and tooth paste for their students, most of who are from poor families. In their requests, several directors noted that many families cannot provide school materials. In such cases families often simply withdraw their children (schooling isn't mandatory in Bolivia). We figure \$3 worth of school materials is a good investment if it means the difference between a kid getting a basic education vs. not. Similarly, we think 75 cents per student for a toothbrush, tooth paste, and instructions on how and why to use them is mission money well spent.



Children here, especially in rural areas, have an abundance of brown, gray, or black, rotting teeth thanks to excessive sweets, soft drinks (which are cheaper and more accessible than water), and a chronic failure to brush.



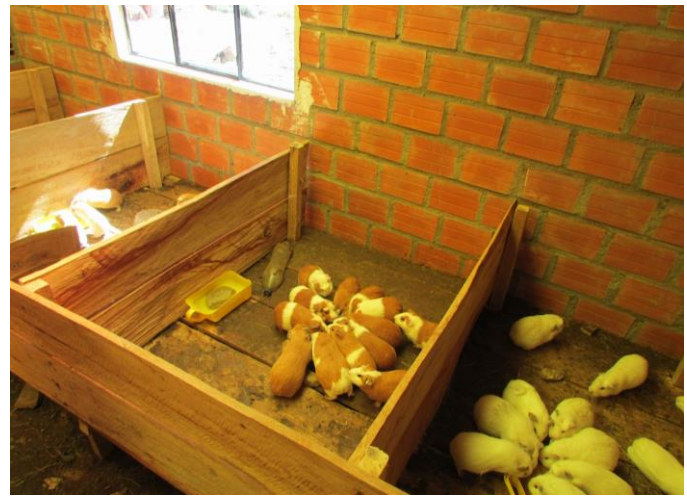
Hearing Aids & Bifocals

Our late March newsletter (“*Open Eyes, Open Ears, Open Minds*”) noted that older folks in a small rural village sent us a hard-to-meet request for hearing aids and bifocals. We’ve learned that if many people have a common need and the mission helps only a few, it’s a bad move. So even though the official request is for fewer than 10 pairs of hearing aids and bifocals, we’re trying to secure several hundred for the region’s senior citizens. Friends and newsletter readers have jumped into action. Working with Lion’s International, they’re arranging to ship used hearing aids and bifocals -- we’ll match them to recipients by trial, error and luck!



Cuys, Quinoa & Chickens

Last week the mission bought 40 breeder cuys (35 female and 5 male guinea pigs) to stock a cuy house just a two-minute walk from our home. The mission also bought the optimum food mix to promote growth and flavor. Fried cuys are wildly popular in Peruvian tourist restaurants, where they fetch \$15 to \$25 per plate. The plan, hatched by church leaders, is to keep a third of the progeny for breeding and sell the rest. Proceeds will be divided. Some will be re-invested in more cuy chow, the rest will help sustain the regional churches and the social services programs they provide.



Day One for the Cuy Project was an upper: Two babies were born overnight! Day five was a downer: A testy, pregnant cuy attacked and killed four other young adult cuys. Lesson learned: separate aggressive cuys from the others!

Church leaders also proposed family-based chicken and quinoa projects. Like all the mission’s sustainable, income-producing projects, local folks have to come up with at least 20 percent buy-in -- donated labor, building materials, or cash -- as well as a business plan describing how the enterprise will work, who will be responsible for essential tasks, and how income will be distributed.



The quinoa project will provide enough seed and fertilizer for each family in the local churches to plant a 9-square-meter plot, with an estimated yield of 15 kilograms. Families will be required to sell a third of their crop so they can buy more seed and fertilizer, and give a small portion to help support local church-based social service programs – the only kind available. The rest of the crop may be consumed or sold as the family wishes.

The quinoa project is one of our favorites because quinoa thrives here. It is rich in protein, which is normally hard to get and expensive, and iron, which is essential in red-blood-cell production. At high elevation a body must compensate for oxygen shortage (60 percent less than in most of the U.S.) by developing more oxygen-carrying red blood cells.

In the chicken project, families will receive five pullets (female chickens nearly at egg-laying age) and five months' worth of chicken feed formulated for egg production. In return recipient families must pledge to care for the hens (not eat them!), and tithe 10 percent of their eggs each week to their local church. The churches can then sell the collected eggs for 1 Boliviano each, about 15 cents. A church that sells 100 eggs per week will gain about \$60 per month – a hefty boon by local standards – to support their social service programs. Local leaders deemed a family-based initiative more appropriate than a single,



central location due to hard-to-navigate rural roads. Start-up costs for this project have been fully funded by Grace United Methodist Church of Dixon, IL.

Teach the Teachers Program

Katie Yaun, designer and director of the mission's new Teach the Teachers English Language Program, has been sculpting strategies, teaching kits, and lesson plans. We met with the regional education director, who was quite enthused and supportive. Alas, virtually all of Bolivia's teachers went on strike a month ago, protesting the government's threat to halve their pensions. About half of Bolivia's teachers marched in protest in La Paz. Schools re-opened a few days later, but until an agreement is reached, the education director is indisposed, and the T-t-T program can't yet launch. In the meantime, Katie is teaching two, eagerly attended, six-week English classes, one for children and another for teens and adults in the tourist industry.



Casey Conger & Claire Ault

Casey Conger, who we know through our home church, First United Methodist Church of Downers Grove, headed for Colombia May 22 after spending 11 days with us. She's wending her way stateside after serving two years in Paraguay with the Peace Corps. Here in Copa, Casey did a fabulous job teaching dental hygiene to school children. The mission provided toothbrushes and tooth paste to students in three rural schools where Casey taught. We hope to raise funds to do the same for students in at least nine other schools on the peninsula.



Just four days after we said goodbye to Casey, Jeff welcomed Claire Ault at the La Paz airport. Claire, another young volunteer from our home church, is a senior at the University of Wisconsin studying renewable resources and minoring in Spanish. She will work with the mission's cuy and green house projects until early August.



Update on Cathedral Scandal

Local and national police claim they're making headway in the theft of the gold, silver and jewels that used to adorn Copa's patron saint, the Dark Virgin of the Lake. But they say they can't risk divulging any information. Police continue to detain two priests, a sacristan, a police officer, a porter, and a lay person, whose stories conflict; in Bolivia, detainees can be held indefinitely without being charged.

People all over the peninsula are outraged by the loss, estimated at \$2 million to \$20 million, the failure to apprehend the culprits, and the lackadaisical approach to the investigation -- it was eight days before police dusted for fingerprints, and two weeks before they interviewed residents. The national news service taped a Copa leader complaining that if the theft had been in a big city, police and the government would have snapped to action; "but since it happened in little Copacabana, no one cares."

Junta

The regional Bolivian Methodist churches get together once a year for a *junta*, a big planning and assessment meeting, that culminates with a three-hour worship service, followed by lots of dancing and an enormous celebration lunch. The tent, dappled with sun-gushing holes and rents, was made in Valdosta, Georgia, more than 100 years ago. It was brought from the U.S. to Bolivia by the first United Methodist missionaries to serve here.



Overview of Current and Near-Future Mission Projects and Funds Needed

We welcome your questions and comments, and we very much appreciate your interest and feedback. Below are tables with cost estimates for current and near-future projects. Please consider making a donation to support any of the specified needs, or a general donation. To make an online donation, please go to <http://www.umcmission.org/Give-to-Mission/Search-for-Projects/Projects/3021288> and follow the prompts. We and the indigenous Andean people we work with and serve thank you heartily.

School	# of Students	\$ Needed for School Supplies	\$ Needed for Dental Class	\$ Needed for Green House	Total \$ Per School
Siripaca A	110	330	82.50	400	812.50
Siripaca B	50	150	37.50	400	587.50
Belen	12	36	9	0	45
Kollasuyo	12	36	9	400	445
Titicachi	28	84	21	0	105
Chañi	13	39	9.75	0	48.75
Marca Kosco	82	246	61.50	0	307.50
Alto San Pedro	12	36	9	400	445
Sampaya	8	24	6	0	30
Siquani	14	42	10.50	0	52.50
Villa Rosario de Chissi	130	390	97.50	400	887.50
Santa Ana	22	66	16.50	0	82.50
Grand Totals	493	1,479	369.75	2,000	3,848.75

Project	# Affected	Total \$ Needed	\$ Raised To Date	\$ Needed as of Today
Hearing Aides	20 - 50	\$25 for distribution	0	\$25
Glasses	20 - +1,000	\$50 for distribution	0	\$50
TtT/ESL	+1,200 Students	\$2,900	\$1,850	\$1,050
Cuys	+1,000	\$2,400	\$1,200	\$1,200
Quinoa	840	\$2,100	\$1,000	\$1,100
Chickens	840	\$2,600	\$2,628	0

Grace, Peace and ¡Jallalla!
(Aymara for hurrah!)
Deb and Jeff

