

Dear SIGA Friends,

Five months have managed to slip by, since sending our my last newsletter. So, what was once tentatively titled January Newsletter, then later February, and so on, is now our MAY newsletter. Here are some highlights of those months gone by:

Trip to Rama Country (Nicaragua)

For several months, we had collected used clothing to be taken to the Rama Indians, a Native American tribe in Nicaragua. Clothes piled in from many places in Costa Rica. Many of my neighbors in Arbolitos also donated clothing (they were proud to be on the giving end, tasting that truth that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive). By the time we made our journey, we had collected over 30 sacks of quality used clothing, and in early February we loaded them onto our new boat, which at that time was without a roof, and made the 5-hour journey down the San Juan River and then up to San Juan del Norte. We also took several boxes of school supplies for the Rama children. We left them with Coyote, who had wisely decided that the families should show that their children were registered for school, before being handed the supplies. For a man with very little formal schooling, he is determined that the Rama children of today be educated.

Several of the Rama ladies spent most of a day, sorting and bagging the clothes, so that each and every family received clothing that would fit. Every member of each family received two complete sets of clothing. After the women had the clothing bagged and labeled for each family, a representative of the



family came to Coyote's home to pick them up. That evening, Coyote predictably wanted to hold worship in his home, so about 15 of us spent time reading the Bible and praying, and I shared a short reflection on the story of Nehemiah being called by God to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Our time of fellowship with them was great!



Our trip was not without some unexpected difficulties, however—our new boat was impounded! Since Carlos had built it himself, we did not have a bill of sale for it. Although we had checked with the Nicaraguan authorities before going about this very matter, and were assured that it would not be a

problem, after the 5-hour boat trip, we arrived at San Juan del Norte, only to be greeted by a “marine officer” who demanded to see proof of ownership. The guard impounded our boat as well as our two outboard motors. An outraged mayor (whom we had not previously met) tried to get them to release the boat, but unsuccessfully. Our stay was extended by 2 nights, and we had to pay another boat to take us back to the Sarapiquí, after which our attorney prepared a document that attests to Carlos having built the boat. Carlos returned to Nicaragua, and they released the boat.

Those certainly were some anxious days for us, but things ended up *better than well!* If we had not had our boat impounded, we would not have stayed the extra two days. If we had not had the boat impounded, we would not have met the mayor, with whom we plan to collaborate on some educational initiatives he has in the works for the children in Nicaragua. If we had not stayed the extra two days, we would not have known about or had time to visit the little library that the mayor has built in the town ... a library with, up to this point, very few books in it. We remember those days! But now, we have a surplus of books, so we can help!

Textbook Challenge

February saw the start of another school year here. Much of our time was spent delivering textbooks to the schools that had opted to participate in our Textbook Challenge. Not all schools chose to do so—believe it or not, the idea that textbooks are necessary seems strange to many in this area! However, because of a donation received in 2010, we were able to challenge twenty schools by offering to pay 60% of the cost of the textbooks for their children. Only eight schools responded, but that means there are eight schools where all of the children have textbooks for Spanish, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science—for the very first time! The textbook project took a lot more time than I had anticipated—just purchasing the books posed a challenge (you'd have thought that getting someone to take our money would be the easy part). Then they had to be packaged up by grade, sorted by school, and put in the boat or packed into our 4WD for delivery. Eight schools set an example, and hopefully others will follow. We pray that they will clearly see the benefits of this investment, so that they will never allow their children to go to school without the tools necessary to receive a decent education.



Two of the eight schools participating. Above, books being sorted in the library. Left, maestro Jimmy chats with his students; Middle, maestro Dauber and the Gaspar school.

Rotary Club Follow up of Teach Me to Teach 2010

March was a busy month, but then, what month hasn't been? A big highlight of March was the gift of books and teaching resources provided through a collaborative effort of numerous Rotary Clubs in the USA, from Florida, Alabama, Oregon, among others, as well as the local group from Heredia. Each school in the region received a donation of three boxes full of books, from reading books for the children to teaching resources for the teachers. The three schools pictured here, (left to right) Fatima, Tambor, and San Antonio, are all located on the San Juan River, so it meant an all day boat trip for us to reach just these three villages. In all, we delivered over 60 boxes of books.

Fatima, with teacher Marjury



Schoolchildren in Tambor



A smiling Yorleni in isolated little San Antonio



On my last trip to the USA, I 'detoured' through parts of Alabama and Florida, thanking some of these Rotary Clubs personally, as well as speaking to numerous churches and other groups expressing an interest in missions and our ministry in Central America. I traveled more extensively on this trip back home than in years past, even travelling to New Brunswick, Canada! I am very grateful to the many people who opened their homes to me, fed me, picked me up at airports, chauffeured me from here to there, entertained me, and even trusted me with their car. Thank you for opening your hearts and doors to me.



Now I am back in my little corner of the jungle. It looks like I got here just in time, because birds had been building nests in my home, thinking that I had abandoned it (maybe Carlos thought so, too!). It cannot be said often enough how much we all covet your prayers. Our prayer is simply that God may find us faithful in what we do, and that the people of this region are blessed as a result. We also pray for God's abundant blessing upon all of you.

Que nuestro Señor bendiga cada uno de ustedes, con toda abundancia,

Ruth