

Hello Friends,

It's only mid-summer, and probably just as hot where you are as it is in Arbolitos. It's also that time of year when we start planning this year's Christmas outreach. I would like to share other things first, but please be sure to check out the end, to find out how you might become involved. Before I even do that, though ...

SIGA is now on **Facebook**, just as I know that many of you also are, so please connect with us there! Just search within Facebook for SIGA Ministry Partners, then click "like" at the top of the page. That will link you with the page, which will be the easiest way to get regular (but no so many that they seem like spam) updates and see photos. So please visit our page, leave a comment if you wish, but most importantly, click on "like" and recommend it to your friends!

Library News

It's hard to believe that just 3 years ago we were wondering how to get enough books to start a library, and now we struggle to find room for all of the books we have been given! It is a great problem to have, for often when we find ways to solve one problem, we open doors to touching the lives of people. At least that has been my experience!

As you may remember, we collected books at the beginning of the year, which were sent to Florida to come to Costa Rica via shipping container. In all, approximately 3,000 books made their way to Costa Rica in April, and we retrieved them from the warehouse in San Jose in July. Approximately 1,500 are children's books, both in English and Spanish. Some are new titles which we added to the library shelves, while others will be heading to schools that are too far out of our reach to visit regularly with the Floating Library. There are three isolated schools on the Nicaraguan side of the San Juan River, and we are going to help them start their own little library, so that those children have books to read, and so that the teachers have some teaching materials. Still their books will go to the Rama children.



Armando & Marcos unpack new books. Armando was just learning to read after 3 yrs in 1st grade. Recently the family was evicted and had to leave Arbolitos.

In addition to the children's books, the shipment also approximately 600 books which launches the theological library component of the Institute for Ministerial Excellence. Some books



Commentaries, biblical interpretation, preaching, church history, it's a humble but well-rounded selection of books for the Institute for Ministerial Excellence.

were donated, but most were purchased new with funds that had been designated to the project. Now we have Bibles, commentaries, preaching resources, books on church history, biblical interpretation and pastoral care, ministry to children and youth, and Bible studies. These resources will be available to churches and church leaders, so that they have access to resources which have been previously unavailable to them. We intend to kick off the project in a formal way by bringing pastors and leaders to the library, to spend a day in fellowship and encourage them to start borrowing, but this will have to wait until Carlos finishes building a bigger boat.

The Rama Indians

For those of you who have been following the story, a few months ago SIGA supporters donated a chainsaw to Coyote, chief of the indigenous people known as the Rama Nation. SIGA has also adopted a project known as "Coyote's Dreams" which includes building a church, improving the education of the children, as well as a variety of micro business projects so that families may have a way to earn some income. Coyote recently informed me that their first project, now that they have the saw, is to build a church, and it is almost finished! I hope to see it next trip up, which might not be till September, but on our last visit I gave him a 35 mm camera and several rolls of film, so hopefully I will at least have some pictures to share of the work they have done.

On our last trip, we also gave the Rama two "Proclaimers," which are solar-powered (and also crank and plug-in) audio New Testaments, provided to us by the organization Faith Comes By Hearing. Since most of the Rama, especially the older generations, are illiterate, and since many of them do not speak Spanish, most of them have neither read nor heard the Bible, except for third-hand accounts of what somebody says the Bible says. Now they can hear it for themselves! Presenting it was a special privilege, rewarded by the obvious gratefulness of the people. Let me tell you a little about it ...

Coyote was relaxing in a hammock, obviously exhausted after a trying day in fighting with the authorities who refuse to acknowledge the constitutionally guaranteed autonomy of the Rama. We began to discuss the situation, and it brought to my mind Jeremiah 29.11 (*"For surely I know he plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope"*), which often happens when I think of the Rama. I said to Coyote, "we have something for you" and retrieved the Proclaimer from my backpack. I explained how to turn it on, without telling him what it was. So there he was, in his hammock, physically and emotionally drained, and then he hears, "Matthew tells the story." He knew instantly. He smiled, and his eyes moistened. I wish I could have captured that priceless instant with my camera! Perhaps, though, it was a moment too sacred for photos, just as it was a moment too sacred for words.

Coyote got up from his hammock, several Rama children gathered around him, and there were some older youth standing in the background behind me (I noticed that they were smiling, too). They all quietly listened for a few minutes, as Matthew continued telling The Story. This is when I snapped the photo. Coyote then carried the Proclaimer, still proclaiming, to his wife Doris and other family members in the other small room of the house. I think Doris was even more thrilled than was Coyote! Since Coyote can speak Spanish, he has at least heard parts of the Bible read. But his wife Doris had never had that experience, and now she was holding "the Bible" in her own hands, hearing it, and understanding it! All activities in the home ceased, as the Proclaimer kept right on proclaiming, while everyone listened attentively. At 8:30 p.m., my husband and I retired for the evening, but we could still hear the the Proclaimer. Finally, God sent rain and thunder so fierce that we could no longer listen, as if to remind us all that there would be work to do come sunrise. It was a sweet, precious experience for us, worth all of the cost and effort to take it there!



I reminded them that now, rather than depending upon someone to tell them what Jesus said, and what Jesus meant when he said something, they could now listen and learn for themselves. I left a second Proclaimer for Coyote to take to a small village which we might not otherwise be able to visit for a few more months, and I left him a CD copy, for in one village there is a diesel-powered generator, which provides electricity for a few hours a day.



Meanwhile, as life here follows the flow of the rivers and the needs of the people, Carlos continues to squeeze the boat building project into his already too-busy schedule. We need the boat so we don't have to find a bigger boat to beg, borrow, or rent, every time we need one, which seems to happen several times a year.

So that brings us back to the subject of Christmas 2010.

Christmas Outreach

I will be home for three weeks in October to pick up gifts for the children, that hopefully will be waiting for me. A few weeks ago, a pastor from Nicaragua who is trying to establish fellowships in three little villages came knocking on my door, to see if there was any way we could help his group at Christmas. My brain immediately said, "no way," thinking about how we were stretched last year, but my heart prevented my mouth from saying that word. So we've got another 80 to 100 children on the list. Last year, I felt like we were 'saved' by the backpacks that came from Rotary Club friends. What is going to 'save' us this year?

Last year was also the first time we adopted about 15 families of pastors, most of them from Nicaragua, and all of them quite poor. Many live in houses with dirt floors. Some of them in a tiny room or closed in carport attached to the church. We took gifts to their children, but this year I really would like to deliver a food basket to every family. Add to that eight more families whom we have identified in recent months, too poor even to own a horse to ride. It is no wonder that so many become discouraged and leave the ministry! We want to say, "you are appreciated," by taking each family a Christmas basket, primarily of food, but with a few added treats for the children. To do this, though, we would need financial contributions to cover the costs, which would be roughly \$20 per family, or \$460, over and above the regular Christmas activities. We shall see what the Lord thinks of the idea by seeing whether or not we will be able to do this.

So, in addition to the Sunday School children and food baskets for 23 families of pastors, we have our regular river route to visit, including the villages added to the list last year. The school supplies are especially important. For the people to lift themselves out of poverty, have better opportunities, and feel like their lives count for something, education is crucial. Therefore, education is a priority of SIGA. The pencil cases and school supplies will be a nice complement to the textbooks that we hope to have in the hand of each child by the time the new school year begins in February. Of course, we will do our best to give each child something fun, too! For more information, please see our "*Christmas Wish List*" at the end of this newsletter.

We are always praying for our supporters, which has enabled this small ministry that God has entrusted to us to grow, both geographically and in scope. We hope that you have felt blessed through your giving. Especially we are asking that you pray for some co-servants to come our way (there is enough work for three or four)! That is our number one need ...

Que Dios les bendiga,

Ruth Clowater
ruth@sigaministries.org
www.sigaministries.org

Christmas Wish List

School supplies	Toys and gifts
zippered pencil cases pens and pencils, especially colorful ones small rulers correction fluid ("white out") Erasers pencil sharpeners Glue sticks Colored pencils (small boxes) School scissors geometry protractors	mini flashlights jewelry (necklaces, bracelets, rings, etc.) small bottles of bubbles (party packs) simple arts and crafts kits that are <u>complete</u> small dolls decorative sticker sheets lip gloss, nail polish, eye shadow, etc. Baby bibs, teething rings, safe toys Small stuffed toys, bears Coloring books, if you can find <u>small</u> ones Matchbox / Hotwheels cars superballs / plastic lizards, dinosaurs, etc. Punching ball balloons (deflated)

--or whatever other small thing that a child might like.

As always, small and affordable is key, and sufficient quantities of things (6 or more) that are comparable so that each age group in each town gets something similar. Cash donations to purchase composition books, refreshments, etc. are always greatly appreciated, and provide us with the flexibility to purchase items here that simply cannot make it into suitcases.

This will be our fourth year doing this, and each year has opened new doors to sharing the Gospel, making new friends, and encouraging the people of this neglected and isolated region of the world. Your participation has made it possible in the past; we are trusting again for 2010.

USA Office (for donations):

SIGA Ministry Partners, Inc.
 3044 Campbell Road
 Troy, VA 22974