



2016 SPRING-SUMMER NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Steve Leighton

Another year has come and gone in Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo. Every year I come here, it seems I find more and more GREAT things from some really great and caring people. The sponsors I know are so generous with their time, talent and money. I am humbled and honored to lead an organization that is doing so much good in this community. I have written a story in this newsletter called the Anai Project. Please read every word of that story because it is a GREAT story about the good we are doing here. We are not saving the entire world, but we are saving some.

I would ask you to share your stories in the newsletter because I know every one of you has something special to share about your student and his or her family. The stories you share may just give another sponsor an idea of what they might do to help their student and the student's family.

Our organization remains strong in many ways. We are financially sound due to your generous support. We have 223 kids in the program that are all doing well. We have 40 students in a 9 month long English class. Jose continues to "juggle" everything, exceptionally well. We have several volunteers that help out in the office every month. We have several volunteers that teach English classes 3 days a week while they are here in Zihua. It is people like you that make an organization strong, so I ask for your continued support.

We are making a difference in this community and the lives of many!

God Bless,
Steve

DID YOU KNOW...

The parents of Jose Bustos both turned 80 this year. Raymond Bustos and Victoria Islas celebrated their milestone birthdays in January, 2016 with their entire family. After finally getting married (in the Church) a couple of years ago on their 50th anniversary, they had many reasons to celebrate. Raymond & Victoria have a total of 55 grandkids, 75 great grandkids and 4 great, great grandkids. They had a total of 15 children, two of which died at birth or shortly thereafter. The oldest son, Raymond, was killed in a car accident only a few years ago. The remaining 12 siblings were all present at the big party. A large and beautiful family.

JANUARY STUDENT/SPONSOR BREAKFAST GAINS IN POPULARITY

By Bob Albright

The January breakfast rose in popularity this year, attracting 120 participants including sponsors, students and guests. Just under 30 sponsors hosted their students and family members at the Fontan poolside restaurant where the atmosphere of waves crashing in the background of beautiful grounds provides quite a contrast to the indoor convention center venue used for the larger February breakfast. The smaller size and less formal program is attractive to some of our sponsors, especially those spending longer periods in Zihuatanejo.



February's event was over double the size with 285 guests including 60 sponsors their guests, students and student's family members. The program was similar to that of past years with a few short speeches by Jose Bustos and Friends of Niños Board president, Steve Leighton, a recognition of three of the special scholarship recipients, Nadia, Eloisa and Jesus Rumbo and a wonderful Mexican traditional dance performance by students from the local dance school.

In total between the two events, 90 sponsors hosted their students advancing the mission of our program especially the personal contact element. Here are some excerpts from a letter to attending sponsors from Jose Bustos.

Niños Adelante and Friends of Niños Adelante want to thank all the sponsors for their continued support of the 223 students in Niño Adelante. Beyond the financial support, your friendship with the students is the cornerstone of our program. Your relationship with your student and theirs with you expands each person's understanding of the two different cultures. Language differences, of course, are a problem. We try to help our students with their communication to you in letters and emails. Writing letters and emails are a learning





process for our students, as our culture is not accustomed to sending letters. Sometimes the letters they send do not convey very much information about what they are doing and their lives. However, we continue to try to teach the students the basics of correspondence.

The relationship between sponsors and students is fundamental to our students'

growth and life experiences. Having someone outside the family who has a vested interest in them, helps them mature and achieve a better understanding of the world outside of Mexico. In my opinion, each year that a student continues in school constitutes a win. Although I want all students to finish high school, some students for personal reasons, do not finish their studies. We are always sad about these situations. However, the time they spend in school due to a sponsor's support is extremely important and nothing is lost. The beca is always money well-spent. No matter which path the student chooses, their relationship with you is a life-time experience, forever. This is why I want to thank our sponsors for all the time they spend in meeting with the students and their families, and our sponsor's efforts in behalf of the students.



DID YOU KNOW...

Benefit dinner was a huge success. We had 85 people at our annual benefit dinner this year held at the Pacifica Hotel in Ixtapa. We were honored to have some special people join us this year. Dick & Gloria, the heads of the Sailfest, attended to get a feel for our organization. The new Mayor, Gustavo and his wife, Maricruz also attended. It was the first time we have had these folks attend. The Friends of Ninos President told them about our organization and what we do in this community. The Mayor promised his full support for anything the Municipal could do to support our cause. The President's of Sailfest also promised to help us pay part of the cost of our special English classes that happen 9 months out of the year. Thanks to all for your generous and continuous support of our fundraiser.

THE ANAI PROJECT

By Steve Leighton



Some years ago, Jose Bustos was visiting a school looking for potential new students for our Ninos Adelante program. A teacher pointed out a young girl that she said was very bright and very poor. In fact, there were days when this student came to school with nothing to eat for the whole day. The student was Anai (pronounced An-a-ee). This little girl lost her father at a young age and was living with her mother and three brothers in a “make do” shack high up on the side of the hill. The house is about 15 feet

square, has a dirt floor, some electricity, but no running water. It is built on the side of a steep hill and the retaining wall holding it in place is made of old car tires filled with sand. Her mother finally got disgusted with the living conditions and decided to move near Acapulco, but only one child went with her. The other three, Anai, Neddy and Luis decided to stay in Zihua and try to find work and an education. Neddy suffered from polio when he was a young boy and was left with some permanent disabilities. Luis and Anai were working with a lady selling “water” from a cart on the streets. (Water is actually a flavored drink that they make and fill big jugs with the product and sell it by the cup.) They were barely making enough money to buy food and a few items for their house. Some donors came along and decided to help these guys get set up in their own business where they could reap the rewards of hard work and not have to share it with anyone else. The donors put together some money and with the help and guidance of Jose Bustos, a bike was purchased, a cart was designed and built for their specific purpose and basic start-up supplies were gathered. It took less than one week to build the necessary “vehicle”, get the vendor license and start off running! (There are many details outside of the basic cart that we will not go into...like where to store the cart, a room for preparing the drinks and supplies, etc...)

The idea here was to get them the necessary “tools” to run their own business and, if successful, make a decent living doing so.

Here is an update on the project after one week of operation...

Luis is running the business during the day and most of the night right now. That is due to the fact that Anai is in school full time during the day and at night she is working at a hospital doing her required community service, necessary to get a high school diploma. Anai is working at the business on the weekends with Luis...running a double shift on Saturday and Sunday. So far, business has been slow. This is primarily due to the fact that they are new and do not have a regular client base yet. The finances are as follows: Luis sets aside the first \$200 pesos each day for new supplies and general operating expenses. He then gives Anai \$100 pesos for her living expenses. That leaves him about \$100-\$200 pesos a day for his living expenses. While this may not sound like much money, it is more

than they have ever had before. According to Luis, it will only get better. He plans to experiment with different flavored waters to see what sells best and also, making his presence felt in the neighborhood. This will be a success story that we will want to follow for the years to come. We hope other sponsors will look at opportunities to help their students, not only get an education, but to figure out a way to use it to support themselves and their families.

This is an example of what we are all about in Ninos Adelante! THANKS to the donors that made this dream come true for a wonderful young lady and her family.

ONE STUDENTS STORY – CECILLIA SANCHEZ M.

By Jim Moe

Ten years ago, this then 12 year-old child stepped into our lives with a quick introduction about herself and her family and thanking us for being her Padrinos and giving her an opportunity to attend school, at the time the 7th grade.

Fast forward 10 years and this week, March 16, 2016, this now 22 year old young woman will graduate from Zihuatanejo's Tecnologico with a degree in office management and a job offer from the Government in Mexico City.



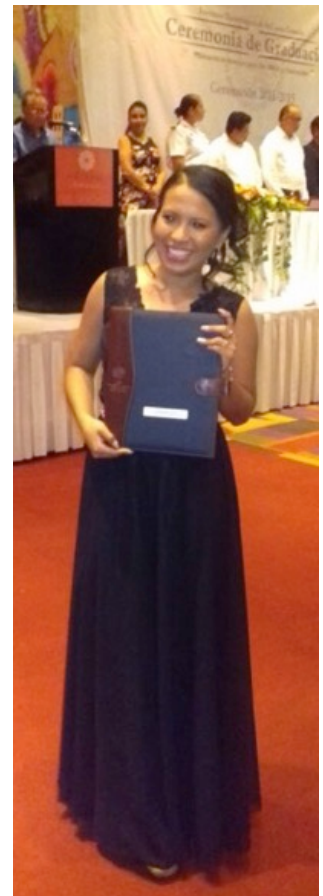
Cecilia and father at graduation



This is a quick summary of a passage that was not always easy for reasons that are not unique to Cecy but, rather challenge all of these kids from Zihuatanejo. In terms of her relationship with Jani and me, first and foremost was the language barrier, a hurdle that none of us ever quite overcame, although progress was made on both sides. However, not having the benefit of easy communication has led to a number of misunderstandings, often quite humorous after the fact, if not at the time. But, with perseverance, and desire, we all managed.

While our time with Cecy was limited to annual visits during one and sometimes two events, we got to watch her grow, both as a student and as a person. Just recently, as we were bidding Cecy and her family hasta luego (knowing that our paths might not cross again for some time), we thanked her parents for sharing her with us. It has been our special privilege to have been given the opportunity to, hopefully, make a difference in her life.

This story, however, is really just beginning. We are excited for her graduation and just as proud of her as we can be. But what she does with her opportunity going forward will write the next chapters of



her story and, not incidentally, the story of The Friends of Ninos Adelante. We are anxious to read those chapters as we are full of hope and expectation that the Ninos Adelante program is giving these young people a helping hand that will lift them out of the poverty of Zihuatanejo into a clearer understanding of what might be reasonable expectations for their successors.

Bueno suerte, Cecy, and to all of the new graduates.

ENGLISH CLASSES – ANOTHER GREAT YEAR

By Tim Ellis

Once again English classes were held this year for teenage children in the Zihuatanejo area. The classes began on January 25th. and continued for 5 weeks ending on February 26th. There were three sessions each week, Monday/Wednesday/Friday for two hours each. Average attendance was 25-30 students. We met again in the church at Plaza Kyoto where there was ample room to separate the students into groups by ability and it worked out pretty well. Ross and Shelagh Yarnell and myself organized the classes again and Stan and Emily Karhoff returned also but this year we had 4 new teachers which was very helpful. Vinny and Margaret Diglio and Alan Axelrod and Mary McGlinn took over the beginners class alternating with Stan and Emily and did a great job with those students. Thanks to all the teachers for working with the kids and hopefully we'll all return in '17 to do this again.



2nd English Shelagh & Ross Yarnell and Tim & Dorothy Ellis



Beainnina Class-Vinny & Margaret Diglio. Alan Axelrod. Marv McGlinn

Most of our students also attended Estella's paid English classes and then came to our volunteer sessions in addition. The tuition paid to Estella comes from Ninos Adelante, Por Los Ninos, and direct payments from sponsors through Ninos Adelante. Students attend her classes based on recommendations from Jose Bustos, if the student has interest in learning English and is maintaining not less than the required 8.0 grade average then Jose will ask Estella to put them in her class. If they fail to participate or keep grades up then they will be dropped from her class. Since there is no cost with our classes we don't require attendance or grade averages to participate but Shelagh does take attendance and gives prizes

at the close to those who have perfect attendance.

On the last day of classes we conducted an auction for the kids and had play money for them to use to buy the 30 or so items we brought for the sale. This is always a fun event and they learn some English commerce terms used with auctions. It is great fun for them, we have been doing this now for the past few years. Then we have a pizza party with soft drinks and sweets, this year we had so much pizza it looked like they would be taking a lot home but no, it was all consumed and only empty boxes remained.

Certainly conducting the classes is very rewarding for all of us doing the teaching. We get very attached to these children many of whom have been with us in previous classes. It is our hope that Ninos Adelante and Por Los Ninos will continue supporting this effort.

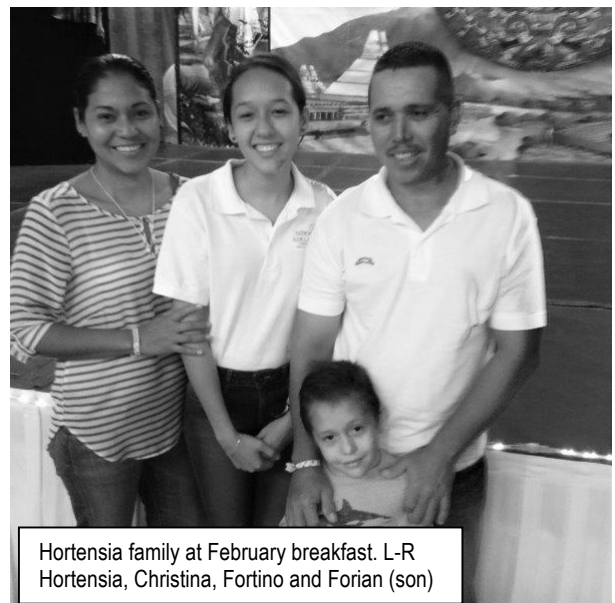
See you next year!

Tim Ellis

BAD CHOICE GONE RIGHT!

By Steve Leighton

Some times in life we make choices that are not always good. I would like to share a story with you about one choice, a bad one at the time, that became a wonderful one later in life. The story begins about 17 years ago, more or less, and starts with my father, Bob Leighton. He was telling me about this great student he was sponsoring in the Ninos Adelante program. She was a very bright girl and her name was Hortensia. My father loved this student. She made a bad choice one day and ended up pregnant. My father was terribly upset, not so much because she was pregnant, but because she chose to quit school and raise the baby. He offered to pay for child day care or whatever it would take to keep her in school. She insisted this was her issue and she had to take responsibility and raise this child. She did promise him that one day she would return to school and complete her education.



Hortensia family at February breakfast. L-R Hortensia, Christina, Fortino and Forian (son)

Now, fast forward about 13 years. (Stefanie, my daughter, used to travel to Ixtapa every year with my parents to help my father care for my mother who was in the early stages of Alzheimer's). Stefanie, was walking on the street one day in Zihua and ran into Hortensia. It was like old home week and they both were thrilled to reconnect after so many years. Turns out that Hortensia's daughter, Christina, is in the Ninos Adelante program and is sponsored by John & Colleen Bevan. Who knew? Hortensia had always been together with Fortino, the father of Christina, and later on they were married. Fortino was very supportive of Hortensia and worked two jobs to help put her through high school and college.

They now have a son named Forian as well. Hortensia is a school teacher and is now teaching at a

school in the mountains, many miles out of Zihua. She teaches there for 20 days and then returns to Zihua and her family for 10 days...every month. Right now, she has not been making the long hard trip to the mountains because the government has not paid the teachers for over 5 months. Not sure what that is all about, but in Mexico, nothing can surprise me. They are a beautiful family. She tells me today that her success was due in large part to the impact her padrino (my father) had on her life. Daughter Christina is a beautiful young lady and very smart. She has a GPA of 9.6 (on a 10.0 scale). She attends ALL of our English classes and was given an award this year for the best (perfect) attendance at our special taught English classes at the church.

Hortensia has every one of the letters my father wrote to her while he was her sponsor. She has shared them with me, but I find them too emotional to read. I know my father would be a very proud guy today to see how this young lady, that made a bad choice once, has become the wonderful person that she is today. This whole family is wonderful and once again, it reminds me of how important that student/sponsor relationship turns out to be.

A TRIBUTE TO SPONSOR JIM WAY

In late July of last year long-time Niños Adelante sponsor, Jim Way passed away. Jim is missed by the entire Niños family. His student, Victor Manuel Pano who will graduate with a Licenciatura in Business Administration from UNAM this fall, reflected on his relationship with Jim in this letter to the family.

México, DF.
September 8th, 2015

Dear Family of Mr. Way,

I really lament what happened; it's something I did not expect. It seems strange that is no longer with us. I'm gonna miss him, he helped me a lot in my studies and not only economically, he believed in me also like the foundation Niños Adelantes, have helped me to grow. I still remember when I started the second year of high school and now I'm starting the fourth year of university.

I appreciate that for someone who was unknown was helped me of that way, and although sometimes it wasn't easy communicate to us for the language always we found the way of understanding us. I will keep the same first image that I saw of Jim, all the time he showed me a smile. I'll keep the last memory that I have with him, that little meeting with him and my mom where we shared a breakfast and big words.

My family gives condolences and we hope that all of you be well, unfortunately it is part of the process of life and always will remember him as the great person he was.

We hope that he stays in a better place.

Victor Manuel Pano

DID YOU KNOW...

Nicholas August, a sponsor for the last year or so, passed away suddenly in Ixtapa on February 17 this year. He was a fairly new sponsor, so many of us did not have the opportunity to know him very well. He was a contributor to our annual fundraiser, a great supporter of our English classes as well as his student and the student's family. Our deepest sympathies and heartfelt condolences to the August family.

ENGLISH CLASS UPDATE

Our English class teachers have a fun end to their volunteer classes every year. It ends with an auction (for various prizes), pizza, drinks and a desert. This video (link below) shows an example of the auction and the fun the students have with it. This year, a donor provided 3 envelopes with an undisclosed amount of money in each one. The students bid on them and then were able to get an envelope. Of the 3 provided, one had 20, one had 50 and one had 100 pesos in it. This video shows the student that ended up with the 20 peso envelope. As you can see by the bidding, it is a fun event for the kids. Thanks to all involved for making the classes not only educational, but always fun for the kids!

Shelagh and Ross Yarnell
Allen and Mary McGlinn/Axelrod
Margaret and Vinny Diglio

Tim and Dorothy Ellis
Stan and Emily Karhoff
Jay and Doris Schroeder

Check out the videos at:

https://youtu.be/B20A3_b9lgo

<https://youtu.be/Mtjr3e3fjM8>