



2015 FALL NEWSLETTER

HOW ARE STUDENTS SELECTED FOR OUR PROGRAM?

Steve Leighton - President of Friends of Niños Adelante

Many times I am asked about the selection process of the kids in our Niños Adelante program. For the most part, the process begins with our Director, Jose Bustos visiting with the 6th grade teachers. Although education is compulsory through grade 12, a high percentage of kids drop after 6th grade. The poorer families will often push their kids to find work and help support the family.

There is NO SHORTAGE of these kids. There are many and we cannot help them all, but we can help some. Jose will meet with the teachers and other educators to find the brightest and poorest of the 6th grade classes. Once he has made some selections, he will then meet with the family and student to get their “buy in” for the program. By that I mean he gets a verbal commitment from the parents and students that they really want to get an education and will stay with it until they graduate. Many things can happen along the way that will change that commitment, but at least they all start out on the same track to get that education.

Often sponsors will meet people along the way while visiting the Ixtapa area and will want to help their kids with an education. While this is well meaning, sometimes the students simply do not qualify for our program. As tempting as it may be to find and select your own students, it is imperative that we let Jose handle this process. He, after consulting with teachers and parents, should be the one to make the final decision as to who will benefit most from our program. Jose’s Process has proven to be most successful over the years. So, I ask you please do NOT recruit students. Leave that process up to Jose.

A side note: The Friends of Niños Board of Directors has voted to limit the number of students we will support in the program. It is physically impossible for Jose to manage more students than he already has. Over the years, attempts to expand the Zihuatanejo infrastructure have met with little success but we continue to search for solutions.

ZIHUATANEJO...CITY OF PEACE

By Steve Leighton

A major ceremony took place this year in Zihuatanejo. It happened on February 1, 2015. A delegation from the United Nations came to Zihuatanejo to declare it "The City of Peace" which is quite a significant honor. Zihua is the only city in Latin America to attain this designation.

A gathering of the delegation took place at the new monument that has been erected in Zihua on Sunday night, February 1. It is located several blocks east of the basketball court in the center of Zihua. Front and center of the ceremony were the "singers" from Niños Adelante. They were lead in song at the ceremony by Juanito Zihua (in my opinion, the best and most famous singer in all of Zihua). The students were all given flags from different countries around the world and combined with their new Niños Adelante shirts, they looked awesome! Our kids then lead the procession to the basketball court for the formal ceremony... meaning the politicians and their speeches. The pictures here will give you an idea of how great the kids looked and performed. It was a grand event and the Niños students lead the way throughout the ceremony. We should all be very proud of this accomplishment for the City of Zihua and especially for our students being such a huge part of the entire ceremony. A very special thanks to the students for the great job they did and for Juanito for donating his time and talents. Another chapter in the on-going success of Niños Adelante made possible by our dedicated sponsors. We are contributing to a better world one child at a time.



VOLUNTEER ENGLISH CLASSES

By Tim Ellis – board member- Friends of Niños Adelante

Another season of volunteer English classes has ended with the final class on Friday, 2/27/15. This year, since Shelagh Yarnell was not able to come to Zihuatanejo in January as planned, the Niños board of directors employed professional help from Stella. She held classes during February for the Niños students. Emily, Stan (Karhoff), and I (Tim Ellis) conducted conversation classes at her school with up to 40 students attending. Emily is a retired elementary school teacher and was very helpful in having these classes for our students.

During the 11 sessions we held, some songs were sung and then lyrics discussed by the students as part of their English experience. We did old favorites like “Are you sleeping Brother John”, “He’s got the whole world in his hands”, along with 3 favorites of the Beatles. Stan brought a TV and video from the BBC Animal Planet series and all of us watched in wonder for this hour long presentation. The students listened to the British accent from the video’s narrator.

We did word exercises, games, sentence construction and recitations during the classes. All of the kids participated. Stella was very helpful with teaching aids and assisted with separating the students into groups by ability. She had two helpers, Jean and Lisa, who worked with us and the students.

The students were treated to snacks every Friday and on the final day ice cream was served. Afterwards Emily, Stan, and I were presented thank you cards complete with notes written by the students. It was touching as you get close to these kids during the short time we have them in class.

Next year it would be nice to go back to the 6 week volunteer classes at the church. There is more room to work with them there even though being at Stella’s is a little more convenient for some. We’ll have to see as February, 2016 is a long way off.

A JOYFUL RETURN

By Steve Leighton

It was a beautiful sunny morning in Zihuatanejo. A small gathering was taking place at the old Church where our volunteer English classes have been held for years. This year was different. Our regular teachers would not be here in February as planned. A few health issues kind of got in the way for our good friends...the Yarnell’s. Shelagh and Ross have been teaching English classes every February for many years. They have made many long lasting friendships with many of the kids that have attended their classes. On this warm sunny day in March, Shelagh and Ross made the trip they were afraid they would not make this year. Along with Tim Ellis, Stan & Emily Karhoff and about a dozen former students (and the ever present Jose), the Yarnell’s met in the class room where the English classes have taken place for years. The students ALL spoke in English to welcome and thank the Yarnell’s for their many years of teaching. It was very touching to see each one of the students speak in English to tell the Yarnell’s how much they have helped them over the years. It was a very emotional

meeting and one that the kids and Yarnell's will not soon forget. THANK YOU Shelagh & Ross for your dedicated service to these kids and our organization. We hope you will be back on track for next year. I know the kids will be waiting again for your return!

THE 2015 BREAKFASTS WERE A BIG HIT

with over 400 attending the events

The combination of sponsors, students and student's family members pushed the total attendance for the January 18th and February 15th Breakfasts to 412. Below are photos of some of the highlights from the February event.



Nelson Abarca Perez, 2013 Irene Sheahen Scholarship award winner and current 3rd year engineering student at UAP Puebla,

addresses the audience



Maria del Carmen Vargas Valdovinos
2015 graduate of Tecnológico Costa Grande
relates her Niños experience.

A VERY DETERMINED STUDENT

By Steve Leighton

At our Annual Breakfast meeting this year in Ixtapa, we had a very special student speak. This student is a graduate of our program, Niños Adelante. She was sponsored by Lorenzo Marbut of Por Los Niños and Roz Toplinsky. The following letter was written by Lorenzo Marbut. Following the letter by Lorenzo, is the speech that was given at the February Breakfast by, Carmen (in her own words). As a point of clarification, Carmen attended the University as a student of Niños Adelante. She refers to Por Los Niños in her talk since they were one of her sponsors in the Niños Adelante program.

This is what our program, Niños Adelante is all about!

MARIA DEL CARMEN

by Lorenzo Marbut

Four years ago, we were introduced to a young woman who declared that, "If necessary, I will sleep in the streets to get an education." We were impressed with both her academic accomplishments and her determination to change her future; so we awarded Carmen a university scholarship, administered by the Niños Adelante scholarship program.

Carmen graduated from our most academically-challenging university with a degree in administration. She is first in her class with a straight A GPA and has been honored as class Valedictorian. Carmen has already been offered a well-paying job with a bright future.

On behalf of Carmen and our other deserving students, we thank all of you for believing in the art of the possible.

Abrazos, Lorenzo

CARMEN'S SPEECH AT THE 2015 BREAKFAST

Hi everybody! Welcome to Zihuatanejo, my name is Carmen Vargas and I am part of por los Niños de Zihuatanejo. This coming March I will graduate from college.

I come from a little and very poor town, up on the mountains called Nueva Cuadrilla, where they believe that women should not study, that women belong to the house and is very common that a girl gets married at 12 years of age. This tells you a lot of my town.

I left my home town some years ago to follow a dream; to be able to study and become a better human being even without the support of my parents.

As you know nothing is easy in this life. I have been through hunger, I have been staying in other peoples house, I have worked and studied at the same time and all of this in order to continue with my studies.

Regardless everything I have been always the first one in my class.

One day I heard about por los niños de Zihuatanejo Association and I thought it was going to be impossible to get what I wanted, a scholarship to finish my studies. When you really want something you fight for it and I had faith so it was not impossible. I had the opportunity to meet Lorenzo Marbut and he help me through por los Niños de Zihuatanejo get a scholarship and the opportunity to learn English.

Now I know that thanks to you all, my dream will be full fill this March. Thanks to your support, I will be the first person to graduate from university in my town and I want to be an inspiration for a lot of women. Promise not to fail you I will be a high executive soon who believes everything is possible.

There is not another word but thank you. Before I finish I want to give a special thanks to Roz my sponsor, my magic godmother and my friend I hope.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT THE 2016 STUDENT BREAKFASTS and THE BENEFIT DINNER

Niños Adelante holds these Student/Sponsor Breakfasts in Ixtapa and Zihuatanejo during January and February when many sponsors visit the area. Please take advantage of these events to visit with your student versus asking Jose to arrange a private meeting. By his nature he will never turn down such requests but he is overburdened during January and February.

The 2016 Student/Sponsor Breakfasts will take place **January 17, 2016** and **February 14, 2016** at the Hotel Fontán in Ixtapa. The application follows on the next page. We are looking forward to renewing many friendships and welcoming newcomers.

This year's Benefit Dinner will be held on **Thursday, February 18, 2016** at the very lovely Pacifica Club Ixtapa. See following pages for applications or **Visit our website at www.friendsofninosadelante.org for more details and application forms that are more user friendly.**

SPONSOR/STUDENT REUNION BREAKFAST REGISTRATION FORM

Many padrinos have said that the becado breakfast is the highlight of their visit to Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo. This is the time to see your becado, hear about current Niños Adelante activities and experience the energy of a room full of kids and parents who appreciate the support they receive from Niños Adelante. Translators will be available to help you and your becado get the most out of this experience.

Please use these Breakfasts to meet and visit with your student and his or her family in place of having Jose arrange a private meeting. As you can well imagine, the months of January and February are very chaotic for Jose.

Breakfasts will be held at the Hotel Fontan in Ixtapa at 9:30 A.M. on **Sunday, January 17 , 2016** and 9:30 A.M. on **Sunday February 14 , 2016** .

Register now! Jose must notify your becado to attend the breakfasts. This notification takes place during beca payout day on the first Saturday/Sunday of the month in which the breakfast will be held. We therefore need to know your intentions to attend the January event by December 31, 2015. By the same token we need to know your intentions relative to the February event by January 30, 2016.

As in the past, padrinos are responsible for the breakfasts of their becados and their families. Cost of breakfast is expected to be about \$13 per person.

(Note: please include only yourself and your family and friends in the count of guests below. Jose will contact the students and their families to determine the number of students and family members attending)

Please reserve _____ places for me at the January 17 Breakfast

Please reserve _____ places for me at the February 14 Breakfast

I/we will be staying at _____ in Ixtapa/Zihua from ___/___/16 departing ___/___/16. (this information helps Jose communicate with you if necessary).

My name is _____

Note: If you would like to host the student of a friend who cannot be at the Breakfast, fill in below:

I would also like to host the student of the following Sponsor/s _____

One can copy and paste this form to a Word Doc then print, fill out and return by email, bobalb@comcast.net or regular mail to:

Friends of Ninos Adelante
PO Box 1624
Sonoma, CA 95476



2016 ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER
REGISTRATION FORM

The annual benefit dinner will be held again on Thursday, February 18, 2016 Refreshments at 5:30pm. We are planning a repeat at the beautiful Spa site at Pacifica Club Ixtapa.

Last February's event raised over \$3500 for our Special Needs and College Scholarship funds. What a wonderful way to enjoy a fabulous meal, complete with refreshments, at a very special place and help a great cause at the same time.

Please register early! The guest count is limited to 70 and this event fills up fast. Just complete this form, print it and send it along with your check, payable to Friends of Niños Adelante to the address below.

Reserve _____ seat(s) at \$100 each. Amount enclosed for dinner \$ _____

Names of attendees _____

I am unable to attend the Benefit Dinner but enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of \$ _____.

Thank you, Bob Albright

Please mail form and check to:
Friends of Niños Adelante
PO Box 1624
Sonoma, CA 95476