



FALL –WINTER 2013 NEWSLETTER

President's Column

By Steve Leighton

As we start another school year, I hope you are all doing well. We have new students this year as always, but I would like to share a “graduate” story with you. We have had some very exceptional students and one of them, Nelson Abarca has been awarded a special scholarship this year. The scholarship is a memorial to a former sponsor by the name of Irene Sheehan. A student must meet certain requirements to apply for this scholarship. One of them is a GPA at or above 9.3 (on the 10 point scale). This year’s recipient has a 9.8 GPA and is heading off to a college in Puebla, Mexico. I want to share some of his comments.

"My name is Nelson Abarca Perez. In junior high I met Jose Bustos with the foundation of Niños Adelante. I am very grateful for the economic help that this foundation offered me with my studies. I will be attending the La Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, a federal university in Puebla and I will be studying Chemical engineering.

I will have living expenses in addition to the normal college expenses. For that reason, I want you to know how much I appreciate receiving the new scholarship.

I am very appreciative of Jose Bustos, my sponsors, Rick and Lois Palmer, and all the people in Niños Adelante who have helped me pursue my education. I especially want to thank Lois and Rick for the love and confidence they have shown me throughout these years of study. I hope to make every one proud of me."

Need I say more about our great organization and our help to these kids? This is what we are all about!

PLEASE READ NELSON’S BEAUTIFUL LETTER FOLLOWING THIS COLUMN

I would also like to mention our special English classes. As you may know, we have several volunteers that teach English to many students every year. The primary teachers are Shelagh Yarnell and Leif Lindblom with much help from Tim Ellis and Ross Yarnell. They have been doing this for many years and it gives us a “good feel” for those who should go on to other English classes...that cost money. Leif will be retiring this year and Mabeth Sanderson has agreed to take his place. I cannot thank them enough for all of their contributions over the years. If you have the opportunity, I strongly encourage you to attend one of their classes. They are taught at the old church in Zihua. Ask them for dates and times. I assure you, you will enjoy attending one.

Thanks for all you do for the Niños!

See you in Mexico.

Steve

Nelson Abarca Perez



Dear Ninos Adelante Scholarship Committee

My name is Nelson Abarca Perez. I was a student at the senior high school, CONALEP in Zihuatanejo. At CONALEP I studied Industrial Electra-Mechanics, an engineering course of studies. I concluded my studies at CONALEP June 2013.

My family is a humble family. I thank God that I was blessed to live with my family. My father is a taxi driver. He has worked in this field for more than 20 years. My mother is a housewife. I have three sisters. One sister is 17 years old and she is studying computers in CONALEP. Another sister is 8 years old and she is in primary school. After this sister is an even younger sister, who is in pre-school.

When I started school, I went to the primary school "20 November." I was in this primary school until I was 12 years old. I graduated with an overall grade average of 9.8.

After primary school, I went to the junior high school called Caritino Maldonado Perez. In Junior high school I received many award acknowledging my abilities in Mathematics. I received 3rd place in the state for mathematics at a statewide event in Acapulco. I received 1st place for the Zihuatanejo area. In sports, I, also, received an award of 2nd place statewide in a soccer tournament. I finished my junior high school years with an overall average of 9.9-

While I was in junior high I met Jose Bustos with the foundation of Niños Adelante. I am very grateful for the economic help that this foundation offered me with my studies. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to know the wonderful people who are associated with Niños Adelante like my padrinos/sponsors Lois and Rick Palmer. I love and admire my sponsors and I am very grateful for their patience and the help that they have given me.

After a lot of research that involved entrance exams, etc. I will be attending the La Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla, a federal university in Puebla. At this university I will be studying Chemical engineering.

Because I will be living away from home in a city far from Zihuatanejo, I will have living expenses in addition to the normal college expenses. For that reason, I want you to know how much I appreciate receiving the new scholarship. Perhaps you can imagine how much help this is to me in following my dream of obtaining a college education. I want you to know that I extend the most profound words of "Gracias" that I can offer.

I am very appreciate of Jose Bustos, my sponsors, Rick and Lois Palmer, and all the people in Niños Adelante who have helped me pursue my education. I especially want to thank Lois and Rick for the love and confidence they have shown me throughout these years of study. I hope to make every one proud of me. Words cannot express how grateful I am to receive this very special scholarship from Niños Adelante.

Introduction to our Board Members

We would like to introduce a few more of the Friends of Niños Adelante board members. We always welcome new faces along with your ideas. We hope some will consider this invitation and join us. We are grateful to all who are members of our organization and your generous contributions . Many thanks!

Bob Albright

Our first encounter with Niños Adelante was Feb of 1987 when on a return flight from Ixtapa, Marilyn and I picked up a local English language publication that featured an article about the organization. In those early days Elizabeth Williams and Mickey Christensen were the program. The two of them plus a few other expat helpers kept track of the kids, hand wrote letters to sponsors, published a newsletter, and administered the program all with a typewriter and hand written ledger.

We joined later that year and on our next visit the following Feb. we met Rocio, our first student. We arrived with gifts including a typewriter, a small calculator and a basketball because we were convinced with a name ending in o our student must be a boy. Not so, but Rocio loved the ball and she loved school. When she graduated from Conalep she was the first in her family including 6 brothers and sisters to complete high school. The next hurdle was Tecnologico where she studied for a degree in computer technology. Today, our now 35 year old Rocio teaches computer science and application at Prepa 5 and Conalep.

We have returned to Zihua each year from 1987 to the present with our good friends Jack and Adrienne Baldwin and Ty and Delia Bujold. Mexico in Feb has a certain draw for Minnesotans, originating possibly from the experience of getting on an airplane in minus 20 degree weather and getting off a few hours later where it is 85 degrees. We were also very attracted by and interested in helping Niños Adelante. After several years, through a connection with a local family, Marilyn and I met an impressive young man who was eager to lend a hand helping Elizabeth and Mickey tracking down the then 100 odd students. Elizabeth was cautious at first but soon recognized the talent and dedication of this young man named, Jose Bustos who refused to take any compensation for his efforts. Adrienne and Delia went on to take over correspondence for the program, Ty incorporated Friends of Niños and became the first President, Delia did the books, I handled the IT stuff and of course we all recognize Jose's continuing contribution.

Editors Note

It is hard to imagine a couple whom have been faithful supporters of students for over 25 years, yet we have been blessed with several. Bob and Marilyn have also included in those years many hours of volunteer services. In addition Bob has made himself available at other times throughout the years to return to Zihua and assist the Ninos Adelante program with his computer knowledge and other projects involving the students. Our organization has been enriched by their tireless work and that of many others. The impressive young man, Jose Bustos, who Marilyn and Bob met many years ago has been the hard working director of the Niños Adelante program in Mexico. We are grateful to all who share their talents.

Robert Neal - Member at Large

Barb and I live in Bloomington(home of the Mall of America), a Minneapolis suburb. We have been married for 53 years, have 3 children and 8 grandchildren, half of whom are finished with college. I am a retired OB-Gyn. Barb is a seamstress now majoring in quilting. I enjoy golf and we like to travel. We have been at Pacifica 26 years where we met the Albrights, Baldwins, and the Bujolds and became interested in Niños. We have enjoyed giving back to the people of Zihuatanejo whom we visit each year. We are on our 3rd student. The 1st moved to

Acapulco in her senior year, the 2nd graduated from college in Accounting and the 3rd is a 9th grader. We have both served on the Friends of Niños Adelante board and were involved with the Mpls. fund-raisers. We are quite active in our church which centers our lives.

Editors Note

Bob and Barb are among those loyal long time supporters who have also volunteered countless hours to better the lives of many young people hungry for an education. As an example, Barb used her sewing skills to fashion many Barbie doll outfits for the silent auctions at the Minneapolis fund raisers. These were a popular item for parents and grandparents and helped raise funds for the Friends of Niños Adelante program. Remember 100% of your sponsor donation goes directly to your student. Our dedicated volunteers work hard to provide much of the operating expenses. Thanks to all who help with that task.

Janie Robins secretary

I have been a Niños Adelante sponsor since the early 90's. John and I have sponsored three students during this time period. "Adopting" the first student and her family and literally calling her "our daughter, Margarita" has indeed enriched my life. She has a wonderful, supportive family who have become our extended family. Because her parents understood the need for education, they have managed, without the help of Niños, to educate their additional four children through the high school level. The oldest son is now being supported partially by Margarita and attends the Culinary Arts Institute in Puebla. He is our third student.

I feel strongly about the positive reinforcement that individual sponsorship and Niños Adelante provides to these students. In return for the support the organization has offered, I have been a focused board member (Secretary) for many terms. A Valentine's Day Party for the English class students is given when I am in Ixtapa each February and I help Jose organize the benefit dinners held in Zihautanejo.

I was an active board member for Big Brothers Big Sisters for many years and currently am a member of Genesis Alliance in Asheville, NC, raising money for college scholarships. The high school recipient must be a survivor of family violence, demonstrate good grades and a willingness to work hard along with financial need.

Now living in Asheville, North Carolina, we have Smoky Mountain views, beautiful hiking trails and mountains to climb. We live in an ideal climate, on a 15 acre property, allowing me to enjoy being outdoors, spend time with my dogs, and do a little gardening. I love music, cooking and travel and we usually schedule a couple of travel tours each year in addition to our six week stint in Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo, Mexico. My children and grandchildren are a big part of my life; we recently took our four teenage grandchildren to Alaska which was quite an adventure.

Editors note

Reading Janie's article you get a glimpse into the hearts of our Niños sponsors. To feel like your "adopted" student is in fact "our daughter" says how deep many of the relationships develop over the years. Janie also extends her caring to the volunteer English Classes where she reaches out to many of the students with treats on the "day to express love". We know that in our relationships it's the "little" things that make us feel special about ourselves and help us to grow into caring people. Your willingness to support a child with financial assistance and the occasional E mail, card, or letter can make a big difference in your students life. We can make our world a better place –one child at a time. Thanks for all you contribute to the students in the Niños program.

An Angel Among Us

This organization has many angels beginning with our sponsors and spanning the scope of board members, volunteer English teachers, dedicated hands on helpers in Zihua, program administration personnel in Zihua, donors and everyone else that pitches in to make Niños Adelante function. Of all these, here is one special angel we would like to recognize, Carolyn Wenrich. Carolyn has a penchant for cooking and she has turned this into a way to raise money for our scholarship program. On more than one occasion Carolyn has hosted classes that feature preparation of unique culinary specialties. In addition to gaining new skills the participants are offered the opportunity to make a donation to the Niños Adelante scholarship organization. Thus far Carolyn's efforts have resulted in very pleased chefs and donations from better than a dozen people.

Thank you Carolyn Wenrich!

New Shopping Options in Zihuatanejo

Sam's Club now has a store in Zihuatanejo. The club is located on the main road from Ixtapa to Zihuatanejo, 2 blocks past Bodega, on the opposite side of the road. According to information from Sam's Club customer service department you must present your membership card in order to make any purchase. They will NOT look up your membership number as they do here in the U.S.

The Eternal Question

"Why do you work when you go on holidays?"

"Wow! You spend so much time preparing and teaching your classes. Why? You're on vacation."

"How come you're going to work now? It's almost cocktail time."

The questions are never ending. The simplest answer would be for the questioner to attend an English class. The reasons would be evident. But visitors seldom come to our classes.

So can I convey the richness that is added to my Zihuatanejo life by my students? Can I share the sense of joy, the feeling of satisfaction, the many rewards and happy surprises that occur on a daily basis? Probably not adequately. But I shall try.

If you were to visit our English class, you would immediately be won over by Eloisa's dimpled smile, by Ibrahim's enthusiasm, by Jesus' sense of humor. You would be charmed by Sandra's sweetness, and you would enjoy Valeria's quiet attentiveness, Julieta's shyness, Monica's eagerness, Karla's beautiful smile, Daniela's giggle, Fabian's sincerity ----- the list could go on and on. You might even be charmed by the shaggy brown canine who curls up under a chair at each morning class. Her attendance is excellent!

Why do I teach? Every child is special. The reward is simply being amongst them, working with them and seeing their progress. I accept their hugs and their "thank yous" at the end of each class, feeling that I have been given a wonderful opportunity in Zihuatanejo.

The hugs and the high-fives often extend beyond the classroom. In so many cases the students' families have become our friends and the friendships endure for years beyond attendance at the English classes.

Several years ago, two sisters and their mother came to class. We have become fast friends since, having had many dinners in their home, attending Elizabeth's birthday party each year, enjoying bananas flambe' prepared by father Revi, riding their burros, cooking lessons with Catalina, sharing laughter and fun with the family in their home and in ours.

This year we were privileged to attend Jessica's 18th birthday party. It was a huge celebration, the traditional "quinceaneros" which she had not had on her 15th birthday. Although Jess's birthday is in August, the fiesta was

held in February so that we could be there. We treasure our friendship with the Morales Guttierrez family, a connection that developed directly from the Niños Adelante English classes.

Ex-students search us out frequently. Alicenia and Alfredo visit regularly, always bringing something --- a taste of jicama fruit, a bunch of bananas from Alfredo's yard, a basket of flowers gathered along the way.

Seven years ago, when she was in my English class, Alicenia lost her mother in a tragic accident. The teacher/student relationship became so little about English and so much about listening and sharing and loving.

What a surprise it was this year to have a visitor arrive just a few minutes before my afternoon class was to begin. I had not seen her since she had attended English class 6 or 7 years ago. Virginia, a beautiful young woman now, sought me out with her one year old baby in one arm and a bouquet of red roses for the teacher in the other.

Maria de Los Angeles had come to English class for 3 or 4 consecutive years, but I had not seen her for several years. She showed up at our condo one day this year, coming on the bus from colonia Limon. She had come to invite my husband and me to the family dinner which would be held the next day to celebrate her 23rd birthday.

Alex, who had a devil-may-care attitude at age 16, comes by to see us now with his wife and baby. He has become a responsible adult who uses his English at his work in an Ixtapa hotel.

It is rewarding and moving to be remembered by these young adults years after our class connection.

Azucena and her family have become our friends, a result of English classes and a little extra help to get her through the required English exam prior to the completion of her business administration degree. We attended her graduation and celebrated with her and her family. Azucena still can't speak English, but she has fun trying. She is a spunky and delightful young woman and we are grateful for her friendship.

This past March, we attended the 15th birthday party [quinceaneros] of Valeria, an English class student who was new to me this year. Tim and Ross, who help with English classes, rode in the back of the father's truck, Mexican style, to get to Valeria's home. There we were embraced by family and friends. We joined in the dancing, and I was given tortilla making lessons by Valeria's mother and grandmother. Valeria and Rosa, her mother, had prepared gifts for us, an embroidered tee shirt for Ross and a decorated "Frida" bag for me. Inside the bag were two beautifully embroidered cushion covers. As we said our good-byes, Cesar, Valeria's father, handed me a very large and finely embroidered tablecloth which he had stripped from a table in the garden. Rosa had made the cloth especially for this event, and they both insisted that I have it. I was moved to tears by their generosity and kindness.

We have since had dinner with them and are enjoying a blossoming friendship with this lovely young family.

Eleven years ago, Gabriela was in my English class. She was our becada for one year as well. Now my family and Gabriela's extended family share a unique and marvelous connection. It was with great pride and much emotion that my husband walked Gabriela down the aisle at her wedding in February, he taking the place of the father that she had never known. We are so blessed to have this family in our lives.

Over the years we have received gifts from students of my English class and their families ----- shawls and baskets and ornaments of all types, crocheted doilies and pieces of jewelry. Most often the gifts have been made by the mothers in their homes. We appreciate the gifts.

Most important, though, is the gift of friendship offered to us by so many of our English class students and their families. They have welcomed us into their community, into their homes and into their hearts. As I reflect back over the years, so many images flood my mind ----- images of beautiful young people and special moments.

So why do I devote my time in Zihuatanejo to teaching Niños Adelante English classes?

I think it's simply called "LOVE".
Shelagh Yarnell

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 (student), 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 19, 2014** and 9:30 A.M. on **Sunday February 16, 2014**.

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 20, 2013. By the same token we need to know your intentions relative to the February event by January 25, 2014.

As in the past, padrinos (sponsors) are responsible for the breakfasts of their becados and 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 19 Breakfast

Please reserve _____ places for me at the February 16 Breakfast

I/we will be staying at _____ in Ixtapa/Zihua
from __/__/14 departing __/__/14. (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 can not be at the Breakfast, fill in below:

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

**Please fill out the above form and return by email, bobalb@comcast.net or regular mail to:
Friends of Ninos Adelante PO Box 1624 Sonoma, CA 95476**

ANNUAL BENEFIT DINNER REGISTRATION FORM

The annual benefit dinner will be held again on Thursday, February 20, 2014 at 6pm. We are planning a repeat at the spectacular Cerro del Vija site and will inform everyone just as soon as those plans are finalized.

The 2013 February event raised about \$3000 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 60 and this event fills up fast. Just complete this form and send it along with your check, payable to Friends of Niños Adelante to the address below.

Reserve _____ seat(s) at \$95 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, Janie Robins

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