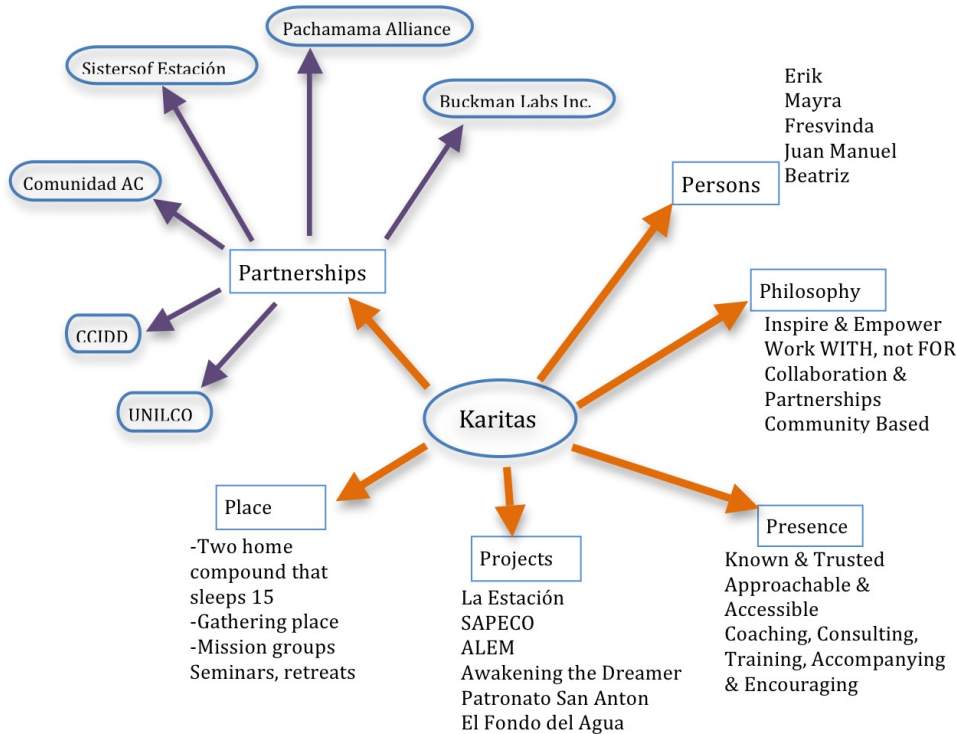


# Karitas Foundation

“Building Bridges, Celebrating Community”

[www.karitasfoundation.org](http://www.karitasfoundation.org)



## La Estación Community Center

The La Estación community center and breakfast program continues to grow, even as promising new project possibilities continue to emerge. Karitas first became involved nine years ago – when a family on a mission trip had their hearts claimed by the La Estación children – with 80 students in the pre-school at that time and little community participation. Five years ago, by adding two classrooms, we were able to accommodate over 100 students, with 150 kids eating a hearty breakfast each day. Now a vibrant group of women sponsor or lead a variety of activities and workshops, formal and informal, virtually every day. This space has become a refuge, a safe place for the mothers to support and encourage each other, a place to dream the impossible, a place where the impossible can become possible.



The programs and projects at the community center have simply out grown the physical space – although it is just wonderful to watch the hustle and bustle of so many people in such a small space doing so many things at the same time. Plans are being finalized to re-build the center, a larger and more versatile space, with a modern kitchen and potential for adding a second floor in the future – a Karitas/Community Council joint effort.

Fifteen years ago a “map” of Karitas’ work in Cuernavaca could be written on the back of a postage stamp. Only two locations, really: Erik’s desk to Frisan Automotriz. Only four players: Erik and three young Mexican peasants, would-be worker/owners. Only a minimal budget: \$15,000 as I recall. It would require MapQuest or a GPS to navigate the broad terrain of the reach of Karitas’ work today. And a calculator to number the men and women and their families impacted by that work, living out unimaginable dreams, claiming extraordinary futures. With a budget approaching \$200,000. Recently, the first draft scribbled on the back of a restaurant placemat, I began to actually draw that “map” – the finished product accompanying these words. The “Six

P’s” – Persons, Presence, Partnership, Philosophy, Projects and Place – has a certain ring to it. It is a joy to “see it” on one page. And celebrate the “gracious mystery” of its development: so much of our work are projects that “emerged . . . arose spontaneously . . . were noticed and nurtured more than strategically planned . . . people’s initiative and then our response . . . serendipitous coincidences with a whiff of grace.” That’s as much sense as I can make of what I have called “gracious mystery” – share our immense gratitude and awe!

*Howard Friend*



## AUTONOMÍA LIBERTAD EN MOVIMIENTO



**A Play:** *"Disability is not as it Seems"*

**Kevin:** *A finished product, a custom-made chair; a satisfied customer*

ALEM, Karitas' project with and for persons with disabilities, has made significant progress this year, the hard work of the past years coalescing into thrilling results. This dramatic progress, which was hard to even contemplate during those years, has emerged across the board in wonderfully diverse ways. And even more exciting is that the progress has become self-generating. Like Uriel speaking up one day "I'm going to take a metal lathing operating course, so we don't have send out to have component parts made." Or being recognized by a national university for the importance our project is having educationally and motivationally for children with disabilities. Or being considered by a U.S. wheelchair development and "adaptation" organization as a candidate to become their Mexican counter-part. Or having a growing number of invitations to present our consciousness-raising play "Disability is not as it Seems." It goes on and on.

However, we have challenges to face: the changing needs of a growing organization; developing a sturdier, more adjustable, economical wheelchair design; and providing

needed wheelchair repair for people who lack economic resources. Over the last three months we have had the support of an industrial designer, who has been able to improve our design for a better basic wheelchair and has built a first prototype. This design will need further development in the coming year as well as variations for different applications.

We have become increasingly aware of the need to subsidize wheelchair repair. There are organizations, like Rotary clubs and government institutions that give away wheelchairs from time to time; but a wheelchair, like a car, needs maintenance and repair – and wheelchair parts are expensive! Currently there is no place for these people to turn, and too often they end up either making do with a broken wheelchair, or discarding it in the yard while they wait another couple of years for another one. This reality is wasteful, expensive and cruel; you give someone mobility and then you take it away! We are poised to change that scenario.

## COMUNIDAD: OUR PRIMARY PROJECT PARTNER

Comunidad, is one of Mexico's twenty-one community foundations, often considered the "step-child" of development models. Typically pressed for funding, community foundations are positioned to offer their region opportunity for greater dialogue between the extremes in the society, to become bridges connecting the general population with social development projects, channeling donor support to worthy projects. They act as a catalyst, bringing together groups that normally would have no reason to have contact. And they serve as interpreters that can help these two groups better understand each other, even though their everyday life experience and perspectives may differ dramatically.

In Mexico, as in most of Latin America, philanthropy is not common: due, understandably, to general economic hardship, as well as an inherited church/government model that assumes government and church, not citizens, are mandated to take care of the poor. One of Fundación Comunidad's primary goals is "to develop a culture of philanthropy," a daunting, immense challenge, but one it is determined to accomplish. Inspired by their mutual commitment and courage, as a board and staff, they are reaching out with open and creative minds and taking promising, if small steps toward making this a reality.



SAPECO -- SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Despite the adversity that the entire country is enduring, our Small Business Development Project, Karitas' very first venture in Cuernavaca, has achieved a remarkable goal: it has become almost entirely self-generating. This is not to mean we don't play a continuing role. It means that we don't have to be the primary initiators or promoters of new projects. Each one of the businesses we birthed and nurtured has become itself an incubator for other businesses, a mostly natural and spontaneous process. Good business practices, positive attitudes and a commitment to increasing skillfulness, learned by employees in the projects we sponsored, tend to be maintained as they decide to become independent.

There are still struggles. Erik gets called in to put out fires, to help with conciliation, or even to help get a certain car's transmission to shift properly from 3rd to 4th gear.

It is hard to see the full reach of the project anymore. We could count all the mechanics that have worked with us over the years, or the number of shops that have a clear starting point through our work. Sometimes we lose track of who the offsprings of the

offsprings are Victor and Julio Cesar, Jorge, Juan and Martin, Juan Carlos and Gerardo come to mind, and there are more. We often find out by accident stories like Miguel's, who worked in Jorge's shop, Jorge having become a skilled mechanic when he worked with us at Frisan. Miguel invited us to his shop's grand opening!

As for the original partners: Frisan is going well. They have struggled, but have held steady – the same partners: Yolanda, Pancho

and Ivan remain at the helm. Rodolfo, the original partner from Transmisiones Estrella, and his brother have had incredible success with their own shop in an excellent location. And Julio, a partner in a used auto parts business and a true entrepreneur, is constantly spinning off related enterprises. And on and on and on.



SOCIAL ILLUSIONISM



Diego Rivera - "El Hombre al Cruce" - at Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City

If it is bad to be disillusioned, it must be good to be illusioned, right? The name, of course, is intentionally provocative. Gently but unapologetically critical of how institutions have been doing community development and poverty reduction work, it is founded on the

principal of appreciation of gifts and abilities, instead of a focus on weaknesses and needs. Some of these ideas are not new, built on a myriad of methodologies developed over the years: Appreciative Inquiry, Asset Based Community Development, Outcome Mapping, Asset Mapping, et cetera. But Social Illusionism brings some new philosophical theories to the table, as well as some innovative tools. Karitas has been employing this technology with promising results.

Most development models involve giving or providing people or communities with what they lack based

on our judgment. This "assistentialism" promotes passivity. Social workers involved in community work have been aware of this reality and worked hard to foster participation, but lacking adequate tools, they often feel left with what seems to be the only option – "plant" the information and ideas in the community, falsely assuming if they could repeat it back as they had been taught, that will make it work. Why do we assume that we know what is best for everyone else? A familiar lament, "How can we get them to participate?" Perhaps, in reality, it is we who need to participate with them!

[More on our Website](#)

"AWAKENING THE DREAMER, CHANGING THE DREAM" SYMPOSIUM



THE PACHAMAMA ALLIANCE

The "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream" Symposium, sponsored by the Pachamama Alliance and Karitas, is an incredible experience and tool that helps participants understand the kind of world that our actions are creating, while at the same time showing where there are signs of hope. Participants become informed and then inspired to get involved. Karitas/Pachamama offered the first Spanish-speaking Symposium in Cuernavaca last May, and since then hundreds of Symposiums have been offered across the country, training more than ninety facilitators. In the state of Morelos the symposium has piqued an interest and passion for volunteerism and galvanized support for community projects. Two corporations have requested a Symposium as a tool to get employees "on-board" with their Social Corporate Responsibility programs.

## Partnering for a Better Planet



A year ago the general director of Buckman Laboratories Mexico called the Karitas office to talk about the possibility of creating an environmental rescue fund for the area where their plant is located. There are two primary matters of concern in this geographic location: 1) located near Cuernavaca's industrial park there a number of irregular, poorly planned housing settlements and all the accompanying complications and 2) the area is composed of porous volcanic rock that, together with its high water table, creates severe environmental risks. There is a stream that runs through the Buckman

plant, sludge brown and filled with trash. "I want to see this stream clean," he said, "what can we do?"

Then a state university located across the highway stepped up to participate and a local concrete company, COMOSA pledged their help as well. We have been able to hire a project coordinator who will initially help determine the sources of the contamination, and then propose initiatives Buckman and the surrounding communities working together can undertake to resolve the problem. Buckman and COMOSA are companies that use cutting edge technology and the University is a poly-technical institution, so the important role for Karitas/Comunidad to play is to bring the voice of the community to the table. It is well said that "technology can fix the symptoms and can help in creating solutions, but if the community doesn't participate, they won't be sustained."



### EL PATRONATO DE SAN ANTON

This project, new to the Karitas network, initially centered around a community coming together to heal their local environment, but has already expanded to take on other new and challenging issues as well. Facing violence, drug use, and apathy they are trying to recover the "commons." Periodic activities are sponsored with the simple but important purpose of enhancing the experience of being a community. It is statistically proven that areas with active communities have: less violence, better incomes, higher self-rated life satisfaction, more effective educational institutions, and more.

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion. *Dalai Lama*

### A CRITICAL FUND-RAISING YEAR: THE SITUATION

- Karitas' presence in Cuernavaca has passed a "tipping point" and it's about trust. Building trust-based partnerships, is a slow, tedious process. But, we have succeeded! We are widely viewed as compassionate, trust-worthy and committed,
- That yields boundless opportunities to serve, potential new projects and expansion of current ones, all poised to have extraordinary impact on countless lives. If someone wrote a check for a million dollars, we could put every dollar toward effective, life-transforming projects . . . immediately!
- This is a difficult economy to maintain current income, let alone seek significant increases. But that is exactly what we hope to do!

After careful assessment of all those possibilities, **we have set a "stretch goal" of \$75,000 in new, renewed or increased gifts!** *An extraordinarily generous donor has pledged, as a challenge commitment, to increase their current giving by: \$5,000 if there are five new \$1,000 donors; an additional \$5,000 if there are five at \$5,000; and, \$10,000 more if there are five \$10,000 gifts. We invite you to become a financial partner!*

We want to connect with you in every way possible. Wander our website: review our mission and vision statements, meet our board, watch an extraordinary photo essay about ALEM, and explore opening each project site in turn. We can provide our IRS tax exempt certificate, a copy of our 990 charitable organization filing in Pennsylvania. Or, give Howard Friend a call.

**Karitas Foundation**  
1275 Rose Lane  
Berwyn, PA 19312

Phone: 610-647-4142  
E-mail: [hfriend@prodigy.net](mailto:hfriend@prodigy.net)

[www.karitasfoundation.org](http://www.karitasfoundation.org)