



Karitas

"Building Bridges, Celebrating Community"

www.karitasfoundation.org

Annual Newsletter

2016-2017

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They keep multiplying

ALEM

Expanding beyond borders — next stop Brazil!!

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They continue and are inspiring others

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"Putting Wheels Under Dreams"

Dear Friends of Karitas,

Sometimes scenes imprint themselves with indelibility in my mind. Here's one. During a recent visit to Mexico, we gathered our leadership team and a small delegation of the people from each of our five projects in Cuernavaca, to reflect on the *past* year and to share dreams for the *future*. Magdalena from La Estacion, her face alive with appreciation for Karitas and her "friends in the U.S." said: **You help us put wheels under our dreams!** The room was alive with nods and sounds of agreement. Maria, an Education Initiative coordinator, chimed in, *that's what we love to do . . . work with people who share their dreams and then put them in motion!* More vigorous nods. Another project supervisor added, *we have no bigger goal . . . realizing dreams!* Then all faces turned to me, speaking almost in unison, *Por favor, dile a nuestros donantes y amigos en los Estados Unidos . . . ¡muchisimas gracias!* Please tell our donors and friends in the U.S., a hearty thank you. The nods more vigorous and the sounds of appreciation more robust.

That suggested a metaphor for this newsletter. We asked each project's leaders and participants to name "dreams *with* wheels" as well as "dreams *awaiting* wheels." Each project will invite you to rejoice with them in dreams realized in the past . . . and perhaps to join them in securing wheels for new dreams in the future.

You likely know our philosophy, our core approach: everything belongs to the people: *their* hopes and dreams, *their* creativity and collaboration, *their* goals and plans, *their* hard work to coax those dreams into reality. We "walk beside" – if anything a "half step behind." To affirm and encourage; to guide and coach; to applaud and celebrate.

In search of wheels,

Howard



After such dedicated and amazing work, ALEM had another dream come true: a ride on the canals of Xochimilco

TWO MISSION DELEGATIONS

A total of twenty-two people were part of mission delegations, seven days in February and five days in November. We call them "immersion experiences," sponsored and led by Karitas. The days orient around visits to some of our five mission sites. Each day begins with morning meditation in silence and solitude, and includes biblical reflection, time for journaling, group

sharing and time alone. Karitas has been working with these people for many years, so they trust us, and welcome and trust those we bring. They invite us into their homes, their work places, their community centers . . . and their lives, with such graciousness. We hear their stories, and they invite us to share ours.



View our video documentary GIFTS OF PARTNERSHIP Karitas in Mexico
YouTube: "Karitas in Mexico" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8siZBBmPAXE>



GRACIOUS, HEARTFELT AND APPRECIATIVE

Alex, a ten year old boy trapped in the body of a two year old dreamed of having a tricycle: ALEM made it possible!

SAPECO

our micro-economic development program encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit

Dreams with Wheels

In 1993 a team of six young men and women became the first SAPECO worker/owner cooperative, Frisan Automotriz, a transmission repair shop. In the years since we have continued to welcome small circles of people who seem ready to initiate a cooperative, encouraging and coaching them in the steps toward realizing their dream, then providing on-going consultation. New ventures are starting so rapidly it is difficult track them all. There are currently over thirty! Several auto repair shops, a chicken farm, artisan cooperatives, crafting moccasins and scarfs, developing a line of lotions and creams from organic sources, therapeutic massage, silk screening tee shirts, making and selling fine pastries – just to name a few. So many dreams . . . so many wheels . . . so many lives and futures transformed!

Dreams awaiting Wheels

Erik visits many of these businesses frequently, applauding their enterprise, celebrating their successes, accompanying their struggles and offering assistance. It is thrilling to watch as they in turn encourage others, when they are ready, to “take the leap” and start their own business.

Micro-lending: we are exploring modeling the remarkably successful models of micro-lending on every continent. We’d begin by establishing the structure of our model, the basic operating principles, appropriate administration, ultimately making loan. To initiate micro-lending: \$5000

Staff hours and costs to accompany those ready to launch a new business, an estimate: \$2000/business.

Sometimes we are among the “last to hear” about a new small business that has emerged from our micro-economic development work! One spawns another. They seem to “pop up” on their own.

Company matching gifts: A number of our donors have discovered that their employer has a matching grant program. As a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization we’d likely qualify.

ALEM

**Autonomia, Libertad en Movimiento
Independence, Freedom through Movement**

So many of our dreams have wheels!

ALEM, an extraordinary story about an extraordinary circle of young men and women with disabilities. Through an unlikely, remarkable and truly wonderful story, fifteen young men and women, who identify themselves as having “different abilities” have become a production team, designing and fabricating specialty wheelchairs and providing much-needed wheelchair repair service. With Rotary International grants they purchased a 15-passenger lift van, outfitting a tool, equipment and supplies trailer, taking that repair service on the road. Having developed three satellite locations nearby, they are preparing a manual and training videos to coach repair services in other cities, even other countries! Rotary International names four projects they support around the world – and ALEM was given that recognition. And in this process, the ALEM team challenges peoples’ unexamined assumptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do.

More recently, ALEM’s pathway continues showing the beauty of overcoming boundaries, working together, echoing dignity. Our “impossible dreams” blossom with you, our Karitas partners! Together our circle of impact is exploding. 2500 wheelchairs repaired this year in six communities, the fruits of our teamwork, changing the lives of stranded people, and our own. We continue traveling to many communities, training satellite teams as we go.

Karitas walking beside us, we birth opportunities to affirm each human being and the power of community, to stir hope for a better world, with that sorely needed wheelchair repair. You have “put wheels under our dreams.” Heartfelt thank you to all of you!

And we have “dreams awaiting wheels”!

We’d use \$10,000 dollars to secure new power tools to make our work easier and faster. Maybe you could become a “tool angel”! We can be specific:

Our team expanding, so we need:

- Four basic tool boxes: \$750/box totals \$3000
- Skill Development Workshops: \$1500.
- Power tool inventory: ten items, such as: Bosch CLPK26 combo kit, Power drills and screwdrivers, high impact drills, 91-piece drill and drive kit: \$300 each a total of \$3000.
- A special kind of protective work suit, two for each for the team to provide safety and to build team identity: \$13 each needing 170 overall \$2250.

www.alem.org.mx

AmazonSmile: It’s easy. You’ll pay regular prices with no extra charges: 1. Visit <https://smile.amazon.com/>, 2. Log into your normal Amazon account, 3. Enter Wellspring Karitas Foundation (our full and official name) in the charity search bar and 4. Select us. Then start shopping and .5% of what you spend will be donated to our work.



La Estación

the station: a huge squatters' settlement
in downtown Cuernavaca

Dreams with Wheels

Located in a defunct railroad yard, La Estacion, though one of the poorest neighborhoods in Cuernavaca, it is alive with rich and wonderful community and solidarity. From modest beginnings twenty-five years ago, always in partnership with the community, Karitas now supports a pre-school, Mi Universo Pequeño of 150 children; built a two-story community center that brims with gatherings and programs almost 24/7; empowers teams of mothers, shopping at the market at 4 a.m., returning to prepare a hearty breakfast for 180 kids; providing space for micro-businesses to augment family income: such as silk-screening, moccasin and scarf making, preparing for sale organic lotions and shampoos, massage and gourmet baking; and offering courses such as child care, nutritious low budget meal planning, promoting personal health, self-esteem, public speaking, relationship counseling, and family planning; And a place to gather!

Dreams awaiting Wheels

Led by coordinator Fresvinda Arellano, working together with Comunidad staff and a gathering from the community, a list of priority proposals for the year ahead was created. With our commitment to a bottom-up, people-empowered planning, we have worked diligently to encourage a broader leadership core, nurture more sub-groups, and expand the number of volunteers. That yielded more dreams!

Develop a group of “chinelos” (a Mexican version of mummers!), who bring energy, laughter and music to community festivities, holiday gatherings and parades. Ten musicians learning to play wind instruments, and, ten dancers. Costumes and instruments, music and dance teachers: \$400

Expand traditional medicinal offerings:

- a massage table and chair to increase massage therapy services
- a display format to array the organic lotions, shampoos, soap and creams they produce to increase sales
- entrepreneurship workshops to nurture small business and marketing skills

Continue to develop our bakery skills

- various molds to increase our variety of baked goods
- gather an inventory of raw materials, supplies and equipment

Revitalize our dining and office area

- thirty new chairs to add or replace: \$450
- six dining tables: \$240
- forty sets of table ware, cups and dishes: \$200
- wooden shelves for supplies and community distribution packets: \$150
- an office desk and chair: \$150
- 100 liter stationary gas tank: \$125
- a stove or grill and 20 kg gas tank: \$450

Partnering for Empowerment

Dreams with Wheels

Word spreads. Communities hear about Karitas' commitment to nurturing community solidarity, offering resources for families and children, encouraging community-initiated program development, micro-economic cooperatives and they come seeking our guidance. The *La Estacion* team welcomes such delegations. We worked for four years in *Texcal*, a community on the edge of Cuernavaca, as they generated a waste management process that actually became income-producing; started “gratifierias” (“free fairs,” weekly gatherings where people bring items they no longer need and shop for items they do need, except it’s all free!); developed various gardening formats that produced vegetables and fruit, as well as medicinal herbs; learned to cultivate indigenous mushrooms they package and sell; rehabilitated a swimming pool at a defunct water park. Two communities with lots of wheels under lots of dreams!

Dreams awaiting Wheels

Since Karitas rarely “takes the lead” committed to “walk beside,” who knows what narratives will grace this page a year from now? Two kinds of teams emerge to receive requests. (1) It is best when it is teams of people from the communities who are already our program partners. They have “walked the walk” . . . created their own pathways toward new futures . . . dreamt dreams and welcomed wheels. (2) We have two trained community developers, both with academic and on-the-job training. When a community is serious about “partnering for empowerment,” that two-person team can deploy. This is not a “short distance run.” It is typically a two to four year process. A first year’s funding of a new partnership is approximately \$4,000.

With the emphasis on “partner,” rather than merely donor or contributor. We love it when a relationship forms between those who offer financial support and the people being supported. A spirit of engagement and reciprocity.

Dreams with Wheels

At risk students in the U.S. fail to transition from Middle to High School. In Mexico many families, having no precedent for continued schooling, household budgets needing income a child generates, many twelve year olds drop out. Our Education Initiative launched two years ago, a three-year pilot program, has worked with twenty ten to twelve year-olds: seeking to engage all dimensions of each child’s life; the emphasis on academics, but also a focus on personal and relational development, enhancing self-image and regard for others, claiming one’s own best future and working together for the enrichment of the community. Caminando Unidos and La Jugarreta are our project partners. The good news is while all the students are thriving, they have become “contagious,” creating a “good news epidemic.” School teachers report that virtually all children in these communities are absent less, well-prepared with homework and participating more robustly in class.

Dreams awaiting Wheels

Our biggest dream – renew the project for three more years. That’s a lot of wheels! Karitas contributes \$40,000 annually, two-thirds of the overall budget, Mexican donors the other \$20,000. The project design has evolved, continuing what has been effective and creatively innovating to expand and refine the process. There are financial partners who may opt to extend their commitment; new partners will be needed.

New dreams are arising! Like ripples in pond, the dynamism of the kids, parents and the community spawn fresh initiatives,

AN EDUCATION INITIATIVE
Choosing the Road Less Traveled

expanding the scope and impact of the project. The vision and energy, planning and collaboration arise totally from the people. For example:

- Community Fellowship: the twenty-one students, are working in self-led sub-teams on community development projects with the common good in mind. Building their self-esteem, creativity and teamwork, their goal is to enrich and enhance their communities. Parents are starting a similar process: developing community projects, as well as workshops to enhance their relational and parenting skills too: \$3300: (1) Student and parents community projects: \$2100, (2) Parenting workshops: \$1200.
- Community Health Needs: we have learned that family health needs are many. We would organize monthly health sessions with medical specialists: \$300
- Psychological Support: We note that some parents need help with their way of relating with their sons and daughters. We offered the opportunity to start psychological therapy. Some local psychologists support the program, offering services at reduced rates, so we want to underwrite some of the differences. Two therapists for psychological support: \$900
- Special workshops: We want to nurture natural musical, dance and artistic talent. Workshops and mentoring in horticultural, baking, construction skills: \$400



Benevity Causes: *We recently received a donation from someone whose company matched gifts through Benevity Causes. Perhaps your company does too.*

We welcome all opportunities to maintain connection with our financial partners. We send a bi-monthly, electronic mini-newsletter (ask to be added to the list.) You can have personal communication with individuals, communities and projects. We’d be glad to send photographs of our projects at work.

Dear Partners in Action,

It seems we are in the midst of a paradigm shift. In our work not only are we giving importance to helping communities find their own goals and solutions and we are witnessing great success, but we are also learning from them. The popular communities in Latin America live in a web of interconnection and solidarity that is desperately needed everywhere in today’s world. It may be that the people’s wisdom of materially poor and indigenous communities hold the key to solving some of our planets most pressing issues: Environmental degradation, social decay, loneliness, and disconnection.

I feel greatly privileged to be a catalyst for this future that is emerging, and I am thankful to all of you, our supporters, that make it possible. I reaffirm my commitment and dedication to this task.

Erik Friend

Let’s Keep in Touch

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.

www.karitasfoundation.org

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