



Karitas

"Building Bridges, Celebrating Community"

www.karitasfoundation.org

ENRICHING THE PRESENT / TRANSFORMING FUTURES

Dear Friends of Karitas,

This has been an exciting, no less than thrilling year for Karitas and its five projects. This newsletter offers a touch of history, a profile of the year past and hopes for the future of each.

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.

I think we learned something important this year. It is urgent, of course, to enrich the present for the marginalized communities who are our partners. Better employment, housing, nutrition, health and education. But what changes if they cannot forge new pathways into a transformed future.

If there is such a thing, we have a good problem, a delightful dilemma. In quest of enriching the present and transforming futures, our projects grow and new ones arise at a rate faster than we raise money. A necessary goal is to expand our donor base and donor giving by 10% this year. Our appreciation to those who are financial partners, and, a welcome to those who may want to join them.

In partnership,
Howard



Sarapio and Angel sit on the ruins of what used to be there house

KARITAS AND EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE Solidarity with devastated villages

On September 19th a major earthquake struck Mexico, damage to buildings and homes widespread. The devastation, however, was geographically uneven, hard hit areas adjacent to minimally hit areas. Amazingly and thankfully all Karitas structures from which we conduct our

projects were undamaged, as were homes of our staff, as were homes of the 200+ families we serve.

But villages to the south were devastated. Karitas already had a relationship with three of those villages: Xoxocotla, Miacatlan and Coatlan. Our immediate response deployed a cadre of volunteers transporting vital initial necessities: food, water, temporary shelter, mattresses, blankets and pillows and other urgently needed supplies, our vehicles making continual runs. We sent psychologists and people trained to give comfort and support because emotional needs combined with material needs. The children were especially traumatized. The human response was not unlike PTSD.

Karitas is now responding to the more long term needs. Because of our trust-based relationship we have become the conduit for contributions from individuals, companies, churches and community organization, both in Mexico and the U.S.

Our three-fold vision: re-build lives, community and, of course, homes. We have designed a 582 square foot home with a Living Room/Kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom that costs \$5,500. A total of 345 households await assistance. Donations can be sent to Karitas as described on page four.



Paralyzed,
Irene
operates
her
sewing
machine
with a
stick

SAPECO

A micro-economic development project

In 1993 a team of six young men and women became the first SAPECO worker/owner cooperative, Frisan Automotriz, a transmission repair shop. We continue to welcome people who seem ready to initiate a cooperative, encouraging and coaching them in the steps toward realizing their dream, then providing on-going consultation. There are currently over thirty ventures! 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.

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 encourage others to start their own business. There may be more than we can count.

We are exploring micro-lending, exploring remarkably successful models on every continent. We would begin by establishing the structure of our model, the basic operating principles, appropriate administration, ultimately making loans.

ALEM

Wheelchair repair by workers in wheelchairs

ALEM is 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. They purchased a 20-passenger lift van, and with a Rotary International grant outfitted a tool, equipment and supplies trailer, taking that repair service on the road. Seeking to develop replicas in other locations, 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.

ALEM’s pathway continues showing the beauty of overcoming boundaries, working together, and echoing dignity. Impossible dreams are blossoming! Having repaired their very first wheelchair nine years ago, they repaired 2000 last year and over 3000 this year in fifteen communities. Putting stranded people back on the road.

This is been a dramatic year for ALEM. Having purchased the adjacent property, a large, multi-purpose building was recently dedicated. Space for parts inventory, offices and parts production equipment. We are seeking a foundation grant so they can begin manufacturing plastic wheelchair parts, providing employment for an enlarged team.

www.alem.org.mx



View our documentary GIFTS OF PARTNERSHIP on www.karitasfoundation.org

La Estación

the station: a huge squatters' settlement in downtown Cuernavaca

Located in a defunct railroad yard, La Estacion, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Cuernavaca, 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 Pequeno of 150 children. We built a two-story community center that brims with gatherings and programs almost 24/7. It empowers teams of mothers, shopping at the market at 4 a.m., returning to prepare a hearty breakfast, and now lunch, for 180 kids. It provides 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. Courses such as child care, nutritious low budget meal planning, promoting personal health, self-esteem, public speaking, relationship counseling, and family planning are offered. And a place to gather!

This past year the teams of four mothers increased from twelve to twenty. At the families' initiative, there are plans to serve lunch. As one person put it: breakfast put malnutrition on the ropes and lunch would knock it out. Aided by entrepreneurship workshops, sales of all cottage industry products increased dramatically. Through leadership training, a number of responsibility-taking sub-groups has formed.



Nothing makes us happier than seeing a child given mobility with a repaired and fitted wheelchair



Don Felipe and Gabriel, the delight of young and old coming together

PARTNERING FOR EMPOWERMENT

Sharing Vision and Engagement with Other Communities

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 have worked for five years in *Texcal*, a community on the edge of Cuernavaca, as they generated a waste management process that actually became income-producing; started "gratisferias" ("free fairs," periodic 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; rehabilitated a swimming pool at a defunct water park. ALEM continues to support spin-off wheelchair repair locations.

We can provide trained community developers, both with academic and on-the-job training, to communities seeking our partnership. 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.

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.

Karitas' guiding philosophy is to work *with* not *for* the marginalized population: *their* hope and vision, *their* creativity and collaboration, *their* careful planning and hard

work. Three years ago parents told us their futures will not change without further education for their children. Age twelve is the typical drop out age for children in poor communities: to produce family income carrying bricks, selling gum, washing windshields at stop lights. The cycle continues: a next generation of unskilled workers, struggling at the edge of poverty. The future replicating the past. A fresh trajectory was needed.

Working side-by-side with the parents and community leaders – together with our project partners – we evolved a comprehensive plan to guide and support twenty children to make the transition to middle school. Caminando Unidos, a Project partner, has a thirty-year commitment to working with the chaotic, violent, very poor community of Ahuehuetitla, a ghetto near downtown Cuernavaca. La Jugarreta, the other partner, has a similar history with Santo Domingo Ocotitlan, an impoverished higher altitude village, near the small town of Tepoztlan. Over those years they have

established a relationship of deep trust with these communities.

Together we developed a plan that engaged the children, families, nearby schools and the entire community, staffed by a team of professionals: educators, social workers, nurses and psychologists. A

AN EDUCATION INITIATIVE Keeping At-Risk Kids in School

stipend was provided for the families. Workshops in Healthy Relationships, Guidance in Child Rearing, and Diet Planning on Low Income Budgets were offered.

Tutoring, workshops on building self-esteem, life-skill development, mutually respectful relating and individual counseling for the children.

One hundred percent of the twenty kids have entered middle school! These kids became contagious, starting what we have come to call a good news epidemic. If three kids were scheduled for an afternoon tutoring session, they often asked if they could bring two friends, the circles constantly widening. After a workshop for parents, they asked if it could be offered again, so they could bring some neighbors. The public school contacted each community asking “What’s happening?” Absenteeism declined substantially; kids arrived to school on time, their homework completed; they participated vigorously in classroom discussions; they were less prone to anger, the fruit of relationship counseling; they even demonstrated leadership.

In light of this thrilling effectiveness, our plan is to expand participation from 20 to 40 kids, and to introduce the program to other communities.



Yuritzi finished middle school and is in high school



Kids support and encourage each other

Dear Partners in Action,

The popular communities in Latin America live in a web of interconnection and solidarity that is desperately needed everywhere in today’s world. It seems we are in the midst of a paradigm shift, an awakening. In our efforts we give importance to helping communities find their own goals and solutions, with impressive results, we are also learning and finding life through them. It may be that the people’s wisdom of the materially poor and indigenous communities holds the key to solving some of our planet’s most pressing issues: Environmental degradation, social decay, loneliness, and disconnection.

I am deeply honored to be used as a channel for the better future that wants to be born, and I am grateful to all of you, our supporters, that make it possible. I reaffirm my commitment and dedication to this task.

Erik Friend

BECOME A FINANCIAL PARTNER

Open our website: karitasfoundation.org and click the Donate button. You can donate by Paypal or credit card. Send a check to Karitas, 1275 Rose Lane, Berwyn, PA 19312

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