

VAMOS ADELANTE FOUNDATION



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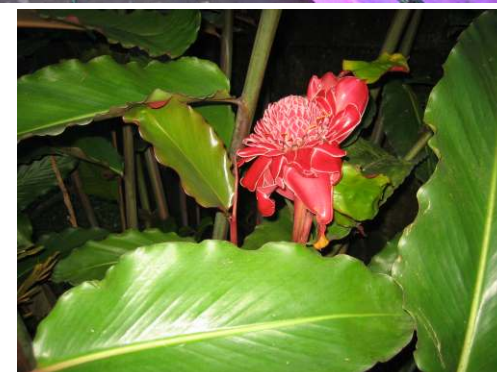


Dear Elene, Lars-Erik and other Ledarhogskolan Friends,
This is Phillip Rokeach and Thomas Heinrich. We are working with Vamos Adelante for a month as volunteers during our five months of traveling through Central America. We both just graduated from business school in Berlin, Germany and treated ourself with this wonderful trip. Our primary job with Vamos Adelante is to visit the godchildren and their families. We then talk with them to find out how they are doing and make sure your help is most effectively allocated. After one week doing this we already learned a valuable lesson: the health/education promoters neither stop working nor walking until the last person is visited, even when the sun is burning down and two exhausted Germans beg for a short break.



We unfortunately missed the Guatemalan Independence Day on September 15th, which is always greatly celebrated in the whole country and of course also at the local schools. Luckily, however, we arrived just after the end of the rainy season, which had been extra long this year. Roads were already fixed and nature was shining in fresh, luminicious colors, as you can see on the flower picture below. It also meant to us that the mosquitos had plenty of time to multiply and are now in great shape and number to attack us during our sweet dreams at night. The end of the rainy season also goes along with the beginning of the summer vacation and for many Guatemalans, including the children, it means the start of the coffee picking/sugar cane cutting season. Coffee beans turn from green to red and are then picked and sold for about 12.10 \$ US per 100LBs pounds. A coffee picker receives ~ US 4\$ per 100 picked LBs. A big problem that the

coffee owners face is theft. If they leave the coffee to ripen, they take the risk of it being stolen. If they pick and sell it, when its still green, they loose about 50 % of the value. But not only the farmers and workers have this security issue. Theft in general has been one of the main troubles this region/country is confronted with. In the last four months the number of armed assaults on busses and cars driving on the roads that connect the small villages has risen dramatically. Therefore the health/education promoters and ourselves are always accompanied by a number of locals, when walking through these areas of higher risk.





The Finca (farm) Montijo was sold in the beginning of the year 2008 and originally we were supposed to close the school in early March. After several positive talks with the new owner we succeeded to convince him to let us stay until the end of the school year, which is in the beginning of November. According to the latest information, the families will have to leave the farm soon and the majority

will move to Santa Rosa (4 km distance) where the children luckily can attend our privat Primary school. Their teacher Jennifer will join us there, so after all, the scholastic change will not be so harsh for them. The pupils will miss their teacher Carlo (he has become Nina's assistant) but he will of course vist often.

Our school food program will continue as previously in Santa Rosa.



Packing the school material and books into boxes felt strange but tears really started to flow when the furniture was picked up and the second room was dis-assembled. Big and small children, mothers and teachers started hugging each other and thanked the teachers for all their help over the years. Montijo is very isolated and therefore it was sort of a privilege for the teachers to get to know the people here who still were so innocent and pure. For these families education truly meant the future and everybody loved going to class.



A very special thank you goes to our Montijo sponsors who have made this little school possible. All children will continue with us, only in Santa Rosa. Everybody received good grades and it should be no problem for them to adapt to the new school. Nelson, one of our first students, graduated from Junior High school in a nearby village with very good grades against all odds as his family refused to help him. Teacher Carlo kept encouraging him and Nelson will now receive a scholarship from us so that he can fulfil his dream and become a mechanic.

Good bye for now and welcome to see us in Santa Rosa!





The end of the schoolyear means, apart from sugar cane cutting and coffee picking, final school grades and graduation. In every town you could see children running around with mostly happy faces (although not all of them) and teen-agers getting ready for the very emotional graduation ceremonies. Dina, to the right, closed her career in tourism with excellent grades and already has a job waiting for her, as most of the V.A. graduating students !



Seeing the students graduate,



after knowing most of them since early childhood, makes it worth every second we worked hard to get them through school with a scholarship. Some never had the support of their families but we kept motivating them. To the student it was a moment of triumph when receiving the diploma as to the overwhelmed parents. For most students this education is leading them out of poverty. Pict. left. Carlo with Nelson and his father who is disabled. Nelson has to maintain the whole family but managed to study as well.

young man graduated from business school with great grades and works in a radio station to sustain himself.



Needless to mention that the station already offered him a good job. Congratulation Paulino and all other students!!

A special thank you to the patient donors financing scholarships!!





The beginning of the dry season usually brings a lot of wind with it and the kite becomes number one toy for the children. November 1st, the Day of the Dead, is traditionally greatly celebrated with kite-flying and the cleaning of the graves. On this holiday the whole family comes together on the graveyards to visit the passed and spend time with the living. The kite symbolizes being closer to God and thereby closer to the departed loved ones. The sizes range from very small homemade kites flown

by children up to a radius of 3 metres and more operated by a very big group of grown men.



Our elderly assistance program has increased thanks to generous reactions to the last report. We were able to help 18 more people monthly, a total of 41.

Apart from ourselves, Vamos Adelante had another three new faces visiting. Sarah, Katherine and Laura, midwives from a leading school in the U.S.A., came for a visit and helped examining

the many pregnant women in the area. They further assisted Dr. Renee during her weekly visit in Zapote. They stayed for one week to find out what "rural" Guatemalan health means and continued working in another region of Guatemala for another week before going back home. As a gift to the people, the three midwives brought a great amount of prenatal medication and vitamins with them.



Vamos Adelante has purchased additional water-filters handing them out to families with many children (see picture bottom left). The cases of parasite contamination has dropped enormously among the smaller children who often just drank from dirty sources when nobody was watching.

The pig project is also growing steadily and the women have really caught on to the small business idea. So far we have had no problems at all, which comes as a surprise.

We will soon expand to more responsible women who are on our waiting list.





I visited Jose on November 12th in El Rodeo. He lives together with his parents and his four siblings in his house made of wood and tin sheets. They are the only family I visited who own a cow. Apart from the cow which was tied to a trunk in the yard they have three dogs and some chickens. Jose receives a “caja de viveres”, a monthly food box containing the nutritional basics, such as beans, sugar, rice, cooking oil, oatmeal, etc.. He seems to be a very shy child. The questions I asked him were always answered by his older sister, which, however, is not unusual. It is probably a result of my “gringo” appearance and my 194 cm (6 ft. 4”) height which makes me a giant here. Jose is one of the tallest kids I have seen so far and loves to play football. He is thin but does not look malnourished. As you might recall, the boy suffered from undersupply of oxygen, resulting in nervousness and aggression and made it even hard for him to talk. The project paid for psychological therapy and the 14 year old boy improved a lot. A huge success is that he just passed 3rd grade and will attend 4th grade from January 2009 on. He also receives a lot of attention and support from his mother who is a very engaged in the activities and meetings organized by Vamos Adelante.

At the end of November I stayed one night in the home of Norma. Her family’s house is located on a hill with a breathtaking view over the valley and some distant mountain ranges about a thirty minute walk to the next village. Sara the grandmother is a promoter working with Vamos Adelante and an extremely caring woman. She had thirteen children of which four died, one of them very recently got shot in a tragic armed assault about six months ago and two already live apart with their own families. When I arrived I was received by a whole bunch of children and

there kept on coming more. As usual scared of my 1,94 m (6’4 ft.) and my “gringo” appearance Norma started to gain confidence as the other children started to play with me. Initially I did not realize her disabilities as she jumped around like all the other kids. Sara then told me that the four year old just started to go to therapy. The little girl can only talk very little as her development is about two years behind. Nevertheless she made a healthy and cheerful impression on me during my short visit





Dear Elene and Lars - Erik,
We hope, we could give you an idea, of how things are progressing but as well of which problems the people and Vamos Adelante see themselves confronted with and of course how your godchildren are doing. In the name of Nina and the VA-team and especially Jose Catalino and Norma, we would like to thank you very much for your ongoing support and we wish you

FELIZ NAVIDAD Y PROSPERO AÑO NUEVO

