

# UPDATE on the AMERICAS

A bi-monthly publication of the Rochester Committee on Latin America

A Taskforce of Metro Justice

Fall 2008



## JANUARY 7: STARTING THE NEW YEAR WITH A REPORT ON ECUADOR

- by Peter Mott

Ecuador – neglected no more! Vic Vinkey was there recently and will report on that trip at the first ROCLA meeting of the new year on Wednesday, January 7, at 7 PM, in the Shaw Room at the Downtown Presbyterian Church, 121 N. Fitzhugh St.

As background for Vic's talk we are reprinting below an article by a Research Associate at the Washington-based Council on Hemispheric Affairs from the October INTERCONNECT (the quarterly newsletter of the Latin America Solidarity movement – free on request). We wanted to learn more because Ecuador's president, Rafael Correa, is one of the most interesting of the seven "leftist" presidents elected in Latin America in the past two years,

## Ecuador Passes Constitutional Referendum

- by Lauren Nelson

On September 28, an estimated 63 to 69 percent of Ecuadorian voters opted in favor of a new constitution for the country. As promoted by President Rafael Correa, the constitutional referendum gave the executive branch increased authority to cast

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## FUN, FOOD, MUSIC AND ALTERNATIVE GIFTS AT ALTERNATIVE FAIR!

- by Marilyn Anderson

You are invited to support fair trade artisans at the ROCLA booth at Metro Justice's annual Alternative Fair which takes place Friday and Saturday, December, 5 and 6. Many ROCLA members look

forward to purchasing items at our tables. Visit us again to see the beautiful items made by three different Fair Trade women's cooperatives. Each coop is made up of groups from various parts of the country and produce different kinds of items. One, UPAVIM, is located in Guatemala City and makes hand-sewn products of many kinds.

Another, MAYA HANDS, has many members who are widows as a result of the civil war of the 80s. These craftswomen are noteworthy not only for their weaving but for their baskets. A third, SAMAJEL BATZ, also has many widows as members.

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*ROCLA Programs and Actions every First Wednesday 7:00 PM Downtown Presbyterian Church 121 N. Fitzhugh St. Free and open to the public. Wheelchair accessible Free parking across the street in City Hall Parking Lot*

Metro Justice Education Fund  
THE ROCHESTER COMMITTEE  
ON LATIN AMERICA  
167 Flanders St.  
Rochester, NY 14619

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**PLEASE ACT ON THIS URGENT ACTION APPEAL  
from Amnesty International USA**

05 November 2008  
UA 306/08 - Fear for safety  
BRAZIL

Katia Camargo (f)  
Her two children, aged 11 and 15

Investigative journalist Luiz Carlos Barbon, who had reported on official corruption, was murdered in May 2007. Local military police officers have been arrested, and are awaiting trial for his murder. His wife, Katia Camargo, is being threatened by people linked to her husband's killers, some of whom are still at liberty. She and her children are in grave danger.

Luiz Carlos Barbon wrote for local newspaper Jornal do Porto in the town of Porto Ferreira, in the state of Sao Paulo. He had investigated numerous cases of corruption and crime involving state officials, including police involvement in gangs stealing freight from trucks on the highway. He also uncovered a child prostitution ring run by Porto Ferreira town councilors and businessmen.

Four military police officers, including a captain, are in custody awaiting trial for his murder, along with a local businessman. However, Katia Camargo has been followed in the street by men she recognized as off-duty police officers, and cars and motorcycles are regularly driven round her house, which is in a very quiet part of town. In May she was nearly run over by a woman she recognized as the wife of one of the detained police officers.

She recently saw one police officer, who had been moved to another town after the investigation into the murder, standing outside a bar pointing and looking at her in a menacing way. Shots were fired outside her lawyer's offices during October. Katia Camargo has not reported any of this to the police, for fear of provoking further attacks.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Brazilian journalists, especially those who report on official corruption or criminal activity, face threats and attacks, sometimes lethal. Freelance journalist Ajuricaba Monassa de Paula, who had been reporting on financial irregularities by the municipal government, was beaten to death by a town councilor in Guapirimirim, Rio de Janeiro state on 24 July 2006.

In May 2008, gangs controlling the Batan favela in the Rio district of Realengo, abducted and tortured three reporters from the newspaper O Dia. These gangs are made up of police officers, firemen, prison guards and soldiers. They dominate poor communities with violence, extorting money from residents.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible and use only this part of the information in your letter:

- expressing concern for the safety of Katia Carmago and her two children, and urging the authorities to take immediate action to give them protection, in accordance with Katia Carmago's wishes;
- asking them to investigate the threats and intimidation that Katia Carmago has suffered, and bring those responsible to justice;
- urging the authorities to publicly recognize the importance of the work of journalists, and to work with media organizations and journalists' unions to implement measures to protect journalists from corrupt state officials and gangs.

**APPEALS TO:**

State Secretary of Public Security  
Exmo. Secretario de Seguranca Publica do Estado de Sao Paulo  
Sr. Ronaldo Augusto Bretas Marzagao  
Rua Libero Badaro, 39, 12o Andar  
01009-000 - Sao Paulo - SP  
BRAZIL

Fax: 011 55 11 3291 6834

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Postage: 94 cents

**PLEASE SEND COPY TO:**

Antonio de Aguiar Patriota  
Brazilian Embassy  
3006 Massachusetts Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
Fax: 1 202 238 2827  
Email: [ambassador@brasilemb.org](mailto:ambassador@brasilemb.org)

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**



## HARSH ARRESTS OF FARMWORKERS IN SODUS FOCUS OF NOVEMBER ROCLA MEETING

Addressing a large audience on November 5, several Sodus area members of the Migrant Support Services of Wayne County spoke about the harsh tactics used by immigration agents in their community. Dr. John (Lory) and Nancy Ghertner, Sr. Luci Romero and Padre Jesus Flores, who work closely with the migrant community, told of raids that had taken place. Padre Flores said that the “raids were destroying the community. Every family is missing at least one person... Either they are back in Mexico or somewhere else.” Nancy Ghertner’s video gave us a glimpse into the difficulties of everyday living for these workers. The Ghertners emphasized that there is a great need for migrant labor and that current laws don’t recognize that fact.

A fifth participant, Loret Gnivecki Steinberg, Associate Professor in RIT’s School of Photographic Arts & Sciences, showed student slides (part of a work in progress) of the daily lives of the migrant families - women and men who work long hard hours in apple orchards and vegetable fields as well as care for their families and try to attend church in spite of the intimidation of ICE agents.

The untenable situation of migrant workers to the east and west of us demands a united effort to work for their basic human rights and for legislation to end their inequitable treatment. ROCLA will be working with the Migrant Support Services of Wayne County (MSSWC) as well as with Rural and Migrant Ministry in Brockport and Farmworker Legal Services for Western New York to help resolve this crisis. In this issue you will find three ways to support these efforts: Sunday vigils in Sodus, movies at the Little, and a December 10 rally in Rochester. To learn more about the work of MSSWC e-mail Lory Ghertner at [nghertner@verizon.net](mailto:nghertner@verizon.net). For a copy of Professor Steinberg’s bibliography e-mail [interconnect-mott@frontiernet.net](mailto:interconnect-mott@frontiernet.net).

## CHURCH WATCH PROGRAM TO CONTINUE IN SODUS

Dr. John (Lory) Ghertner writes:

I originally announced that the Church Watch program would be suspended due to the success in keeping the Border Patrol away from the village during Mass all summer and fall.

Unfortunately, after I had made this announcement, this past Sunday (11/2) the Border Patrol was active in the village again, and the State Police held a road block between Sodus and Williamson “looking for illegal(s)....”

After the meeting of Migrant Support Services it was decided that Church Watch at Church of the Epiphany in Sodus must continue for the foreseeable future. We stand in witness every Sunday at 2 PM to protect our Latino community and to let them know that we are their friends and neighbors.

Please watch this short YouTube video for the best explanation of why we are doing this: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwicu\\_1hFPM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwicu_1hFPM).

## Ecuador Passes Constitutional Referendum

*(continued from page 1)*

forward an agenda of political, economic, and social reform. President Correa previously had asserted that if the measure to enact a new constitution failed, he would not seek re-election; now, due to the passage of the referendum, Correa will be eligible, if re-elected, to hold office until 2017.

Correa’s most staunch opposition came from the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador’s economic powerhouse, commercial center and most significant port. The President claims that the new constitution will wrest power from the nation’s often corrupt elites, who over past decades have wreaked havoc upon the country’s political legitimacy and hobbled its social welfare programs. In return, Correa’s critics insist that the new constitution permits him too much influence over the economy and threatens the orderly development of democratic institutions.

Correa has been an outspoken foe of economic neo-liberalization, rejecting the Washington Consensus model of development in favor of increased economic control by the state. The new constitution allows the Ecuadorian government to oversee the central bank and redistribute idle lands to the poor, as well as appoint a majority of pro-government judges to the courts. Correa has asserted that Ecuador’s foreign debt payments may be suspended in the future if domestic issues require more immediate attention; yet, the approval of the new constitution raises the possibility of real political, economic, and social reform, as well as a redistribution of power to the country’s poor and indigent.

President Correa is a self-proclaimed proponent of “21st century socialism” and a stalwart of the Latin American political left. Like Venezuela’s Hugo Chavez and Bolivia’s Evo Morales, he has sought to induce reform through the approval of a new constitution. However, Correa limited the influence of Chavez and Morales on his domestic political agenda, displaying his willingness to govern independently of Latin America’s leftist political bloc.

Though Correa has refused to renew the US’s lease of its air base at Manta, Washington continues to applaud the Ecuadorian president’s efforts at drug eradication. Ecuador maintains official diplomatic ties with the US, and has made no mention of any efforts to nationalize its electric and telecommunications sectors, as has been done in Venezuela. Correa has not attempted to draw Ecuador closer to Russia, and the new constitution specifically mentions the protection of private property as a key goal of the Ecuadorian government.

Though Correa’s socialist rhetoric has roused negative sentiment among Ecuadorian elites, his policies up to now have been enormously popular among the country’s poor. In a country that has functioned under 20 different constitutions and ousted three presidents from power in the past 10 years, Correa offers a new approach to achieving stability and progress.

## CALENDAR: Dates to Note

**Nov. 21-23.** **Shut Down the SOA!** Fort Benning, GA. Thousands will converge on Fort Benning, Georgia for the November Vigil to Close the School of the Americas (SOA/WHIN-SEC). To sign the petition to President-Elect Obama to Close the SOA go to [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org). [NOTE: The military has co-opted the top space on the web page and is using [www.soawatch.org](http://www.soawatch.org) for promoting military careers.]

**Dec. 5 & 6.** **New York State 2008 Rural Women's Conference:** A Gathering for Rural Women and their Allies. Holiday Inn, Binghamton, NY.  
Speakers: **Commissioner M. Patricia Smith** - a dynamic and effective labor advocate for over thirty years, a driving force in overhauling the New York State Labor Department to focus on vigorously protecting workers and on ensuring that employers compete on a level playing field. She helped to create the Bureau of Immigrant Worker's Rights, and works to keep New York State's most vulnerable workers from being exploited. **Sandra Cuellar Oxford**, the Organizer for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, International Region 1 and volunteers at Somos la Llave del Futuro, an organization for immigrant leadership development and social change.

**Dec. 8.** **"The School to Prison Pipeline"** Human Rights Day in Rochester. What factors push young people out of school and into the criminal justice system and at what cost? What alternatives are there? Downtown Presbyterian Church. 5:30 Potluck, 6:45 Reading of the Articles of the UDHR, 7 PM Program. Tabling by many of the 100 co-sponsoring organizations, including ROCLA. All welcome!

**Dec. 10** Immigration rally at the US Border BorderPatrol office at 171 Pattonwood Drive at 3:30 PM. [See article elsewhere.]

**March 13.** **ROCLA'S Annual Rice and Beans Dinner!** Honoring Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of the School of the Americas Watch, who will receive ROCLA's National White Dove Award. Gates Presbyterian Church (note change of place).

## !SI SE PUEDE!

Below is a sampling of reactions to Barack Obama's election from our neighbors to the south.

**BRAZIL:** President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva says he hopes Obama will place a priority on improving relations throughout Latin America, telling reporters on Wednesday that Obama should "build a more active policy toward Latin America" focusing on development. Steps from Rio de Janeiro's famous Copacabana Beach, police officer Emmanuel Miranda declared that a "new day has dawned in America. It's the beginning of a different era in the U.S.," said Miranda, 53. "The United States is a country to dream about, and for us black Brazilians, it is even easier to do so now."

**GRENADA:** Obama's victory resonated in the Caribbean, which shares with the U.S. the legacy of slavery and racism. Local television and radio switched to the American television networks so people could have live coverage. In Grenada, shouts of "Obama, Obama, Obama" could be heard around midnight local time when people began to realize who had won the election. "Being the first African-American to be elevated to this prestigious office fill us with additional pride and emotion," Grenada Minister Tillman Thomas said. "We view your election as a new beginning for all of us."

**CUBA:** The overwhelming election of Obama once again demonstrates the ability of the American people to change, to choose a new destiny, to correct the course that a country should take when it is wrong.

**COLOMBIA:** Colombians must receive with joy the triumph of Obama. It is a glimmer of hope to overcome the racism that for centuries led us to think of the words "Indian" and "black" as derogatory ones. From an Editorial in El Tiempo, Colombia: Obama logro lo practicamente imposible (Obama achieved the nearly impossible).

**ARGENTINA:** The government considers Obama's victory a "message of hope" for the world. Argentinian chancellor Jorge Taiana added, "It's the end of the cycle of neoliberalism."

**GUATEMALA:** Bloggers are celebrating Barack Obama's win with songs, hope for change and personal wishes. Francisco Estrada Rivera, 51, sells hot dogs and guacamole on a tranquil street corner near a park in downtown Guatemala City. His three brothers all migrated to the United States, so he's heard firsthand stories about discrimination and deportation. "Obama won because the Latinos supported him," Estrada said. "He knows that immigrants work hard, and they come to the United States because there's nothing for them in Latin America. It's good that Obama won. It's good for Latinos, and it's good for Guatemala."

**PANAMA:** the Panama News threw its full support behind Obama and the Democrats: "To curb the political power of sleazy financial hustlers, to balance the budget, to rebuild American industrial might, to end the war in Iraq, to rebuild the overstretched US Armed Forces, to restore respect for human rights both in the USA and around the world—of the two parties with a chance to form the next US government, only the Democrats, led by Barack Obama, have the will to do these things."

**MEXICO:** President Felipe Calderon congratulated Obama on his "triumph" ...and invited him to Mexico. The conservative Mexican president expressed a hope to "strengthen and deepen bilateral relations and work to build a better future for the region," the statement said.

[Sources: the LA Times, BBC News, Faustas' blog, the San Francisco Chronicle, [www.prosebeforehos.com](http://www.prosebeforehos.com) and [www.black-americanweb.com](http://www.black-americanweb.com).]

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## Harvesting Justice Film Festival The Invisible Workforce Made Visible

LittleTheatre, 240 East Ave, Rochester, 585-258-0400  
Admission \$10

Seniors/Students/Little Theatre members \$8 each event

Dec 8, 6:30 pm **The Invisible Mexicans of Deer Canyon**  
**The Invisible Chapel**

*Sponsored by St. Bernard's School of  
Theology & Ministry*

An in-depth look at what life is like for millions of undocumented immigrants living in the shadows of American society. The film portrays intimate details of several individual day laborers who live in sub-human conditions amongst multi-million dollar homes. (73 min)

Jan 12, 6:30 pm **The Guest Worker**

Sponsored by St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Brockport  
On a hot, soggy day on a farm in North Carolina, 12 men sit on a porch watching the rain wash away another day's work, another day's wages. One of those men, 66 year-old Candelario, has been coming to the United States for 40 years, harvesting our crops and trying to provide for his family. Without benefits, without re-tirement, he battles against the elements, his own age, and the backbreaking work, returning to this farm year after year as the guest worker. (54 min)

Net Proceeds from the Film Festival to benefit Rural & Migrant Ministry

**Presented by Rural & Migrant Ministry and The Little Theatre FilmSociety**

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

## BECOME A ROCLA MEMBER!

(or RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP) BENEFITS ABOUND!

- Informative monthly meetings on local and international issues affecting members of the Latin American community.
- Bi-monthly newsletter to keep you up to date.
- Annual Rice and Beans Dinner honoring a national and local activists.
- Participation in Pastors for Peace Friendshipments to Cuba to break the immoral embargo.
- Lifting up, through the arts, social justice issues facing people in Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America.
- Local work on migrant worker/immigration issues.
- Financial support of people in Latin America who are creating sustainable futures and to groups working for justice and societal change.
- Participation in the national organization, Latin America Solidarity Coalition, working for improvements in US-Latin America policies.

Dues: \$20 per person, \$30 per household. Or please send whatever you can. Payable to: ROCLA/Metro Justice

Mail to: The Kaisers, 150 Attridge Rd., Churchville, NY14428.

## HONOR HUMAN RIGHTS: DEC. 10 IMMIGRATION RALLY

As we go to press the Migrant Support Services of Wayne County and Rural and Migrant Ministry are planning a large immigration rally at the US Border BorderPatrol office at 171 Pattonwood Drive (off Lake Ave.) on December 10 at 3:30 PM, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A message from Dr. John (Lorry) Ghertner of the Migrant Support Services of Wayne County:

I am asking you to support our efforts to make the community aware of what has been happening to the migrant population all over the country and to say in one united voice to the federal government that the raids and detentions must stop.

We are in the preliminary development stages right now and I hope that your organization will help to complete the planning and bring supporters to this event. We are planning to stage the rally at a close-by church with a march to the Border Patrol office with several speakers.

Note: Although the Rochester office is not in the Sodus sector we feel that it will be the most visible location.

## ROCHESTER VIGIL TO CLOSE THE SOA

And to Commemorate the Martyrs of El Salvador  
- from John Honeck

We all are invited to a prayer vigil on Sunday, November 23, from 2-3 PM, at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, 296 Flower City Park, to support the national efforts to CLOSE THE US ARMY'S SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS/WHINSEC (SOA) located at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Pax Christi Rochester and the Catholic Family Center will lead us in commemorating the Jesuit martyrs of El Salvador and the four North American churchwomen, slaughtered by Salvadoran troops trained at the SOA in methods of torture and assassination. For more information please call Vivian Rightmyer, 293-3299.

In recent weeks we have read about the firing of Colombian Army Commander Montoya and four other officers for killing 15 poor Colombian youths and pretending they were rebels. Montoya was trained at the SOA. Write or call your Congressperson to demand closure of SOA/WHINSEC.

**"Broken Limbs, Fallen Fruit"** a half hour documentary looks at how decisions over immigration to "el norte" play out in a poor and marginalized Mayan (Tzotzil) family in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state. The dvd will also contain brief (5-10 mins.) mini documentaries about NAFTA and corn, neo-liberalism and coffee, remittances, cooperatives, Acteal, and efforts to stop immigrants at the Arizona-Sonora border, all of which play a part in the lives of the family. Release December 15, 2008.  
[bill@billjungels.com](mailto:bill@billjungels.com)

September 15, 2008

## Santa María Tzejá, Guatemala

Dear Friends from the Rochester and Batavia areas,

My family and I send you our greetings and best wishes from Guatemala. We hope that you are all in good health and spirits. My family is doing well. We are back living in our village again after spending the better part of August in the capital. Juana continues to recover from her August 5th cesarean operation, and our new baby boy, Randall John Patrick is thriving. My three daughters also continue to grow and grow and are very pleased to have a new baby brother. In general, Juana and I are happy and productive, although somewhat tired from the demands of having 4 children age 10 and under in our household. Juana is also continuing with her university level teacher training studies with a focus on Mayan – Spanish Bilingual / Intercultural Studies.

### News Flash: Upcoming trip to Rochester

My father has been experiencing health problems lately, and is going to move out of the Atria assisted living facility into a nursing home. With my wife Juana's approval and blessing, we have decided that this is an important time for me to come north for three weeks in order to assist my parents and my sister Nancy. My daughter Phoebe will accompany me. It looks like we will be flying to Rochester on Saturday, September 20th. We look forward to seeing many of you when we are in the area.

Work wise there is much to report on, as always. I will focus my report today however on the progress we have been making in our efforts to establish a high school in our village.

### Background:

High school in Guatemala refers generally to a three-year period of study which corresponds to grades 10 through 12 in the United States. Individuals who graduate from high school are referred to as professionals, and are generally prepared to work in a specific field, such as primary school teaching, accounting, as forestry technicians, auto mechanics, etc. There are close to 100 professions that one can study at the high school level, so as you can imagine, it would be an important step to achieve a consensus in our village as to which careers we would teach in our future village high school. In Guatemala there is also an accelerated, two-year high school plan of studies for youth who are certain that they will be able to go on to university level studies. In these accelerated study programs, the students do not receive training in any specific profession, but rather are given strong preparation in the sciences, in math, in computer skills and in Spanish language and literature.

As some of you will remember, I began working in earnest on the project to establish a high school in our village in mid-2006. Over the May to September 2006 period I conducted 54 interviews with village leaders, village teachers, village university students and others in order to identify our collective vision of the type of high school we want to try to create. I then wrote up a 26 page report describing what we learned during the interview process. We handed this report out to many different village organizations in the fall of 2006 for their review. In January of 2007, after my family and I had returned from our fall



Randall Shea with his family: Phoebe, Kristina, Randall with Aida, Juana with Randall John Patrick, born August 5.

trip to the United States, we held a meeting of over 50 village leaders and we had the chance to hear their feedback to my fall 2006 report. Based on the findings of our initial 54 interviews, supplemented with the suggestions and recommendations which we heard during the January meeting, I then wrote up a proposal which would guide us in our efforts to establish a community high school in our village. In late February of 2007, we held a second meeting with village leaders and all of the recommendations in our final proposal were accepted and ratified.

We collectively determined that we will attempt to establish a village high school with a focus on one or more of the following career areas:

- Health related studies, like nursing
- Forestry
- Agronomy (farming)
- Natural resource Management
- Teaching

The Mission Statement approved for our future high school reads as follows:

*We will strive to contribute to the development of our municipality and country by means of a socially relevant community high school. We will train and prepare in a holistic way professionals who, aware of the historic and current reality of Guatemala and of the world, will have the tools, knowledge and skills to contribute to a sustainable development which will favor the majority of the people, achieving in this way an educated and prosperous population. We use innovative educational processes of a non traditional type. We train and prepare Guatemalan citizens who will be participatory, critical, creative, conscious and aware, and capable of transforming our society into a more just and democratic one.*

Continued next page

## Santa María Tzejá, Guatemala (continued)

Villagers also voted on and approved a list of shared characteristics which we hope and expect to see in our future graduates. For example:

- Ability to work in one's chosen profession with ease and excellence.
- Ability to recognize and remember that each graduate is a social product, trained not only for her or his own benefit, but for the benefit of her or his community.
- Possess both critical and constructive capabilities; have the capacity to think for oneself, and also to help others think, in order to then transform and build.
- Know, respect and practice the values of one's culture.
- Have the desire and the ability to continue learning and growing, years and even decades after one's formal education has been completed.
- Have a dosage of humility, recognizing that there are different classes of intelligence. For example, illiterate persons also possess a lot of knowledge and have the ability to contribute greatly. Graduation from a high school does not make one superior to those who haven't reached this level. "The higher one's academic level is, the more humble one should be."

The work referred to above was very fruitful. By late February 2007, we had achieved a clear community consensus as to what career fields we would attempt to create in our new high school, and we also had a clear vision of the mission and ideology of the school we are trying to create.

My work on the project basically stalled for the next 6 months or so, as I struggled, without a great deal of success, to keep the work on the high school project moving forward while at the same time attending to my other professional functions and to family responsibilities. Our next big step forward occurred during September and October of 2007 when a civil engineering student from the village and I traveled throughout Guatemala gathering information and visiting existing high schools. In total we conducted in-depth, fact finding visits at 6 different high schools located throughout Guatemala. We also visited the National Nursing School in Coban, Guatemala, and visited the county hospital in our area where a nursing training program is currently underway. We formally interviewed 18 individuals during the course of our field investigation. Some of the key findings to come out of the field investigation included:

- The Guatemalan Ministry of Education is not currently authorizing the creation of new teacher training high schools, since there are already a lot of individuals in Guatemala who are trained as teachers and many cannot find work.
- There do not appear to be many opportunities to train students, at the high school level, for professional careers in the different health fields. The good news is that the Guatemalan Health Ministry, in coordination with the University of San Carlos, started in our county a university-level 3 year training program to prepare nurses. 35 students, all of who are from and living in our county, are currently enrolled in the program and receiving classes in our county hospital. The hope is that our isolated, remote region will, within a few years, have a

good number of qualified, university trained health professionals working throughout the area. Given this new university level training program, it appears unlikely that we will attempt to establish a high school training program for health personnel.

- While visiting high schools in the Petén area of Guatemala we came across a very interesting and exciting training model. We visited a school which prepares its students in a two-year, accelerated high school program in the sciences and math. After two years, the students graduate from high school, and then can enter directly into a three-year university level training program in forestry that is run by the Guatemalan Rural University. The university courses are taught on the same site as the high school courses.

### Work performed in 2008

In the first months of 2008, membership rotated on the high school committee. I stayed on the committee, and was named as the committee's president. As a committee, we wrote up a work plan formally identifying the tasks that need to be accomplished in order to establish a high school, and we established target dates for the completion of each of those tasks. Thanks to some additional funding support we received, we had enough money to hire someone to work as an employee of the high school committee and whose task would be to keep the work on the project moving forward at a good pace and in accordance with our established work plan. In May we publicly announced our intention to hire an employee and began receiving resumes from interested persons. We received applications from 5 individuals, including three persons from the village with a substantial amount of university training. In the end, the committee selected Aurelio Canil Botón to be the new employee. Aurelio is a member of our first middle school graduating class of 1997, and a member of our successful youth theatre group from that era which performed the play about the war years in our village. More recently, Aurelio completed all of his university classroom training in the field of civil engineering, and also completed his supervised professional practicum. He appears to be the ideal choice to lead the work on the high school project. One of his university courses was Preparation and Evaluation of Projects, which dealt with the basic steps involved in the elaboration of any building project. He also has a strong theoretical training in project budgeting and in the solicitation of bids, as well as training in the environmental impact assessment of a project. He also accompanied me in September and October of 2007 in the field investigation work I refer to above. In the photo above he is shown teaching physics to our ninth graders this year.

### A University Extension in Santa María Tzejá?!

In August of this year Aurelio and I interviewed an official from the Guatemalan Rural University in Guatemala City. We informed the official of our fall 2007 visit in the Petén where we visited a high school where the graduates could continue with a three year university degree in forestry. The official was very excited about working with us to establish such a program in our village of Santa María Tzejá. We are planning to go to Guatemala City in the near future to work intensively for an entire week with university officials to concretize plans and next

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## Santa María Tzejá, Guatemala (continued)

steps. Our goal now is to establish an accelerated two-year high school program in our village, with our graduates having the opportunity to go directly into a university training program in either forestry or in agronomy / farming which would also be taught on site in Santa María Tzejá. Having a university extension in our village is clearly something to be excited about and to strive for. Our graduates would be able to contribute more to our region, and earn a better salary, by having three years of university training as opposed to only a high school degree.

It is important to note that while some exciting possibilities are opening up for us as we strive to establish a high school / university extension in our village, we still have a long way to go and a lot of work to be done before we reach our goal. We are always conscious of the need to be systematic and thorough in laying the ground work for the project. We need to be sure, before we invest a considerable amount of money, that the school we hope to build will be economically sustainable over the medium to long term.

So that's my update for the moment. Lest I make you sleepy, as I have young Randall John Patrick in the attached photo, I will sign off for the moment.

Thank you as always for your interest in and support for our village education project. We look forward to being in frequent communication and to seeing many of you soon.

Sincerely

Randall Shea and family

## ROCHESTER COMMITTEE ON LATIN AMERICA (ROCLA)

*ROCLA for many years has sought to be a bridge between the Rochester community and the people of Latin America. Monthly meetings on the 1st Wednesday of each month at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church provide an opportunity*

*to learn more about what is going on in that part of the world. In addition to providing information, ROCLA is committed to working for systemic justice and supports numerous organizations that are on the front line of this endeavor. School of the Americas Watch, the Mexico Solidarity Network, Rights Action and the Rochester Labor Film*

*Festival are among the many groups that receive assistance and encouragement.*

### **ROCLA Steering Committee**

Marilyn Anderson, David Eisenberg, Hernan Escalante, Marilyn and Bob Kaiser (convener), John Locke, Gail and Peter Mott, Vic Vinkey, Mike Wahl, Tom Ward.

### **Update on the Americas Publishing Team**

Editors: Gail and Peter Mott; Designer: John Locke

## Can you spare an hour or two? **ALTERNATIVE FAIR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

Please call Marilyn Anderson  
271-4374

Friday, Dec. 5 from 6-9 PM  
Saturday, Dec. 6 from 10-3PM.

## **FUN, FOOD, MUSIC AND ALTERNATIVE GIFTS AT ALTERNATIVE FAIR!**

*Continued from first page)*

Their weaving is quite different from that done by MAYAN HANDS and reflects their the traditions of their own area.

From Haiti we will have cards from Kevin Fooks' "Looking Through Their Eyes" photography project with the youth of Borgne. He and Sarah Brownell, recipients of ROCLA's Local White Dove Awards for their extraordinary work with the people of Borgne (and who are in Haiti now), have left us card sets, Haitian chocolate and crafts. All proceeds will go to SOIL (Sustainable Organic Integrated Livelihoods).

Coloring books and cards by Marilyn Anderson will round out our offerings.

Please come and buy from ROCLA's truly Alternative table and from other local artisans. Your purchases not only will give you pleasure - they will make an enormous difference in the lives of the craftspeople who made them. We will have information about Fair Trade.

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

ROCLA's gala annual event:  
The Beans and Rice Dinner  
Honoring the 2009 National  
White Dove Award recipient:  
Fr. Roy Bourgeois,  
SOA Watch founder,  
recipient of the 1997  
Pax Christi USA Teacher of  
Peace Award, and the 2005  
Thomas Merton Award,  
and an activist for human rights for all.  
Friday, March 13, 2009. 6:00 PM at Gates  
Presbyterian Church

