

# SISTER CITY UPDATE

Issue 23

Richland Center-Santa Teresa Sister City Project

April 2005



Vidal Reyes of La Poma with two of his children  
(All Chacocente photos by Derrick Gee)

## Justice

By David Rhodes

Most of us have an easy, intuitive feeling for justice, yet explaining it is hard. Like beauty, we best know it when we see it. Something inside us responds to beautiful things and just actions.

In general terms, justice might be defined as the appropriate distribution of pleasant and unpleasant things. When rewards follow honesty, courage and dedicated effort (and penalties follow dishonesty, cowardice and sloth) we experience a sense of satisfaction.

The story of justice is about people getting what they deserve. This gratifying tale is told over and over in popular movies--good people getting ahead and bad people falling behind. Few things comfort us as much as the assurance of justice.

*continued on page 2*

## Escalante Style Show

By Margaret Lee

Proud husbands, neighbors, children and Sister City visitors from Wisconsin watched as the women seamstresses of **Escalante** showed off their wares. Little ones crawled under the tables or clung to their mother's legs as one by one the women in the sewing group held up clothing they made. Smiles of pride were evident on all their faces. SCP gave two treadle sewing machines to this group last year. After training once a week for three months and a \$50.00 dollar loan to purchase materials, the project has become an amazing success.

The clothing displayed ranged from simple skirts and shorts to matching father-son shirts with inset sleeves, collars, and button holes, silky dresses for young girls, with puffy sleeves adorned with lace, dress suits for themselves with fitted jackets, and matched skirts. Many of the items were made without patterns; they were made by looking at pictures. Not being able to sew a straight seam myself, I was impressed.

Some of the women are ready to make clothing for sale. They would sew for relatives and neighbors to start. Thirty-two women have signed up to join the sewing group next year. SCP will provide four machines, two for **La Poma**, two for **El Papalon**. Some of the women who learned the craft this year will be the teachers for the new group. What a wonderful thing to see the pride in the accomplishments of these women.



*Justice, continued from page 1...*

He who walks in integrity will be delivered,  
But he who is perverse in his ways will fall into a  
Pit..

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread,  
But he who follows worthless pursuits will have  
Plenty of poverty.  
(Proverbs 29, 18-20, RSV)

The desire for justice is so strongly embedded it often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When particularly pleasant things are experienced—even outrageous good fortune—we often accept them as well deserved, appropriate. “Feeling good” perpetuates thoughts of “being good.”

But things become more complicated outside of such daydreams, sermons and movies. Natural disasters, pestilence and famine inflict indiscriminate suffering. Good people do not always feel good, prosper or live to a ripe old age. These are mature realities.

Still, no one is directly responsible for “natural” tragedies, and consequently the term “unjust” seems unwarranted. Tragedies simply happen. Justice and injustice are human inventions and only apply to human actions within societies in which standards of decency are accepted as a condition of membership. Nature may be amoral, but within human communities people are entitled to social justice.

Hence, when a schoolyard bully extorts lunch money and a government imprisons without due process, these are injustices. We can justly blame people who abuse power and otherwise act with overt disrespect, resulting in hardship for others.

**But there are also gray areas, morally ambiguous zones where justice stumbles and it’s hard to tell if injustices have been committed or not. One of these, I think, concerns the poverty experienced in many parts of the world.**

Of course it can be argued that poverty is no one’s fault and therefore not “unjust.” But this judgement is less certain when poverty is considered side-by-side with wealth. In isolation, the existence of poverty does not require explanation, but in light of existing wealth, it begs to be explained. If the “separate-but-equal” justification for segregation was shown to be a moral sham, what legitimacy can possibly remain for “separate-and-unequal”? If one society lacks adequate nutrition, health care and education, does this not create a just obligation for a healthy, well nourished and educated society—an obligation that, if neglected, amounts to a tiny injustice?

Still, questions of collective guilt are so much more confusing than individual guilt. Obligations are felt individually, and the obligations of states are, in practical terms, nothing more than personal obligations felt and acted upon by individuals in the name of the state. Also, if “collective punishment” is wrong (bombing a city for the crimes of several individuals within it), then “collective responsibility” must also be mistaken.

On some level, it seems valid to claim that individuals born into wealth are as innocent as people born into poverty for circumstances they find themselves living in.

Consequently, our yearning for justice diminishes when we consider places and conditions other than our own. We know how justice applies to our families and immediate communities, but our sense of justice wobbles in unfamiliar territory.

For these and other reasons I think it is impractical to argue for an expanded sense of justice—extending beyond family, community and national boundaries. Most people cannot (and perhaps should not) be made to feel obliged to people they do not know. Lives are already filled with worries, and there are only so many worries we can bear to consider before we want to scream “leave me alone, it’s not my fault.”

Thankfully, there are more commendable motivations than guilt, including the desire to see good things happen in distant places. When the sense of family is extended, our small place in the world becomes a little better. One need not feel responsible for the deprivation experienced in distant lands in order to feel a deep sense of satisfaction in seeing those conditions improve.

**The Sister City Project offers opportunities for such satisfaction.** Being part of an organization sponsored by remarkably generous individuals just feels good. It is enriching to work with people that wrestle, month after month, with how to best utilize funds in a remote and often unforgiving environment. The achievements of the Chacocente villagers are all the more gratifying because of the many obstacles they face. If justice didn’t feel good, there would be little hope for a just future.



*Sawing boards for the new La Poma school.*

“Give a man a fish you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish you feed him for life, but eat the fish yourself while shaking your head and murmuring tut, tut, tut, and you will teach him how to become a compassionate conservative.”

**-- From the New Book, “Ramblings of an Ungrateful Nation.” Published by: If the Shoe Fits, in cooperation with Wrong End of the Stick.**

## Visit to Santa Teresa

By Janet and Derrick Gee

S.C.P. board members Jack and Maggie Lee and Derrick and Janet Gee visited Santa Teresa and the Chacocente Wildlife Reserve for a week beginning January 19 in order to review the projects. They were accompanied by interested friends of the Lees, Joel Swanson and Geordie Beck. Visits were also made to Rivas to speak with the Rivas Decano Lions' Club who are offering the Chacocente villagers help with eye care through their new Eye Clinic which has been supported by the Spring Green Lions' Club.

The Gees also met with **Norvín Sepúlveda** of Fauna and Flora International who are about to begin environmental and social work in the Refuge. Discussions considered how both organizations could work together for the greater benefit of the communities in the wildlife area.

The group was especially pleased to meet the new mayor of Santa Teresa, **Cristóbal Conrado** and the Vice-Mayor, **Jamileth Fonseca** who has been a friend of the S.C.P for many years. It is hoped that the change of mayor will lead to closer and more efficient ways collaborate.

For three days the group walked between the four communities, seeing the projects, meeting many of the villagers, sleeping in the homes of three families and listening to their stories. Their lives continue to be hard as they eke out a living as farmers in the tropical dry forest which experiences six months of hot, dry weather followed by six months of rain. During this wet season, two crops have to be planted, cared for and harvested. Their daily diet is usually corn tortillas and beans with some cheese, rice, fruit and meat when possible. However, everyone we spoke with was grateful for the help we have given during the past few years.

**Education.** Apart from a teacher problem in Escalante, the communities seem pleased with school progress and the support they have received from us in the past. They would like to continue receiving help with school supplies and asked again about help with backpacks. We said that would be too expensive to provide for everyone.

The La Poma school is nearly finished but we asked why it was costing so much more than the one in Escalante. **Vidal Reyes** explained that 1) they paid a foreman, just as in Escalante, but later paid a second person to finish the school before the academic year began, 2) the quality of the materials is better, (Escalante had most of the lumber donated and took sand and gravel from the river), all the materials in La Poma were bought in, 3) transportation costs were higher because Escalante is closer to a road. 4. The structure is stronger (More concrete, less wood).

We are concerned that the issue of a suitable well was not addressed before the building was begun in La Poma. They have a temporary plan to bring water in via a hosepipe from a nearby hill but this issue will have to be solved in the future. (We later learned that a brand new school in La Chota, built with IMF money at a cost of US\$25,000 also has the same problem!)

We met with **Gloria Rivas** who is leaving as the Municipal School Superintendent. She thanked us for our

support of the school and regretted the problems with the teacher in Escalante. We asked if there was any possibility of help from the Ministry for a well in La Poma and to repair the Escalante school. She said that there was no money available.

Regarding Jeffrey Solis, the new Escalante teacher, she said he is young and enthusiastic. She also said that the ministry will send desks to La Poma. She noted that 6 students left Escalante for La Poma because of the bad situation. The other schools have had good attendance.

Gloria also explained a new program that is planned for the school in La Chota. It is called Bachillerato por Encuentro por Modulos. It is a high school program for those 15 and older and will be done in modules. This would be a big help for the Chacocente students because they would not have to go to Sta. Teresa for high school. There would be no enrollment fee and transportation would be easier. Another school in La Pitilla will be offering the same program. The La Chota program will begin in February and is financed by money from Spain and PAENIC.



*"Old man, New School" Joe Swanson at La Poma*

**Gardens.** After earlier failures at working communally on garden projects, 9 people and their families from El Papalon have decided to give the idea another chance. We visited their garden located near the school where they showed us a new drip irrigation system that is being installed with our financial help. **Carlos Martinez**, the new ag. technician was there also. Joel, Jack and Derrick had questions about the soil fertility and had specific suggestions related to manure. The people involved said that they would be willing to send some of their produce to help the local school food program.

**Health.** After being slow to accept the idea of natural medicines, community members are now realizing they can be useful because they are generally more readily available and less expensive than modern medicines. In the Health Centers in La Palma/El Papalon and Escalante, we saw the natural medicines the health promoters have made. Some of the ingredients are local plants; some are bought in the markets. Slowly they are beginning to generate more income. In one village the health center had a current surplus of \$125. Marta Rodriguez of La Poma is attending a midwifery training program in La Pita with MINSA, the Health Ministry.

We met with **Dr. Wilford Quintanilla**, the MINSA doctor serving at the government health center in La Pita. He is well-liked in the communities near Chacacente, perhaps because he is willing to visit patients at home if they can't get to La. Pita. The doctor, who especially works with pregnant women and children under five years old, explained that the main problems are diarrhea, poor nutrition, parasites, and respiratory issues. He said financial help was needed with the existing nutrition program for pregnant women and children, which provides rice, beans oil, sugar, and vitamins. Brigades of volunteers go into the villages and vaccinate children, as was confirmed in our villages. He went on to say that each village has a health committee, and when necessary they carry a sick person in a hammock for up to three hours to see a doctor. There is also training for local people to know what to do in an emergency. Special issues include: adolescents and drugs, family planning, and sexually transmitted diseases. (Money is also needed for sports equipment. We hear there is a strong baseball rivalry between our villages!)

We explained our health strategy to Dr. Quintanilla, and he said he was willing to work with and help train the village health promoters, as well as to use our health clinics as a location to prescribe the medicines we have provided. Starting in May, the doctor will visit each of the three clinics once a month and see patients.

The delegation delivered a suitcase full of basic medicines. They also brought stethoscopes donated by the Thrifty White Pharmacy. **The Rivas Lions Eye Clinic received \$300 donated by the La Farge Lions Club to help Chacacente villagers with eye problems.**

**Bees.** Almost all of the SCP's projects originate as ideas suggested by the Chacacente people themselves. Beekeeping is a project requested by their Commission for 2005. Trees and plants of Chacacente's dry tropical forest are flowering year round, perfect for honey production.

The participants will receive training, and plan to use Italian bees (the usual type in U.S. hives), rather than the more productive but aggressive Africanized bees, so as not to destroy the native bees in the wildlife refuge. Both men and women will be involved in beekeeping. Half the honey and wax produced will go to the health promoters as ingredients in making their natural medicines.

**Alcaldia.** We met Cristobal Conrado and his vice-mayor, Jamileth Fonseca, both at the beginning and end of our visit. Mayor Conrado is a very quiet man and hard to read. The vice-mayor position is usually just a token, but Jamileth plans to be active and continues to be a strong supporter of our project. We asked both her and Cristobal to make her the Alcaldia representative on our Commission and the Alcaldia signatory on our bank account. There appeared to be no problem with this, but as the new team was not yet properly in place, no decision could be given. It appears that the responsibility for education is shifting from the central government to the Alcaldias. Jamileth expects that Gloria Rivas will be replaced with someone more effective. We stressed our wish for a closer relationship with the Alcaldia and Santa Teresa.

## Sleep Tite, Mind the Bugs Don't Bite

by Derrick Gee

It was one of those magical evenings. The only connection with the "real" world was the ubiquitous white, plastic chairs we sat on. Vidal and Martha, our hosts for two nights in their forest clearing near the village of la Poma, gazed with us at the only source of light- the moon and stars. We talked about what might be "out there" on those billions of earths, about their spirituality, the past and the future.

By eight o'clock it was bedtime for all of us- the four adults, four of their own children and two foster children. For our bedroom, they had partitioned off part of the living room with a pink plastic sheet and a pretty lace curtain for a door. Janet and I each had a canvas camp bed and, for company, a pile of gunny sacks holding last year's bean harvest. Before leaving us for the night, the kids chased the livestock out of our room- a puppy, a piglet and two chickens.

I put my boots and socks close to the bed in case I needed to wend my way outside during the night. After a blown kiss to my spouse and a few of those deep, relaxing breaths and sighs that precede a good night's rest, my feet began to itch. There was a sense of something moving between my toes; then crawling on my calves; then biting. I reached down and felt some tiny critter, squished him, or her, and then another, and another. In the dark, it was hard to know upon whose territory I'd encroached. Putting together the evidence- bare feet on a dirt floor frequented by poultry- must be some kind of chicken flea. As they reached my thighs, despite vigorous harvesting and squishing, I decided that it would be better to sneak from between the sheets, trapping the fleas in a "sheet sandwich, and lie on top of them. It seemed successful.

As I worked hard at losing consciousness, I had a sensation of cobwebs drifting down onto my face. In all their gossamer delicacy, they created an itching sensation that I could only placate with vigorous scratching. As the cobwebs kept coming, I was expecting any time to feel the wet tackiness of my own blood.

During a lull in the cobweb assault, I realized that the lack of bed covers was making for a cold night. I reached inside my boots and put on my socks. They were full of fleas! I whipped them off and threw them to the floor. Groping upwards onto the pile of bean sacks to find my shirt and pants, I caused my backpack to fall on me. All this activity tested the bed. The canvas began to rip away from the frame. Voices came from the other room. Janet asked if I was OK. "No" was my only answer. I didn't want the whole family to be groping around in the dark trying to solve the gringo's problems. By now, I believe it was two a.m. I know this because, every hour, a battery -operated clock would play classical music

It was tough trying to sleep on a broken bed. Taking all my weight on my thighs and shoulders is just not one of my normal sleeping postures. From eight until six is a long night for most folks. You know how sometimes, after a bad night, you think you haven't slept at all, though in reality you have? I swear I didn't sleep for one second in ten hours.

...continued

At first light, the post-mortem on the critters proved them to be ants. Later, when I saw the same insects on a cactus, Vidal warned us to keep away.. "They bite", he said. We told him the story. He laughed.

Part of the function of this trip was to test the possibilities for eco-tourism. We're learning a thing or two!

### Nature Notes

**Ants.** After Derrick had spent the night battling ants, Vidal showed him their nest in the huge swollen thorns of a nearby cornizuelo tree, a native of the dry tropical forest. This species of red ants and the cornizuelo(bull's horn acacia) have a symbiotic relationship. The tree provides the food for the ant colony, as well as its home. Nectar-producing glands protrude from the leaf stalks, and the modified leaf tips are sources of fat, protein, and vitamins. In return, the aggressive ants are a standing army protecting the cornizuelo tree. Their fierce sting keeps away any insects or animals that might defoliate the tree. The ants also chew away other plants that touch their tree or grow beneath it, keeping away competition for light and soil resources.

**Chacocente's Olive Ridley's** Six months of the year, when the moon is in the last quarter, thousands of olive ridley sea turtles crawl ashore at Chacocente to lay their eggs in the amazing mass-nesting phenomenon known as the arribada. Chacocente is one of less than 10 arribada beaches remaining in the world today. The turtles are returning to lay their eggs on the very beach where they hatched. Each mother turtle digs a hole in the sand with her flippers, deposits about 100 eggs, and covers them with sand. The eggs will hatch in fifty days, and the baby turtles will immediately head for the ocean, where they will spend the rest of their lives. The males will never come ashore again, and the females only to lay their eggs.



Jack Lee, good Samaritan

## **BURGERS, BRATS, BEER**

**MAY 21, 3:00 P. M.**

We've scheduled a day of fun at the Jack and Margaret Lee Hacienda to help raise money for the people of the Chacocente Reserve in Nicaragua. The festivities begin at 3:00PM and will continue until the fire is out and the beer is gone. It will be a time to laugh and enjoy ourselves. Hike on the Nature Conservancy, (153 acres across the road from our farm along the Kickapoo River) or bring your musical instruments and help entertain the old folks. Call the Lees at (608) 625-2252 for more details.

**The Burger/Brat combo**, home made buns by Rosanne & Audrey, homemade desserts, and other "fixins" will be available for the grateful donation of **five dollars**. Beer will be available for \$1.50 per bottle. (No fair bringing your own) Please bring lawn chairs if you have them.

Directions to the farm: Hwy 131 south of **LaFarge** towards Viola to **Tunnelville Rd.** (Rustic Road #55) 1 1/2 miles to farm. Red/Brown house. Watch for Jack lying in the road.

**HAVE FUN** while helping our **SISTER CITY**

Want to come earlier in the day and canoe? Call 625-4395 for canoe rental information ....

### **Eat Pizza, Help Santa Teresa**

On two Mondays, June 6 and June 13, Richland Center's Pizza Hut will be doing a benefit for the Sister City Project. For each \$6 buffet dinner sold, one dollar will go to the SCP. The buffet consists of salad bar, pasta dishes, bread sticks, and all the pizza slices you can eat, including dessert pizzas.

Please come and bring your friends – we can have a party right there. SCP board members will serve as greeters. Brochures and other information will let diners know about our work in Santa Teresa.

Pizza Hut is located at 719 Highway 14 East, Richland Center.

On Friday and Saturday, September 23 and 24, the SCP will have a benefit event running Burnstad's "Brat Barn." This is a refreshment stand by the supermarket where shoppers can buy a freshly cooked brat or hot dog and bun, along with a beverage. SCP board members and supporters will cook the brats. All profits will go to the SCP.

Our thanks to these two Richland Center businesses for their support!



*Olive Ridely Arribada at Ostional in Costa Rica. Will sights like this become just a memory at Chacocente?*

*(Photo by Michael P. Jensen, courtesy of Seaturtle.org)*

## Sea Turtle Struggle Continues

By Jane Furchgott

Thank you to everyone who emailed letters about Chacocente’s sea turtle crisis to Nicaraguan President Bolanos. Over a thousand letters were sent, mainly through the website of the Sea Turtle Restoration Project (STRP).

Todd Steiner, STRP Director, received a copy of a letter sent from Nicaraguan Minister of the Environment Harding to President Bolanos. After receiving a thousand emails, Bolanos had obviously asked Harding to look into the Chacocente sea turtle situation. Harding assured the President that MARENA (Nicaragua’s DNR), the army, police, and navy would do something about the problem.

In October, soon after the letterwriting campaign began, several fishermen from El Astillero were arrested returning from sea with 3600 turtle eggs. In February, two pickups containing over 10,000 eggs were stopped near Playa La Flor, the other Pacific arribada beach, and several people were arrested. These were encouraging developments. But as far as we know, nothing else changed during the past turtle nesting season (June-Feb.).

In fact, during this past season, no MARENA boat patrols took place at Chacocente, despite the fact that MARENA now has its own boat, and despite the SCP’s willingness to help share costs, and Leonidas’s efforts to get the patrols going again. The money was available. MARENA’s excuse was that a captain couldn’t be found.

To top off this sad chapter, the Santa Teresa municipality’s new patrol boat motor (a gift from a few SCP board members), was recently stolen from a small locked building near the ranger station, under the eyes of the MARENA guards. The police are looking for the motor but have had no luck. Perhaps it was an inside job.

There is one ray of hope for improved Chacocente turtle protection in the future. Fauna & Flora International (FFI), an English environmental organization which has \$900,000 for programs at Chacocente, has received a promise from MARENA to completely change Chacocente’s guard staff. Perhaps our email campaign also encouraged this action. Changing the guard will provide a clean slate for Chacocente MARENA, which for years has been suspected of complicity

in egg trafficking besides doing a poor job of protecting the turtles.

(Another bit of positive news came from the SCP January delegation. In conversations with the villagers, they were told that many in the area understand the need for changes in land use and for protection of the turtles, although the villagers wish they would be consulted more by MARENA.)

In January I went to the International Sea Turtle Symposium in Savannah, Georgia, where California ecologist Sarah Otterstrom and I organized an informal meeting of scientists concerned about Nicaragua’s sea turtles. We received a lot of support for our email campaign. Todd Steiner, STRP Director, thought it was a good start since it caught the President’s attention. We learned that sea turtle protection is lacking all over Nicaragua, including the Caribbean coast, where critically endangered hawksbill turtles compete with fishing and development and green turtles are being harvested past the point of sustainability.

Now we are working on a long collaborative letter to President Bolanos outlining all the specific sea turtle problems from the whole of Nicaragua. This letter will be presented to President Bolanos and other influential politicians. We intend to put pressure on the government through the international NGOs that fund the Nicaraguan government’s programs. A meeting in Nicaragua and press releases will accompany the presentation of the new letter.

## Chacocente / Kickapoo Valley Reserve

On March 30th, 2005 members of the Richland Center Sister City group met with friends of the Kickapoo Reserve to present a slide show from the January visit to Santa Teresa, Nicaragua. The purpose of the presentation was to familiarize those involved with the Kickapoo watershed with the similarities and differences of the Chacocente Reserve and our own reserve here in southwestern Wisconsin.

Jack and Margaret Lee and José Marroquin presented the people of our area with a look at the people, the environment, economy, and politics of the Chacocente Reserve and surrounding area. Both reserves are being pressured by development; externally as well as by internal land use issues. Although the climates are different, the goals are similar, to protect and preserve the areas for future generations through sustainable land use policies. A question and answer period followed. Those who attended expressed optimism at establishing a working relationship between the two reserves.

We rely on the ongoing support of our membership to carry on our work in Santa Teresa. Please consider attending our fund-raisers and/or sending a donation. Tax-deductible contributions may be sent % **Stein Goering, Treasurer, Sister City Project, P.O. Box 483, Richland Center, WI 53581.** Checks should be made out to the **RC-Santa Teresa SCP.**

*Agricultural Reivew... continued from Page 8*  
agricultural practices and the increased effort in adding organic matter from plant material and manure to the land.

The area and the climate provide year round production capability, which also makes the emphasis on sustainable practices all the more necessary. Monocultures are now being discouraged as the present form of agriculture is dominated not by a market economy but by a self- reliant one. This form of agriculture is the most efficient in that all efforts to conserve soil and nutrients directly affect the production and therefore have a positive educational and health incentive to those involved

Gardens are being used communally to increase production and minimize the use of technology and resources necessary to produce food for the table on a year round basis. Drip irrigation is prevalent and necessary in the production of food during the dry season. Irrigation is presently the most viable means of providing lacking nutrients to the plants. Presently, major garden crops include tomatoes, peppers, and beans. More research will have to be done on which crops are appropriate during the varying seasons and which crops are culturally acceptable to the people of the region.

Subsistence agriculture can be sustainable on the poor soils and steep terrain of the region if the practices presently being endorsed are continued and expanded upon. The lack of infrastructure makes a market economy not only impractical but would in essence be the undoing of this fragile form of agriculture. Less in this environment is more. The smaller the acreage the more manageable, thus the possibility of success increases while the environmental degradation is minimized.

Minimal investment in technology in the way of pumps (solar and wind) and irrigation equipment would make year round food production possible if increased measures of soil enhancement through the incorporation of organic materials are encouraged. Organic material in the soil will provide aeration, water retention, and reduce erosion, the elements essential for sustainable food production for livestock and people.

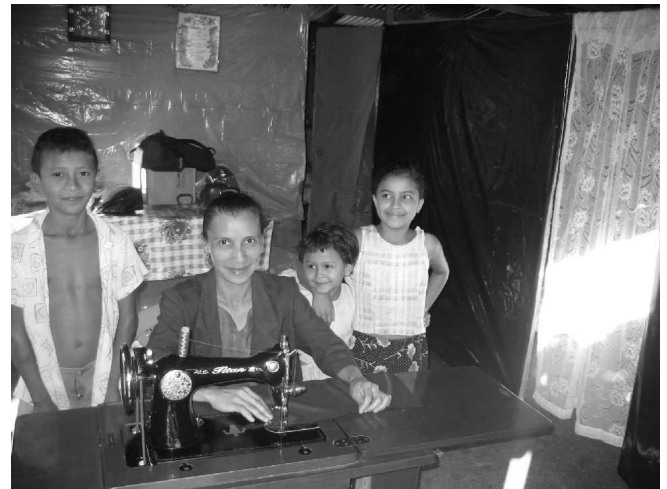
The people of the region seem enthusiastic about the small successes achieved to this point and were receptive to new ideas presented to them.

Success is the eventual defining characteristic that encourages education and breeds further achievement. The introduction of an agricultural agent to the community who is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the potential for self reliance in food production will prove to be invaluable as long as the needs and desires of the community are respected and the land can be protected from short term success by the exploitation of resources necessary for long term sustainability.

The integration of existing systems as well as philosophies will determine the extent and depth to which new ideas will be accepted. An idea generated locally to increase participation in the communal gardens is to produce food for the school lunches as well as for families. The use of wells for drinking as well as irrigation has generated a new interest in the types of wells being installed and the ability of those wells to provide water where and when it is needed. The health centers which produce products derived from plant material,

may be impacted by the extending the influence of not only agriculture but agricultural production of these products, As well as health care.

The interconnectedness of the projects presently being displayed is encouraging, not because we who went to observe the progress of these ventures saw the merit in them, but because the values and relationships born of those participating has become evident to themselves and projected upon others in the way of personal pride in their accomplishments.



*Expert seamstress Martha Rodriquez at her sewing machine*

## SCP Membership Report

The Sister City Project’s annual membership meeting was held on February 26, 2005. We welcomed two new board members, **Joe Swanson** and **Jon Bishop**. Elected to office were: **Jane Furchgott** (President and “turtle person”), **José Marroquin** (Vice-President and International Coordinator), **David Rhodes** (Secretary), **Stein Goering** (Treasurer), **Jack Lee** (Outreach Coordinator), **Joe Swanson** (Newsletter Editor), **Derrick Gee** (Long Range Planner). **Leonidas Grijalva** continues as our Nicaraguan representative. The SCP thanks departing board members Bonnie Wright, Marty Clearfield, and Ambir Raimer for their contributions.

The financial report for 2004 showed income of \$29,097 (primarily from donations) and \$27,397 in expenses. Of that, \$1,004 went for local administrative costs, with the remainder going toward our work in Nicaragua. Here is an approximate breakdown of project expenditures:

La Poma School Project	\$5700
Agriculture	5000
Latrines	3500
Other education	1400
Sewing project	1200
Natural resources	400
Nica representative expenses	5700

It should be noted that most of the Nica rep costs were covered by Peter Smith, who has been making regular donations to pay Leonidas’ salary. We thank Peter for his past support, but members should be aware that from now on, these costs will come from our general fund.

Richland Center - Santa Teresa Sister City Project  
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## **BRATS & BEER FESTIVAL**

MUSIC, FOOD, HIKING,  
CONVERSATION

SEE PAGE 5 INSIDE FOR DETAILS

**GET TOGETHER WITH FRIENDS  
RAISE MONEY FOR THE  
CHACOCENTE RESERVE.**

**J&M LEE HACIENDA**

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*(Call 608-625-2252 for directions)*

**Saturday, May 21, 2005**

**From 3:00 Pm Until Jack Tells Us To Go Home**

**HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE**

**Change Service Requester**

## **Agricultural Review**

By Joe Swanson

The agricultural practices of the people in La Polma and surrounding areas has been predicated on the slash and burn principle that has been prevalent in the Americas for hundreds of years. The land is deforested, exposing the thin layer of topsoil, which supports the planting of food crops for the people and animals of the surrounding area. The land being used for agriculture in this area is steep and relatively infertile. The potential for erosion and further depletion of soil nutrients by rain in the wet season and sun and wind in the dry season further depletes the potential for sustainable production on these lands.

The agricultural agent has recognized the problems associated with food production in this region and means are being taken to implement techniques that will minimize the impact of agriculture on this fragile land. Contour strips have been incorporated into the steep terrain to minimize erosion. Buffer strips consisting of vegetation and soil are being used to further decrease the possibility of erosion during the rainy season and to conserve moisture in the dry season.

Trees have been planted in the buffer strips whose roots not only help hold the soil but whose branches also provide a source of protein. The trees produce a variety of beans that are used for animal feed. Grains planted in the strips are of two primary varieties, millet and corn. These are both species of grass which produce moderate yields on thin soils. Further efforts at preventing erosion and enhancing the nitrogen-starved soil are being introduced. The process of companion planting has been introduced into this area. Beans have been

planted along with the grasses to hold the soil and fix nitrogen. The green matter produced by these crops is then used to enhance the buffer areas and as green manure which adds organic matter to the thin soils.

Presently the amount of land under cultivation is dictated by the amount of labor available, as there is little mechanical assistance in the farming practices. The future of sustainable agriculture in this area will be determined not by increasing production through expansion (more acreages), but by increasing production through the combined use of sustainable

*Continued on Page 7, inside*



*Sustainable agriculture could reduce dependence on slash-and-burn cropping and free-range cattle, which threaten the Reserve's ecosystems and are beyond the means of most Chacocente residents.*