



# insider

**Volunteer Update  
June-July, 2009**

Interfaith Service to Latin America

270 Page Street West

Saint Paul, MN 55107

**New!**

Phone: 612-819-8877

E-mail: [info@isla.cc](mailto:info@isla.cc)

[www.isla.cc](http://www.isla.cc)



*Celebrate*  
***An evening  
with Mama  
Chunga***

*(well, virtually)*

**Sat., Aug. 29  
6-9 pm**

*At the parsonage of  
Hennepin United Methodist  
Church, 425 Groveland Ave,  
Minneapolis, MN*

***Nicaraguan-style food & fun!  
Reconnect with ISLA friends!  
Share memories & plans!***

***Silent auction preview 6:00 pm***

*Nicaraguan artwork, crafts, furniture, local services, etc.*

***Dinner 6:30 pm, Fun into the night!***

***Suggested donation \$25 per person***

***Order tickets now or further information:***

***Jon at 612-819-8877***

OUR MISSION

ISLA'S mission is to partner with communities in Latin America through health, education and construction programs to become self-sustainable.

Board Members

**Anne Meyer Ruppel, Chair**  
**Katherine Schill, Treasurer**  
**Dean Neuburger, Secretary**  
**Dan Kramer,**  
*Construction Program Director*  
**Bob Mullin,**  
*Education Program Director*  
**Dave Dexter,**  
*Medical Program Director*  
**Dwayne Cowdin**  
**Jason Ritenour**  
**Tom Cooper**  
**Rick Panning**  
**Lu Lindstrom**  
**Michelle Murphy**

---

*Administrative Director*

**Jon Kerr**

*Program Coordinator in Jalapa*

**Javier Eduardo Aguilar Cordoba**

---

***Look for us on  
Facebook!***

*Easy sign up and log-on at*

***[www.fbook.me/ISLA](http://www.fbook.me/ISLA)***

*Share your thoughts, memories, photos &  
reconnect: to ISLA friends*

# Medical team takes its show on the road

January is a great time to go to Nicaragua, especially when the thermometer falls below zero here in Minnesota.

Therese Zink, a physician at Fairview Zumbrota, and Heather Dankwart, a third year University of Minnesota medical student who is spending nine months with Fairview Zumbrota/Red Wing, traveled to Jalapa, Nicaragua for ten days as part of the ISLA team (Interfaith Service to Latin America).

Therese and Heather were part of a team that collected over 470 Pap smears and performed colposcopy (the examination for abnormal Pap smears) on thirty women. Pap smears were collected at the hospital in Jalapa as well as in smaller communities. Dr. David Dexter and his team at Fairview volunteer their time to read the Pap smears and biopsies. Since the late 1990s over 7000 women have been entered into the database.

One of the most exciting parts of the effort is that over the last two years a local women's group has come together and partners with the ISLA team to publicize the PAP smear clinics and to distribute results. These are women who run local businesses but volunteer their time to register patients during the brigade's clinics, publicize the clinics before they occur, and distribute the results. In these communities you can't just send the results by mail, email, or phone. Instead volunteers from the women's group travel to the small communities and hand-deliver the results. An address may read: 30 paces east of the school.

Nicaragua does have national health care and women can get Pap smears from government clinics, but in this region, the government clinics do not consistently provide results to patients and the local gynecologist has not given women the appropriate follow-up. As a result, ISLA has tried to fill a niche until a more honest gynecologist can be recruited to the region.

The local women's foundation arranged talks at the local tobacco factories to recruit women for Pap smears. Tobacco is one of the main products grown in the region and many women and men work in the fields and factories during the day. Heather delivered four presentations to workers while they stood on benches separating tobacco leaves on wooden tables. She and a translator then circulated the gymnasium-size rooms talking with women individually, answering questions, and encouraging men to have their wives get Pap smears. Many women had never had a Pap smear, were afraid of having the test, or had husbands who had not allowed them to get Pap smears. Due to the lack of preventive screening, cervical cancer rates are much higher in Nicaragua than in the US.

Heather Dankwart said, "One of the most rewarding parts of the trip was to see some of the women I talked with at the factory come to the hospital for Pap smears."

Reprinted from the Zumbrota (MN) News-Record



Michelle Murphy, Joyce Hellickson and Heather Dankwart, along with other ISLA medical volunteers rode in the back of pickups or any available transportation to visit outlying clinics during their January trip to Jalapa. Photo by Dean Neuberger.

## Construction team makes big plans for future Jalapa trips

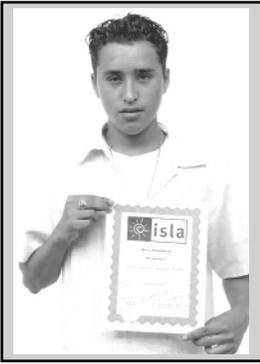
A successful January trip, with completion of multiple projects, was only a sample of big things planned for the future, describes ISLA Construction Committee chairman Dan Kramer.

A tour of potential projects in and around Jalapa was another important part of the trip. The goal of the daylong trip was to give construction team members an opportunity to think ahead about problems and solutions that would help local residents.

"There were eight or ten sites we assessed," said Kramer. "It was really good because we got our own view of the sites and could tell if they were appropriate. That was really good because we don't always get to do that."

Advance planning has always been a problem when dealing with a nation, Nicaragua, and community, Jalapa, with so many immediate needs. The construction team is relied upon to support medical team, clinic and other ISLA needs on an ad hoc basis. Their heroism responding to immediate needs has sometimes come at the expense of longer-term projects.

Construction continued P. 3



**Delvin Francisco  
Rugama  
Duartes is one  
of ISLA's 2009  
scholarship recipients.**

# ISLA supports college & university students

**By Bob Mullin, Education Chair**

In it's second year, ISLA's two -year college support program has generated an interesting and ambitious student body of 28 young people. Knowing that ISLA will support them for only up to two years, they have chosen programs ranging from one year, to earn a teaching certificate, to eight years to become a Catholic priest.

Teaching is the most popular major, which is wonderful, because the need is great. With class sizes ranging up to 50 students, teaching is a profession for the strong of heart. The Nicaraguan Minister of Education is promising to reduce class size and hopefully raise teacher salaries, which right now can only be described as abysmal. It is unclear where he will find the money to accomplish this. Six of the 12 teaching major students are attending the Escuela Normal Mayrena Guadamuz in Esteli. This is similar to the "Normal" schools popular in this country in the first half of the last century, preparing students to teach in primary schools. Five of the students will be studying for four years to qualify them to teach in high school.

One of our students, Jose Luis Lopez Mejia, is in his second year at the National University in Managua (UNA), the top school in Nicaragua. This is an accomplishment of considerable note. High school graduates from Jalapa rarely are accepted at UNA without an additional year of preparatory work. José Luis Lopez Mejia is majoring in engineering, a five year program. Pablo Antonio Blandon Martinez is without a doubt our most committed student. Pablo will be at the Catholic Seminary in Esteli for eight years preparing for the priesthood. When he started high school, Pablo wasn't much taller than the ISLA bicycle he received.

Unfortunately we still have high school and college scholarship students who do not have sponsors for the current school year which runs from February through November. If you can help, it is \$150 to sponsor a high school student for one year and \$300 to sponsor a college student. ISLA's address is 270 Page St. W, Saint Paul, MN, 55107.

## Construction cont'd from P. 2

But the construction team is ready for both maintenance and repairs and long-term work," said Kramer. "We'd like to get more opportunities to think ahead when we can."

The benefits include an ability to find the right materials and crafts people at the right times.

"We can promote the trips so that we get people on trips that have skills that fit various types of projects," said Kramer. "That's a big advantage."

Unspoken, but even more important to construction team members, giving advantages to the people of Jalapa. It is a can-do goal that history suggests they can do.

If interested in being part of a construction team for a future Jalapa trip, please contact Dan Kramer at [drkramer@hotmail.com](mailto:drkramer@hotmail.com)



**Long-time ISLA board members (from left) Glen Puncochar, Nancy Carlson and Dave Dexter recently finished their final terms along with Peter D'Ascoli and Don Pavek. All three remain active in the organization with Dexter continuing as Medical Director, replacing D'Ascoli. If interested in serving on the ISLA board or committees please contact Lu Lindstrom at [4lindy@charter.net](mailto:4lindy@charter.net)**

ISLA  
270 W. Page Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55107

## March team walks the talk with Jalapans

Perhaps you are familiar with the Antonio Machado poem that says “caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar ...” or, “traveler, there is no road, the path is made by walking.”

The March trip reaffirmed for me that ISLA is indeed making our path as we walk. And now joining us on the journey is the marvelous Women’s Foundation of Jalapa whose work in educating women about the importance of Pap smears — for early detection of cervical cancer — has made a huge impact. They presented a first-ever conference on the subject when we were there. OB/GYN Elizabeth Doty gave a clear, concise presentation for the attendees and answered many interesting questions. She and nurse Gloria Karl also worked non-stop in the hospital, performing colposcopies and procedures on past patients who had had abnormal Paps.

The Women’s Foundation also arranged for our Pap team to go on the road. Between Michelle Johnson and Erica Ross many more tests than anticipated were performed — in the hospital, in several tobacco factories, in the high school, even in the home of one of the Foundation’s leaders. Michelle Johnson and I (interpreter) felt fortunate to be able to set up our portable table right on the factory owner’s desk. This “presidential suite” came complete with room service — bottles of water delivered by the owner! Erica and Michelle were also asked to consult on various ER cases at the hospital, including a man who hit a live wire and fell from the scaffolding while working on a construction site — not a happy ending. Psychiatrist Ed Colon’s work in the mental health area was invaluable ... he traveled far and wide, and as a native Spanish speaker, was able to communicate perfectly.

--Miriam Kelen



**You can make  
a difference!**

**Your donation of any  
amount (gifts of \$50,  
\$100, or \$200 suggest-  
ed) will always have im-  
pact through ISLA’s  
medical, education and  
construction programs.**

Send your tax deductible  
contribution to:

**ISLA  
270 Page Street W.  
Saint Paul, MN 55107**

