



insider

**Volunteer Update
Nov.-Dec., 2009**

Interfaith Service to Latin America 270 Page Street West Saint Paul, MN 55107
Phone: 612-819-8877 E-mail info@isla.cc www.isla.cc & now at www.fbook.me/ISLA

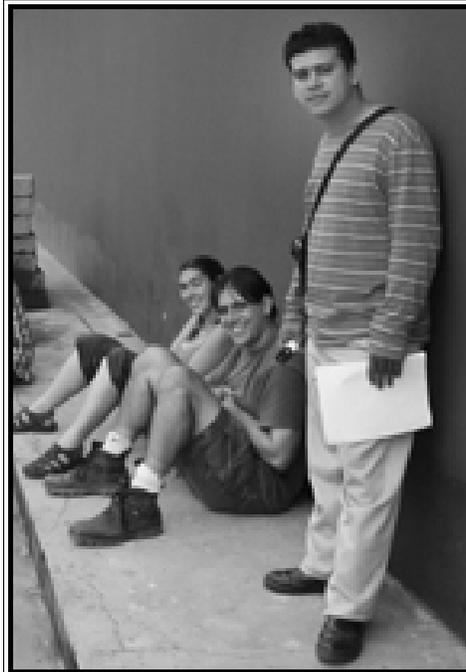
Jalapa comes to Minnesota Javier's visit brings perspective on two cultures and ISLA's future

I understand now what is meant by the phrase 'developed country.'

My August visit to Minnesota showed me both friendships and modern conveniences shared by my friends. I can not forget the Wii-game, for me it was amazing to see such fun at home. No one I visited is without a nice, hot shower or a fridge full of foods and beverages, along with at least one or two cars per family.

But beyond material things my visit also gave time to think about God and his word, and enjoy social activities with ISLA friends. I will never forget studying the bible with Don and Bonnie Pavek until almost midnight or other time spent with ISLA friends in Northfield or at St. Olaf.

Watching the Jessie James Days parade with the Cowdins was another highlight. I was especially surprised by the huge horses pulling the chariots – though I also saw these amazing giant horses at the Minnesota State Fair.



Javier Aguilar Cordoba usually leads visiting ISLA teams in Jalapa. But his late August - early September visit to Minnesota and subsequent visits with church and school groups - even a local radio interview - brought new connections between two cultures. He reflected on what he learned and hopes to bring back to his work and the people of Nicaragua. Photo by Jon Kerr

Javier cont'd P.3

OUR MISSION

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

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Jon Kerr

Program Coordinator in Jalapa

Javier Eduardo Aguilar Cordoba

***It's not too late for
March 10-21, 2010
trip to Nicaragua!***

Applications and info at

www.isla.cc

Karl leads Oct. team thru both adversity & fun

Through snow or high waters, nothing keeps Gloria Karl from successfully leading her ISLA teams to Nicaragua and back.

Never was that more true than with the October ISLA delegation, which experienced flight delays from the first Minnesota snowstorm of the year and washed out Nicaraguan mountain roads. But Karl's leadership and a relaxed, open-minded approach from the group of five overcame all obstacles once again bring aid, materials and inter-cultural connections to Jalapa.

"It was an easy-going team. We were flexible. You always have to be in Nicaragua but I think we worked very well together," said Karl of the team, which also included Tom Nygard, Paul Sass, La-Verne Gillen and Quin Oredson. "We were able to think through things and figure out how to do a lot of things in a small amount of time."

At El Junco the team first took on painting, inside and out, of a school building. It literally meant buying out all the dark blue paint in Jalapa hardware stores. Other work, included putting in pre-ordered doors that were the wrong size and needed corrective carpentry.

October team continued P. 4



ISLA team members rebuilt most of a school roof at Escambray that had been damaged in a storm. Photos by Tom Nygaard.



Gloria Karl spoke to a group of students at one of the several schools where she and other October team ISLA volunteers worked.

ISLA looks at future partner opportunities

Part of the October ISLA team's experience included connecting with another Minnesota non-profit doing work in Nicaragua, and hopefully the start of a model for similar collaborations.

ISLA members traveled to Leon for an overnight and day seeing the historic city and learning from the staff of Project Minnesota Leon, which does humanitarian work there.

"It was really interesting seeing what they do and the medical facilities there," said Gloria Karl, herself a nurse. "And of course we enjoyed the cathedral and sites. It was a different perspective."

It is hoped that PML volunteer teams may also come to Jalapa in the future, bringing more exposure to the efforts of each group. Joint ventures such as shipping or storage of donated goods to Nicaragua is another possibility.

Similar partnerships are being looked at with other U.S. and Nicaraguan-based groups. The ISLA board has authorized a subcommittee to explore options that develop cost efficiencies or otherwise address needs of prospective partners are being considered. Ideas or leads from ISLA participants are welcomed!

2009 is a banner year for education

By Bob Mullin, Education Chair

The January team started the year off by presenting scholarship certificates and payments to 117 high school students and 29 college students. At the request of Nicaraguan education officials, our high school students then began participation an adult literacy program that replaced mentoring requirement during the 2009 school year.

In September the education committee decided to start a full class of 32 freshman students in 2010. This would allow each of the 32 six-grade schools in the district to nominate a new scholarship recipient. This decision was made in spite of a decline in charitable giving which has been reported across the U.S. That downturn is also felt in Jalapa where it hurts families' ability to send their children to school.

Yet high school graduation is still truly a major event in the community. Photos reveal that the school literally rolls out a red carpet for the procession of each student and parent. For our 13 ISLA students who will graduate in December it is especially significant. They are almost always the first child in the family to be able to attend high school.

Also in December eighteen college students will complete their two years of study under the aegis of an ISLA scholarship. Ten students will receive Technical Certificates in areas such as nursing, teaching, English and agronomy. Eight students plan to continue their studies on their own support. This self-support is now possible as a result of their first two years of college work.

While this article focuses on numbers, the ISLA scholarship program focuses on the youth of Jalapa and their contribution to the future of Nicaragua. High school scholarships are \$150 per year with college scholarships \$300 annually. Your gifts open doors to a lifetime of learning.



ISLA education scholarship funding helped keep nearly 150 Jalapan students in school during 2009. Photos by Javier Aguilar

Javier visit cont'd from P. 1

When I stayed in Saint Paul, Jon took me on a bike tour. It was very exciting for me to be by the shore of the Mississippi River, which I had heard about long before through my Geography teacher in Nicaragua - who had dreamed of seeing it himself.

I learned that there is a lot of diversity in spiritual thinking for people in the U.S. It was amazing for me to discover that it is easy to find a lot Somali people, wearing their colorful dress and women using their veils.

These are just a few examples of people sharing a wonderful time with me. There were others such as Colleen taking me to a Twins game. Or everyone who came to the Mama Chunga party to share ISLA spirit and raise more money to help my Nicaragua.

I would like my ISLA friends to have the opportunity to do home stays when they visit Jalapa - as part of a more profound connection within the community. I know how much I appreciated the great opportunity to be hosted by families that guided me into a real American life style.

I think it would be the same for our friends in the United States. You could have the experience of always not having a nice hot shower or a nice flushing toilet or air conditioning or a fridge full of food.

But hopefully you would also feel our love and friendship. Thanks a lot for all your solidarity and love you have shown me.

ISLA
270 W. Page Street
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October team builds, paints with Jalapa friends

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“We had a lot of people helping us at El Junco. That was great and we really like to have that community support,” said Karl. “You get a nice feeling when you get that shared effort and connections – sort of like we do a lot with the Women’s Foundation too.”

After that several day effort the team moved on to Escombrey, where replacement of a school roof partially torn off by high winds awaited. Working as a team passing up lumber and tin, the ISLAers pulled off a project they all agreed was well worth their sore backs and shoulders.

Finally, the October team moved on to painting the inside of El Carbon school before the work time ended.

Other side trip experiences included a visit to a local cigar factory, practicing conversational speaking with a local English class, and finally a presenta-

tion of school supplies and finished school construction projects to local officials.

“I very much enjoy getting out into the rural communities, areas I don’t normally get to,” said Karl, who a professional nurse usually works on ISLA medical projects. “It was nice to do some different things.”

JBBut the real highlights to Karl were the interpersonal relationships that the trip included, which as trip leader she took special pride in developing.

“When I hear people say afterwards that ‘It was great, I’m glad I went,’ I know I did my job,” she said, referring to her 15th ISLA trip in 12 years.

“Each team that I’ve traveled with has been unique and different,” she said. “That’s probably why I keep going back.”



**You can make
a difference!**

Your donation of any amount (gifts of \$50, \$100, or \$200 suggested) will always have impact through ISLA’s medical, education and construction programs.

Send your tax deductible contribution to:

**ISLA
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