



# insider

**Volunteer Update  
November 2007**

Interfaith Service to Latin America

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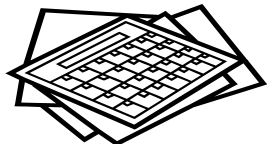
## ***IS THERE AN ISLA TRIP IN YOUR FUTURE? THINK ABOUT IT!***

**January 2008** - January trip dates are January 15-26, 2008. This upcoming trip is especially exciting because nine pre-med students from St. Olaf College will have an opportunity to join an ISLA team as part of their study abroad program. Seven physicians including several St. Olaf alumni will serve as mentors to these student volunteers. There are 30 team members registered for this trip, with a waiting list besides! **(See page 5)**

**March 2008** - Rumors suggest that the March 2008 team will fill quickly, so please sign up soon! The deadline for the group air reservation is December 3, 2007 and the completed application and deposit must be received by December 8, 2007 in order to qualify for the Early Registration discount. The 2008 Trip Brochure and Application may be downloaded from the website [www.isla.cc](http://www.isla.cc). You may also find information there about the new trip discounts!

**Because of a recent airline schedule change, the March trip dates have changed. Departure is still scheduled for March 22, 2008, but the return date has been changed to March 31, 2008.** The originally planned flight out of Managua on April 1 has been canceled, and due to high demand during the busy spring break travel season, we are unable to rebook the group on another flight on that day.

**Looking Ahead** - Other future trip dates are June 16-27, 2008 and October 11 -22, 2008.



As always, all interested volunteers are welcome and encouraged to join ISLA's work in Jalapa, Nicaragua! While ISLA's areas of focus are medical, construction and education, all gifts and talents are needed and appreciated. We would love to have you join us!

## **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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**Bob Mullin**

### **Medical Director**

**Peter D'Ascoli**

### **Administrative Director**

**Jean Kennedy**

**Program Coordinator in Jalapa  
Javier Eduardo Aguilar Cordoba**

## **A Communication from the Chair of the Board**

The purpose of this communication is to inform you that Javier Aguilar, ISLA's Nicaraguan liaison, was recently attacked and seriously injured. Javier had attended a meeting and after the meeting a woman who also attended the meeting asked Javier for a ride home. Javier asked her if her husband would mind and she assured him he would not. It turned out the husband has a history of jealous and violent behavior and did mind that Javier dropped her off. As he was leaving the man shot him. The wound was serious but Javier was able to drive to Jalapa and get assistance. He was taken to Ocotol, underwent surgery and after several days was released from the hospital to his home in Jalapa.

I traveled to Jalapa with the October team to visit Javier and to evaluate the situation. I can assure you that Javier is doing well and is on his way to a full recovery. He is in good spirits and has already resumed some of his work duties. To be sure he does not overdo it during his recovery period ISLA has hired an assistant. Her name is Imara Fiallas. Imara is 22 years old, has graduated from high school and recently received a certification in accounting from a trade school. She will assist Javier at least through the end of January 2008.

Based on the information I received from Javier and from my visit with the captain of the Jalapa police department, this event appears to be an isolated act committed by a jealous husband and does not constitute a threat to ISLA or its volunteers. The police indicate the man has probably fled to Honduras and is being pursued.

If you have any questions or concerns or would like to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to call me at 651-636-6022.

Sincerely,

Tom Cooper  
Chairperson – ISLA Board of Directors

## **Benchmarks** by Bob Mullin

**In May of 2005 ISLA developed a Strategic Plan for 2005 to 2007\***

- **We said we would have 150 high school scholarship students in 2007... We have 132.**
- **We planned to support 30 primary schools by 2007. . . We support all 71 primary schools in the district. Thirty-four of these are one-room country schools with grants of only \$50.**
- **We would start a grant program to help the three high schools . . . It began in the fall of 2005 with a \$300 gift to the chemistry lab at INAJAL. We have since contributed more than \$7,000, most of it in the form of a gift to develop the almost nonexistent library collections and facilities.**
- **In May of 2007 we would start raising funds to send our first class of graduating scholarship students on to college... We expect 23 students to graduate December 5. November and December are now the critical months in our effort to secure support for them.**

**A big huge THANK YOU goes to all the donors who made these accomplishments possible!**

**\*The above represents only the education portion of the 2005 Strategic Plan.**

## Tribute to the October Team by Mary Carlson

**Bob Mullin, Nancy Woods, Gloria Karl, and Peter D'Ascoli** traveled together to Jalapa in October, 2007. Each volunteer of this small team deserves a medal.

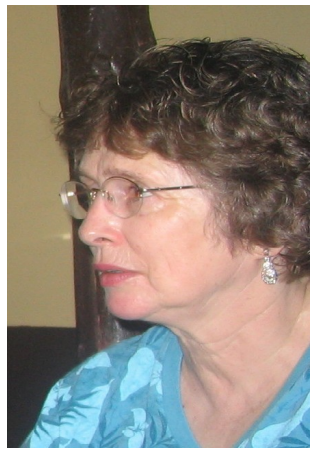
**Nancy Woods:** A Colorado nurse, this was Nancy's first international mission trip experience. She quickly transitioned from an intensive care nurse to a pap smear nurse. She saw what needed to be done and did it. A horse owner herself, she enjoyed all the equestrian activity around Jalapa.

**Gloria Karl:** Gloria has been on 11 ISLA trips in 10 years! In addition, she works for ISLA year-round, finding the right kinds of medical supplies for ISLA's mission and the hospital's ongoing needs, then sorting and packing them in her garage. She is the liaison between ISLA and another organization she dedicates herself to, Third World Friends in Kenyon. She is expert at telling the ISLA story, recruiting volunteers and obtaining donations, especially from District One Hospital in Faribault, MN.

**Peter D'Ascoli:** What do you say about a physician who is not discouraged that the facility he's working at is without electricity for 7 hours a day? Who listens to the concerns of a women's group all morning and teaches them about women's health all afternoon? Who, when asked how he felt about working on a small team replied, "This is the biggest team I've ever been on-- we've never had so many Jalapans working with us."

**Bob Mullin:** Bob's passion is helping things grow, whether it is tending the gardens outside of the hospital or recruiting more donors for the ISLA scholarship program. He worked hard at both gardening and ground work for the educational program during the October trip.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Anne Morton



"I'm encouraged by the dedication of the Jalapans I meet that are working to improve their lives and help their country."

**Anne Morton**

Volunteer **Anne Morton** of Rochester has been involved with ISLA since 2006, when she joined several members of her church on a trip to Jalapa in March of that year. Since then, she has worked on ISLA's education and medical projects and has served on the Education Committee.

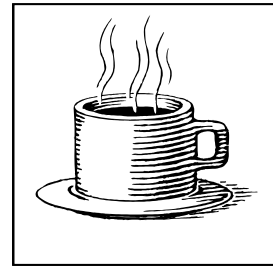
Anne has found her way into classrooms in Jalapa where she has assisted with everything from English teaching to sharing information about depression with students and staff.

"Sharing with the staff at INAJAL (in 2006) was really wonderful. We met with the student leaders there and one young student said to me, 'I hope you don't forget us.' Last year her eyes popped out when I walked into her classroom. I had recently lost two nephews and going to Jalapa and working on that project helped me to heal."

When she is not volunteering with ISLA, Anne keeps busy with reading, book discussions, square dance and round dance. She is married and has three stepchildren and six grandchildren. Originally from Chicago, Anne loves to travel and learn about new cultures.

Another trip to Jalapa is in the works for Anne and a friend in June. "The dedication of the ISLA volunteers keeps me wanting to be involved in the organization. Also, I enjoy working with the ISLA teenagers in the schools. They have been really great relating to the children in the schools and on the playgrounds. I'm encouraged by the dedication of the Jalapans I meet that are working to improve their lives and help their country."

## What Can You Do With 82 Cents a Day? By Bob Mullin



Well, you can try to buy a cup of coffee at a gas station.

### OR IN JALAPA

- You could support a college student for one year, or
- You could support two high school students for a year, or
- You could support one large school for a year, or
- You could support four small country schools for a year.

Each of the above projects can be supported with a gift to the ISLA education fund of \$300. (Actually, 82.14 cents per day.) The need is great.

The most exciting component is the new college program. It is designed to help our graduates earn a two year Technical Certificate. Educators in Jalapa tell us that with this degree the students would be able to obtain work in the area which would support their continued studies, should they choose to do so. To qualify for the program the students must have maintained a grade point average of 80% over their last three years in high school and satisfactorily completed their mentoring requirement. The grants will cover tuition and provide \$50 for student supplies. When asked if this was sufficient help for the students, the President of UNIVAL, one of the local colleges, said, "It will save their lives!"

New high school scholarship donors will be needed to replace donors who are unable to continue their support or who have moved on to support their student in the college program. In 2008 we hope to provide 130 high school scholarships and 20 college scholarships. In the school support program we hope to increase our aid to the small schools without reducing assistance to the larger ones.

## Have Suitcase – Will Teach by Kay Kramer

In June I had the opportunity to work in two elementary schools which offer English to the younger students in Jalapa. Most of my time was spent at Mercedes Rodriguez assisting Alfredo, the English teacher, with activities to help make the learning of English fun, practical and more experience-oriented. I did not concentrate on direct teaching as much as ways to assist Alfredo in his teaching of English.

I took games such as Bingo, as well as songs and activity sheets he could continue to use. We worked on practicing the phrases he was teaching such as "What is your name?" and "How are you?" I put together the beginning of an education suitcase which will remain in the ISLA storage and can be used by others who want to work in the schools.

The children were excited and open to my being in their classes and they assisted me in learning Spanish too. The classes consisted of children from second grade up to sixth grade.

I came away feeling our greatest help would be to assist the teachers with ideas and activities which could continue after we leave. Money is always an issue, but if anyone has things to add to the suitcase such as games, song ideas, or other activities, please do.

Alfredo truly loves the children and wants to improve his abilities as a teacher. Anyone interested in an experience in the school would find it very rewarding and I would be happy to talk with you about ideas for the teachers. I may be reached at [kaykramer@gmail.com](mailto:kaykramer@gmail.com).

# St. Olaf Connection Brings New Dimension to January ISLA Trip

by Jan Foley

Isla volunteer and St. Olaf alum Nancy Carlson had a dream to somehow involve her alma mater in the work that is so dear to her heart – ISLA’s service in Nicaragua. After months of coordination carried out with unbounded enthusiasm, Nancy’s dream is about to come true.

Joining this January’s ISLA team are nine St. Olaf College students with an interest in medicine and a heart for service. According to its mission statement, St. Olaf is a “college of service,” and thanks to Nancy’s efforts, St. Olaf’s offerings now include a study-abroad/mission trip featuring mentors who are alumni.

Several of the seven medical doctors who will be joining the January trip are St. Olaf College alumni, and all of them are looking to make a difference in a young person’s life who is considering entering a medical field. The only male student in the group is interested in dentistry, and his dentist father was so intrigued by the trip that he decided he wanted to go along!

For its part, ISLA will reap the benefits of the college students’ work in the form of a public health survey the students will be doing in homes in Jalapa. The purpose of the survey is to discover the real medical needs of area residents. It will allow ISLA to be even more tuned in to the most prevalent medical conditions in Jalapa, among them cervical cancer and high blood pressure.

“We’re really trying to do what they want down there, not what we think they should want,” Nancy says.

By the time the student participants embark for Nicaragua in January, they will have prepared well for their mission experience. They will have written a paper, completed required reading and weekly evening classes, learning about such things as public health and Spanish medical terminology. They will have completed an internship during which they shadow medical providers in their area of interest.

Once in Jalapa, with Nancy Carlson as their on-site supervisor, the students, who have varying degrees of Spanish skills, will be asked to journal about their experiences. Upon their return, they will be required to write another paper. Their reward? One full class credit and a life-changing service experience.



“I really think it’s a win-win for the college and ISLA.”

Nancy Carlson

(At left) College students and medical providers gather for their evening class at St. Olaf College.

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**Yes, I would like to support ISLA in partnering with the people of Jalapa, Nicaragua!**

\_\_\_ Please send me information about upcoming trips to Jalapa.

\_\_\_ Please send me more information about ISLA's programs.

\_\_\_ Please send me information about making a gift of appreciated stock.

\_\_\_ Enclosed is a donation:

\$500    \$250    \$100    \$50    Other \_\_\_\_\_

***Check Payable to ISLA  
P.O. Box 50715  
Minneapolis, MN 55405***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

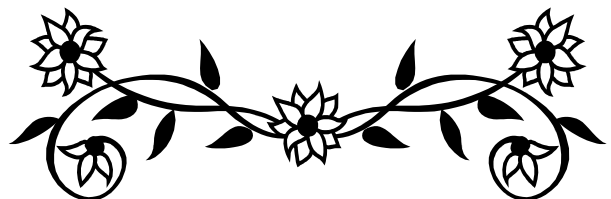
*ISLA is a 501(c) 3 charitable organization and contributions are tax deductible.*

**Jalapan Women's Group Assists October Medical Team**

By Mary Carlson

The October team had excellent local support from a new women's group in Jalapa formed around the desire to improve women's health care in the region. The women's group worked in advance to contact women who needed follow-up pap smears, colposcopies, and LEEP's, so there was an excellent turnout of the women that most needed care. The women's group also worked with us to welcome and register the women as they presented for their care. They will be responsible for distributing the pap results in a confidential manner, as well.

Jalapa is typically without electricity from 7 AM to 2 PM, creating a challenge for doing procedures requiring electricity. The hospital was able to provide us electricity from its generator for 2 hours/day. The ISLA generator was used during the times we needed electricity when there was no other power source. Dr. Peter D'Ascoli, Gloria Karl and Nancy Woods were a fantastic work group.



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