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Between the Lines, By David Horvath, Past President, Friends of Esquipulas



When we receive the excellent quarterly reports from the technicians and staff in Esquipulas for the Parish Clinic, Nutrition with Vegetables and Organic Farming projects, we easily see the success in numbers, the determination, the steady progress -- the satisfying comfort of continuing good work.

We eagerly soak up the excitement of another season --the delivery of seeds, preparing beds for seedlings, the first planting in rainy season. We see photos of the preparation of bioorganic fertilizer and vermiculture enriched soil; the delivery of tools and training to use them; children being weighed and medically cared for. We see water filters being used in small communities everywhere, making more of a difference than almost anything.

And spelled out before us we read the Spanish names of the communities, families, neighborhoods and villages involved in the projects. And beyond words, we know from our visits, these real and beautiful places and people including: *Community El Portón, house of Señora Jerónima Cisneros Orozco, Community El Zapotal, house of señora Margarita García, Community Santa Teresa, house of señora Masiel Zelaya and others.*

And because of our long relationship we are also aware of the back story, the reality beyond what is written in these reports. Yes, there is more and better food. But there is still massive generational poverty and what that means for our friends.

There is success in their Green Market next to the bus station in Esquipulas. The project workers have developed a management team and are diversifying their product. They are excited about selling passion fruit, tilapia and chickens. But economic conditions in the country are hard and the political climate adds additional insecurity. Transportation is still a critical need. Produce is still transported to the Esquipulas market by horseback, motorcycle, bus or on foot.

The microloans and Community Savings Banks are building habits of saving and improving household economics. A new “self-saving” group with children is a model for other communities with potential long term benefits.

Mothers are learning to grow food for their families and neighbors, but still must attend to “all the household tasks,” especially care of the children. Farmers are learning to grow chemical free produce for a profit, which keeps them from leaving the country to farm for others. But to be competitive, they must sell their product at prices lower than they should be.

And there are new challenges for the communities of Esquipulas. See the following article on a serious health concern for women in the Nutrition with Vegetables program, which shows how poverty affects health care in the communities.

So... with all this reading between the lines, the knowing, the relationships, the needs and the joys, we are profoundly grateful for our donors, your generosity through the years. We continue to celebrate the success of these projects and the hope they provide the people in Esquipulas. We are inspired by our friends and we carry them with us in our own lives. We so appreciate this circle of solidarity we are so blessed to experience.



Friends of Esquipulas
1226 W. Oak Street
Louisville, KY 40210



An Outreach Ministry of St. William Community

How to donate!

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Solidarity Supper Report

In March, approximately, 150 people gathered at Louisville Trinity's Convocation Hall to celebrate and learn more about Friends of Esquipulas. Fifteen table hosts invited guests to share in the celebration. Our kind table hosts brought place settings, provided drinks and shared stories. The fundraising effort was very successful, with \$13,331.00 received and additional pledges of \$7,625. Expenses for the event are completely covered with in-kind donations and support from individual Board members. Our sincere thanks to our generous donors!

The Friends of Esquipulas Board provides funding for internal administrative costs (including this newsletter) so that 100% of donations go directly to benefit the projects in Nicaragua!

Increased Health Concern

We have been informed that a general medical checkup of the 84 women who participate in the Nutrition with Vegetables program identified 22 had serious health problems including 17 with the human papillomavirus [HPV] (linked to a much higher incidence of cancer). The doctor and staff in Esquipulas are finding ways to provide initial exams and treatment by cutting certain items from the project budgets, but we are working with them to find funding for essential follow-up treatments. This virus is a huge problem worldwide, and the vaccine is not available or affordable in many places. It is transmitted through breast feeding and childbirth as well as sexual conduct.

