



# *Fotokids*

*Fundación de Niños Artistas  
de Guatemala  
August 2007*

## **LETTER FROM THE EXEC. DIRECTOR**

One of our young girls, a bright eager-to-learn 13 year old, was failing for the first time in her academic classes. The mother proudly announced to me after visiting the teacher and uncovering the unprecedented failure, that she beat the girl with a strap. She mentioned to me several times how she had “marked” her all over. Obviously this was seen as dealing with the problem.

The real problem is that her father is an abusive alcoholic. He comes home early from his job at the market, drunk, and physically abuses her and her sister on a regular basis.

The violence extends to his beating her mother as well. Since Y stands up to him and tries to protect her mother, she is on the wrong side of Dad. He has said at that at 13 years of age she should be working and that he is going to throw her out of the house.

She hasn't been able to concentrate on schoolwork and has been looking for a job.

Her mother said she was unaware both of the beatings and the fact he had kicked Y out. When I asked her how come she hadn't told her mother, she replied, “I tried to, but she always stops me with, not now, I'm busy.”

These are the kinds of problems that we have to find ‘solutions’ to. I'm not sure what we can do for the long run, but at least until the term is over Y is (supposedly) going to stay with her

grandmother who lives nearby. I say supposedly, because I think the mother wants her to remain at home to take care of her little brother while the Mom works. We will have to stay on top of the situation.

All kids deserve to be encouraged and respected but this one would break your heart. Her outgoing, loving manner so impressed people when I brought her to the States last year She really needs a break. It would be a tragedy to lose her, yet another victim of domestic violence.

Every project anniversary in August I say to myself, “*it sure is hard to believe I've been doing this for 'x' number of years!*”

During the sabbatical I have been writing the project's, as well as my own memoirs. I have folders stuffed full of notes and letters. I shouldn't have left this history for 16 years. I mean I should've written it when I had only *ten years* of notes. I can say this, as now after months of work I'm only up to year five!

It has been an interesting exercise though for me to realize, not only how the kids have changed, but how I have changed as well. No, I'm not going to explain that. You have to wait for the book, or the major motion picture!

That's another thing, I don't know if I'll publish it. Once your life is in the public domain; it's gone. You have no control over whatever anyone wants to embroider,

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misunderstand, take out of context or make up. Not to mention how I will protect the kid's privacy.

This last quarter has been excitingly full of travel and outreach. Bree our master website designer and I went to Honduras to do some teacher training for the older kids in GUARUMA in Las Mangas. I still think that Las Mangas, along the boulder strewn, fast paced Cangrejal River is one of the most beautiful places I have ever been.

The project under the direction of Jimmy Andino and photographer Mac Stone has charged along at a fast pace. The interactive Nature Museum, donated by the community to GUARUMA has been redesigned. The Museum and student run nature trail continues to be visited by local schools. While we were there the trail was also the filming site of the Italian Survivor show. The trail has history; it's already been used for the Spanish Survivor production. Bree and I stumbled upon something that looked like a tiger pit with the stakes recently removed. That's an idea! We could make it a survival trail as well as a nature trail!

We visited at exactly the right time and met up with Anna Richter, our previous Director, who coincidentally had arrived for a visit. Stewart Diamond from the Grand Cayman Rotary came over to see the satellite Internet service they are supporting and take a look at the new Visitors Center.

The Guaruma Honduran project you remember, uses photography for environmental education and it is located on the periphery of the Pico Bonito National Park. The Pico Bonito on the opposite shore of the river is a 55 square kilometer park, parts of which are still

unexplored. It has waterfalls and forests full of toucans, monkeys and jaguars.

The Visitors Center is just off the dirt road to Las Mangas and has the new entrance to the park over a swinging hammock bridge. If all works out GUARUMA will be in charge of the new Visitor's Center.

One of the Honduran kids is a finalist for the BBC Nature photography Awards, 12 year old Franklin Ramirez, and the group has a five page article about them in **July's issue** of the World Wildlife Fund's young people's magazine ***Ranger Rick***.

Bree taught the older students animation and pixilation. They in turn will use these techniques when they teach the younger ones. Three communities are working on a joint DVD that will explore their relationship with the River Cangrejal watershed.

*Caracol* our sister project in Belize came to Guatemala for the inauguration of their exhibit of photo vinyls at the Metropolitan Cultural Center. Jon Ottley and Claudia Orantes, the Project Directors, brought 4 students who participated in week -long Fotokids workshops taught by Berlin and Linda. The workshops concentrated on Photoshop, the SLR camera, and darkroom techniques.

**Their London Caracol exhibition is to be held: 13th to 16th September in the Bargehouse Gallery, Oxo Tower, South Bank.**

We hope all of our UK supporters will be able to attend.

Megan Spelman, former photographer with the Flint Journal, is now directing our Santiago Atitlán project. We have rented a small house/school there and she will be adding about 15 kids from Tzan Cha and

Panabaj, two areas that experienced massive destruction during Hurricane Stan in 2005. Many of the survivors are still in temporary shelters made of plastic sheeting and continue to grieve the loss of some 800 family members buried in the mudslide.



*Foto by Santiago Eliceo Mendoza*

Families from the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC) visited Guatemala in June and brought 4 of our students up to their project at the Lake; Yamilett, Hugo, Cindy and Jorge. It was good to see the kids being able to run around and just play. Of course they took plenty of photos.



*Hugo gets guitar lesson from Sean of Orinda*

LOPC introduced us to a very well organized local eco tourism group, which I would like to use for our joint program (yet to be funded) focusing on global warming with Guaruma and *Caracol*.

I would like the three groups to each investigate their community's relationship to their environment and bring their knowledge to a youth leadership exchange.

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, Fotokids has been selected to inaugurate Guatemala's Photography Festival **Foto30**, with an exhibit at the gallery in the Santa Domingo Hotel. This is the most beautiful 5 star hotel in Central America, built amongst the ruins of an 18th century convent. We are busy preparing for the exhibit and we are going to feature some of the nature shots Guaruma has taken.



*Guaruma foto by Juan Velasquez*

During the month long Foto30 festival our *Center of the Image* will be producing a DVD made up of a compilation of images by well known Guatemalan photographers speaking out against child violence. The

DVD will be shown on public TV's throughout the City.

## **WHAT'S NEW WITH THE KIDS!**

A NYC production company PIRANHA Pictures filmed **Linda**, as a follow up to the article about her in SWITCH. This is the youth magazine created by local newspaper *El Periodico*. The film premiered at the 2007 Aspen Ideas Festival and was used to announce the John P. McNulty Leadership Prize. Linda's 15 minutes of fame is now up to about 2 hours.

**Atiliano** will graduate from the national art school this year with a degree in sculpture. He continues with his 3-year scholarship in film production with a local production company here.

**Nancy Morales** is in her last year of Design at San Carlos University and has done a wonderful job with our design group *Jakaramba!*, co-designing our new web site and working as design coordinator for the Center of the Image.

**Berlin** has worked to reproduce the *Out of the Dump* original book for *reprint*. If the printer works out we will be again offering this book. Of course those of you with the original book know it is out of print and now worth \$79 on Amazon. 1<sup>st</sup> Editions never lose their value(authors note!)

**Evelyn** and **Vivi** continue their work with the HIV positive children. The work has its own special problems. Vivi has found that the kids from the orphanage are used to getting their own way, and not to put too fine a point on it, know how to manipulate a bit. The older kids that Evelyn teaches are busy writing their thoughts.

One of the 15 year olds who was in the hospital *for months* and none of her family visited her writes: "*When my father comes*

*to visit me at the orphanage I feel really content because I love him a lot. He has to work to care for my brothers and sisters because I have so many of them that I don't know all their names. Its fun when he visits. The last time he visited it was my birthday (15th) and he told me he bought me a cake but fell asleep on the bus and when he woke up it wasn't there. I told him not to worry that I was happy just to see him."*

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP!**

**Great Gift Idea or Remembrance! Give a tax deductible Foto-Link or Educational Scholarship to one of the new students in your name! Comes with a cute card made by the child & gift enclosure. Details and credit card info: [www.fotokids.org](http://www.fotokids.org)**

**(U.S.Tax Deductible) Checks should be made out to: "San Carlos Foundation/Fotokids"**

and sent to:

**FotoKids, PO Box 661447; Miami Springs, FL 33266**

Log on to [www.fotokids.org](http://www.fotokids.org) and click on **Pay-Pal** at the bottom of the home page

**\*Arrange for our traveling exhibit and a couple of kids to come to your town for a fundraiser.**

**We are planning in 2008 for exhibits in Portland Oregon and Salt Lake City. If you are in these areas and want to help let me know! Email: [fotokids@intelnet.net.gt](mailto:fotokids@intelnet.net.gt)**

**BUY A PRINT AS A GIFT OR FOR YOUR OFFICE - See the web site Gallery**

*Visit our new website designed by Bree Hankinson & Nancy Morales*