

Fall 2012 Honduras Trip Report

School Curriculum Teaching Sessions – Creation Stories/Masks:

A teaching curriculum (“Creation Stories/Masks”), developed by members of the First Unitarian Church’s Honduras Task Force, was presented to and completed with students from all five elementary schools in San Jose. This project, which involved the reading of a Mayan Creation Tale followed by the construction of unique masks based on characters in the story, was worked on with students in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades from the San Jose Centro, Portillon, Guanacaste, El Horno, and Potrereros schools. In total, approximately 130 students participated in this curriculum project. Numerous masks created by Honduran students were brought back to Rochester to share with local children; in exchange, the Honduran students received an already-created mask from an American student. Almost all students (even the oldest!) were very receptive to the project, though it always takes some initial prompting to have them fully utilize their creative juices.

6th Grade Scholarship Applications:

Kirsten Nagel, representative from the First Unitarian Church of Rochester, held a meeting for 6th grade scholarship applicants from the five elementary schools of San Jose. In total, thirty students (most with their parents) attended, with representation from all five of the schools. Some of the families currently have a student in the scholarship program and are looking for financial support to send a second child through colegio. During the meeting, Kirsten reviewed all necessary scholarship information, including where funds come from, what funds can be used for, expectations for scholarship recipients, and when/how selected students will be announced. After Kirsten relayed the details of the scholarship program, all students lined up to obtain and fill out their applications. While students filled out their applications, parents were called up one at a time to fill out a financial information form with a brigade member. Photos of all students were taken following the completion of the forms. Scholarship recipients for the 7th grade will be announced by Marvin Cacho, representative from Shoulder to Shoulder, in January 2013.

Scholarships for Colegio:

A meeting was held for current scholarship recipients from the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th grades. Kirsten Nagel (First Unitarian Church representative) led this meeting, and utilized support from Honduran translators when presenting and when collecting necessary paperwork from scholarship recipients. The importance of maintaining grades above 60% in all classes, completing necessary scholarship paperwork, and attending weekly tutoring sessions was discussed during this meeting. Students in the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades were presented with letters from individual donors and, in turn, wrote return letters during the latter half of the meeting. All twelve 7th, 8th, and 9th grade scholarship recipients showed up to the scholarship meeting (or, in one case, a father showed up because his daughter was sick). In addition, Jose Leonel, a former scholarship recipient whom the church did not support in May, attended with his mother;

ultimately, Kirsten decided to reinstate him in the program, as he's continued with school and improved his grades.

Francisca, one of the two 10th grade scholarship recipients (who's currently in "carrera," the Honduras equivalent of high school), attended the meeting and provided Kirsten with her current school information. Francisca was willing to speak with the 9th grade scholarship recipients about moving on to carrera and her own experience moving away from the San Jose area. Kirsten later received budget proposals for carrera from three of the four current 9th grade students. These youth seem motivated to continue with their studies pending additional financial support from the Unitarian Church and/or individual donors!

Tutoring Program for Scholarship Recipients:

A meeting was held with Santa Froglan, the tutor for scholarship recipients and a teacher at the Portillon school, about the educational progress of the students, where tutoring sessions are being held (which is currently in the community building), and the details of his attendance sheets. Santa continues to take weekly attendance and plans to continue to oversee the Saturday tutoring sessions. Sessions generally run from 8am to 1pm, with most students attending relatively consistently. Later in the week, Kirsten provided Santa with some school materials for tutoring sessions (including notebooks, pencils, erasers, and lined paper).

School Supply Distribution

School supplies, including paper, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, scissors, glue, and erasers, were distributed to the elementary schools in San Jose Centro, Guanacaste, Potrerros, Portillon, El Horno, and Las Delicias. Additionally, the kindergartens in Guanacaste and La Calera received a small amount of school supplies. Most of these supplies were distributed in conjunction with a visit, curriculum teaching session, and health education song/skit by various members of the brigade.

English Teaching Session with Guanacaste School Teachers:

An English teaching session was held with three teachers from the Guanacaste elementary school. Kirsten (First Unitarian Church Representative) and Jen (2nd year resident) met with the teachers for 1.5 hours and worked with them on vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure. English vocabulary generally focused on family words (mother, father, daughter, son, grandmother, etc.) and household items (bed, table, chairs, etc.). The teachers seemed to enjoy the lesson, though pronunciation seemed difficult for them.