



Our Year in Review

January, 2011

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A village library is a beautiful thing!

We are pleased to report that in 2010 our mission to provide needed literary resources to impoverished and underserved communities has continued and is expanding. During this past year our volunteer “staff” has increased to five committed individuals. With your support and with the help of additional volunteers, our previously established libraries continue to grow with resources tailored to specific needs and requests from each village. Four libraries now serve several communities... our newest located within the United States. From our hearts we thank you!

In June *FBTB* volunteers traveled to Nicaragua to support our existing libraries as well as to create another at an elementary school in El Pantanal. Several months ago Renee Wolters, from New Mexico’s Central America Solidarity Network, visited this village school. Zoraya, the library’s director, was happy to show her the library and the kids reading. “The books are getting well used,” says Renee. Zoraya expressed that they would like a set of encyclopedias, especially science encyclopedias. Children from

organization.

Though each library is unique, the three in Nicaragua are located in villages where the population lives in extreme poverty. Now, for the first time, children have access to school textbooks, as well as to books of fiction and non-fiction. Maps, globes, puzzles and other educational resources are now also available. These collections serve as solid foundations for a future of literacy. Below are brief descriptions of each library.



Schoolgirls at El Pantanal enjoying their new library...a Hoopoe Book donated by All Bilingual Press



Sally Hale, *FBTB* volunteer, reads with a child in Mulukukú.

Biblioteca Samuel Vidaurre, Mulukukú - Opened in 2007, this is the largest library, now holding over 3000 books for children and adults. It is run by the Maria Luisa Ortiz Cooperative. Mulukukú recently acquired internet access. With the goal of having all information available at one location, the library is

moving to a rebuilt space adjacent to the cooperative’s “cyber café”. Due to lack of telephones, mail, and paved roads, this central Nicaraguan village had been detached from the outside world. The library and internet have dramatically expanded the citizens’ access to resources and the outside world.



La Biblioteca Paraiso del Niño in El Fortín...Children’s Paradise Library

neighboring villages are also using these resources. Prior to our involvement their only access to books was in the city of Granada, a long ways away. Zoraya is enthusiastic about the value that this little library has brought to El Pantanal and its surrounding communities within such a short time. She looks forward to continued support from our

Support *From Books to Brilliance* at www.goodsearch.com

Your online searches and purchases will raise money for village libraries at no cost to you!

Biblioteca Paraíso del Niño, El Fortín - Created in 2009 and given its name by the village's children, this library holds 500 books appropriate for beginning to high school readers...the only books in the entire village. María Teresa, a very competent and well-educated community leader, manages the facility with the help of several high school volunteers. Though still extremely poor, life is improving for the citizens of El Fortín, due to development projects spearheaded by the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and La Casa de la Mujer, a local women's cooperative.



Book delivery for El Pantanal!

Biblioteca José de la Cruz Mena, El Pantanal, Nicaragua - Begun in 2010, this library is housed in the village's elementary school and run by its teachers. To create this facility Maggie Covill teamed with founders of Si Quieres, Pueden Reír (If You Want, They Can Laugh), a non-profit that provides school supplies to the children at this school, and with contacts at Casa Xalteva, a language school in Granada, Nicaragua. Casa Xalteva was founded by two professors from the University of New Mexico, with a mission to help alleviate

Thank you, Rotary eClub of the Southwest, for the opportunity to introduce FBTB to your members last March! We look forward to working with you on a matching grant this year!

poverty in Nicaragua. Casa Xalteva has ongoing and strong ties with this village.

Regrettably, the problems of poverty and illiteracy are not exclusive to the third world. In November *From Books to Brilliance* established our first domestic library located in Grants, New Mexico. Mosaic, an organization that assists people with disabilities, has long been planning to promote family literacy in their facility. Mosaic's social workers and developmental specialists provide services to young children, as well as to Navajo women and teen mothers. Ninety-seven percent of them are economically disadvantaged. Mosaic's team emphasizes the need for early childhood literacy for a successful home-to-school transition. The 712 books provided to Mosaic originated from generous in-kind contributions. Albuquerque's James Monroe Middle School students collected over 500

FBTB says goodbye to Mary Reed Shepard, who, for decades, fought tirelessly to create a better world. Mary inspired many people in her work toward justice and peace. Having traveled in Central America several times, she was charmed with our stories of little village libraries. Mary was an ardent supporter of *From Books to Brilliance*, but above all, this wonderful woman was my beloved friend.



books in their student council's book drive. Mercedes Fruland, of Usborne Books & More, again promoted FBTB with an Usborne booth at the Corrales Harvest Festival, donating the remaining 200 books. Mosaic volunteers are currently cataloging the books and preparing the space for the library's community opening.

Due to the generosity of so many people and organizations, contributions nearly tripled in 2010, both monetary and "in-kind" gifts. Rita Wirkala, of All Bilingual Press, provided another set of Hoopoe Books. All Saints Lutheran Church collected hundreds of reading glasses. At Cottonwood Classical Preparatory Middle School, students auctioned off baskets brimming with products from different countries, and proudly donated the proceeds. The Latin American Studies Club at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire furthered our cause by selling FBTB bookmarks. A team of Harvard graduate students, calling themselves Lightning Strikes, were challenged to "change the world in ten days" and chose to promote From Books to Brilliance. Following their presentation at Harvard, one of the students wrote: "It couldn't be better. Every-one in the classroom was deeply touched, with tears in eyes." This grass roots effort to bring books to people that are thirsty for knowledge and eager to participate in a larger world is possible with this type of hard work and dedication! Your loyal funding gives us the flexibility necessary to create these village libraries.

"This summer I was actually in El Fortin, Nicaragua with the Women's Studies program... I was able to see the impact of one of your first libraries on this community. It was truly a joy to share books with the children and to know this is available to them now. The concept of a village library is a beautiful thing!"

Amanda Ehlers, 2009 University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire graduate, former Vice President of Latin American Sustainability, Education, and Development (LASED)

As our small successes become known we are receiving more requests to establish village libraries in other needy communities in Central America and the United States. Our hope is that we continue to attract the necessary resources of capital and dedicated individuals to maintain this all-volunteer effort. We are fortunate that our small group is able and willing to fund their individual participation.

We understand that we are only a small force of people committed to bringing literacy and the hope of a better future to impoverished communities. Indeed, resolving the globe's vast and complicated dilemma of poverty and illiteracy is a monumental undertaking. However, knowing that we cannot do everything has given us the license to do something! We continue to be inspired by the number of people and organizations who dare to hope, and whose goal it is to improve the human condition. Without their leadership, the tenacity of the villagers, and the generosity of our supporters, this organization would not exist. All have a passion for possibilities, and from that we draw our strength.