

Shoeshine Special

News from the
Working Boys' Center
Quito, Ecuador

Fall 2008

DEAR FOLKS,

Our family of families' programs of nutrition, health care and education, etc., etc., are year long activities, but we do have vacation from school classes. Then, it seems, all of a sudden, "school" that was "out" is "in" again chugging along a schedule of formal classes in pre-school, grammar school, technical, adult and special education. August was our only break from classes. But even during August the teenagers in their final state of formation created a scholastic bridge of classes. Since May 30th, they've been coming to classes only once a week while they achieve on the job experience and approval of their future bosses in various jobs. They'll come back for one more comprehensive exam in November to earn their professional titles. But poor old August might not come back to the Working Boys' Center next year after the way we crammed so much into it this time.

In August, the summer games and championships, indoor and outdoor, had crowds cheering like nothing else was going on in the world. But, at the same time a huge amount of urgent repairing and repainting took place in our Centers. Also, we did a lot of preparation for participation in the international organization of working children and teenagers, which I'll tell you about further on in this issue.

I should mention in passing that Quito's Liga team had won the Latin American Soccer championship cup in July and, starting in August, the whole nation is biting nails until we win the International Soccer Teams' Cup in Japan in December. So our successful efforts to focus on what else we were doing in human development among the poor is simply heroic and we deeply appreciate the praise we know you shower on us.

Read all about it.

John J. Halligan, SJ.

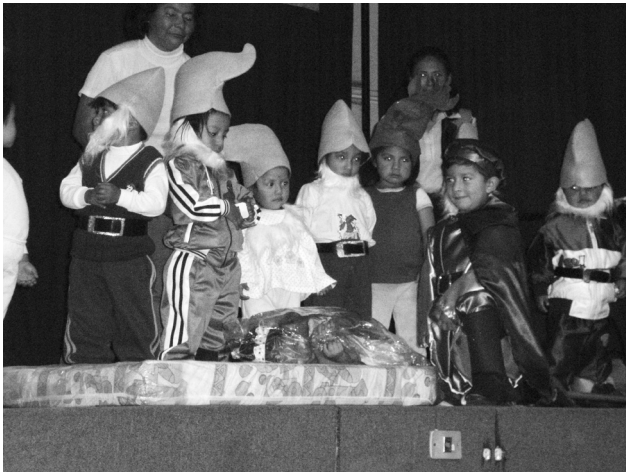


The "Current Attraction"

THE MEANING OF GRANDSTANDING

I always thought it meant a kind of ostentatious self love. After we built our own grandstand on the playing field at Center Number Two, we found out that the folks make grandstanding into a good time for all. They simply love to climb on and sit on and picnic on and just relax and chat on our grandstand. Of course, if there's something taking place out there on the field in front of the grandstand, that's like icing on the cake. They can watch smething else if they want to while they're on their own beloved grandstand. This is not an exaggeration. The thing is made out of reinforced concrete; not a cuddly overstuffed type construction. But they are all over it every chance they get. We suspect it represents the solid vantage point on life that the Center gives them. Or something very special like that.





"Dare I lift the plastic?"

A RELUCTANT SNOW WHITE

High standards in decorum are part of our operations. Our kindergarten kids helped kick off the August games with a theatre production. We have pictures to prove that our Snow White politely handed back to the wicked witch the poisoned apple just before she died. After her death, our dwarfs tried their best with a clear plastic sheet instead of a rich people's glass coffin to keep her down and beautiful. But she fought off the use of throw-away plastic. And when the handsome prince got off his horse to kiss her back to life, that became hand to hand combat. The prince was just strong enough to pull her up from the mat. But no way did he get to kiss her.



The queen of sports leads the team.

OPEN ARMS

The month of August includes, along with all the games and championships, frequent special

events to help our folks attract new families of working kids. Part of the damage done by grave poverty is that it convinces the poor that nobody knows, nobody cares, nobody welcomes, nobody has room. So a welcome sign or any kind of well meant invitation to come see what we have to share with them doesn't penetrate their defense against friendly outreach. What draws them is a little bit of chaos like a whole lot of people crashing a party. We announce food fairs. Food Fair means that anybody can come in and set up an outdoor restaurant and sell meals on our property. Hundreds of very poor people come to investigate the insanity. There are all kinds of questions about what the Center is all about. The rest of this membership promotion depends on the answers they get from our affiliated member families.



Young Workers and collaborators.

WIDE OPEN ARMS

The month of August wasn't all play and no work for our teenagers. They spent a lot of time discussing the nature and purpose of the International Movement of Working Children and Teenagers and selecting from among themselves, a dozen young women and men who will represent them in that organization. That movement was begun in Italy in 1978, fourteen years after we started Working Boys' Center here in Quito, Ecuador. It spread to many countries all over the world with its very simple objective of defending the right of kids to work and help support their families as long as they also get the education, health care, meals and recreation all kids need. Working Boys' Center is pioneering the process of getting Ecuador integrated in that

movement. Some very beneficial legislation could result from the union.



Cooking school with the local chef

FEASTING TOGETHER

Everyone in the family has an opinion on the quality of the meals that we prepare and share at the WBC. Some want salad, some don't; some like potatoes, some like rice; some want cake, some want cookies. At times the cooks don't know what to do to satisfy everyone in the family. So, you can imagine our happiness when the family of Matthew Manger-Lynch gave us a recent start-up donation so we could hire a chef to work with our cooks to make the meals more exciting and attractive. (It seems that Matthew, who recently lost his life in an accident, was interested in cooking from an early age, and even studied to be a chef in Paris, France. According to his wife, Elizabeth, "...Matthew had many wonderful opportunities in his career as a chef, but he wouldn't have had them without his commitment to work, his need to constantly learn new things, his reverence for the natural world, and a healthy sense of adventure." It seems that Matthew shared the values that we promote here in our family

SMALL CRIME, BIG DEAL.

Henry Maza looks innocent standing last one to the right, second row. But he was sighted twice on the road to perdition and that was our opportunity to share with you the happiness of knowing his whole wonderful, hard working family on their way to success. It's a typical glimpse at any one of the hundreds of families you are helping to make it in a

big way in this life and the next. In this Maza family, there are nine kids in all. Three of them, missing from the picture, have graduated as metal and auto-mechanics.

The first crime sighting of Henry was easy, on my way for coffee with Sister Miguel. Henry and two accomplices were skateboarding down near the playing field. During work hours! On a rampage of sloth in broad daylight! Blatant and defiant! Scandalous and whatever else I shouted as they scooted off the property heading for their work places. So thought I. Meantime those novices in crime didn't even suspect that I might spend my day going to and coming back from coffee. So the second sighting was even easier, on the way back from coffee. In the same place, engaged in the same crime.

Sister Miguel confiscated the skate board this time. A very good move, as it brought Henry up the stairs and into the office that evening, all on his own and saturated in crocodile tears because the skate board was property alienated from his sister, who, according to Henry, when wronged, packs a terrible wallop. He wanted the skate board back before she discovered it missing. It was Sister Miguel's chance to call for his father who was shocked that Henry had not been out working, making his quota with his shoe box. The prosecution didn't rest before all charges were presented: disobedience in the face of a correction, filching the skateboard; maligning his gentle and gracious big sister; leading others astray and then inducing them to defy authority, making Padre Juan look foolish; crocodile tears; enjoying bad behavior and on and on. But there was a good defense in the general admission that the defendant is known as a consistently good worker. Henry got the skateboard back and was last sighted laughing his way down the stairs.



WE HOPE TO MEET AGAIN

Our year long volunteers have time after all the teaching and exams are over to help with the summer games which take a lot of organizing. Nobody stops working for a living; so the schedules have to fit into hours free from work. Also, all ages have to be included. We don't have to worry about health and other conditions. If he or she makes it to the game, he or she gets in on the action. Scoring is done very normally, according to whatever the contest is. But the numbers don't mean much unless they get to be funny. The two things that matter are the laughs and the making of new friends. These are things the volunteers facilitate all year long, their invaluable contribution to our human development. The volunteers have to get going back to U.S.A. to look for jobs. So their departure in the middle of the games season is very meaningful in the midst of all the joy they added



Goodbye, beloved volunteers. We'll always be friends.

Tax deductible donations can be sent to:

Family Unity International, Inc.

Mrs. Patricia Parks, President
12750 Stephen Place
Elm Grove, WI 53122

Visit us on the Web @
<http://www.workingboyscenter.org>

