

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • FALL 2009



THANKS FOR GIVING SO MUCH OF GOD'S GOODNESS TO US.



DEAR FOLKS,

God's peace be with you.

In March of 2009, the National Catholic Reporter published a big article with pictures all about our Working Boys' Center. The author, Patricia Lefevre, highlighted all the positive things about us as a total family development system. She described us not only as a success in the world but also as an instrument of God's love for all the poor who want to glorify God with progress. Patricia reported on Sister Miguel Conway BVM's conviction that the power of God is consistently felt at work in the Center's survival, in its growth and in its effectiveness in changing lives for the better.

That power of God is especially evident in the brave hearts of each year's full time volunteers in the Working Boys' Center. They leave their homes and country and suspend all efforts at personal advancement to risk a full year of ten hour work days for the needs of our folks. Their presence in the Center makes it more fun for our families to persevere in making the changes from bad life styles to good.

The volunteers have an arms open acceptance of the human condition as it is and as it can change. This helps them turn bad into good as you will read in the centerfold of this issue.

Cheers for you who support all this!

John Halligan, S.J



YOUR POWER

The world's frightening economic crisis is much more than a disaster. It is also another revelation of Divine providence over God's misbehaving children. God is giving us another big chance to be more alert than ever before to the needs of each other. Financial preoccupations are heavy and tiresome, but they are also a motivation to think about how God wants us to both care for and depend on one another. Over the years, the families in the WBC have experienced your care for them and learned to care for others. They all have experience of being down where you can not fall lower. And they have learned from you to recognize a "crisis opportunity" for all those who can risk being generous despite their own needs.

The Working Boys' Center is a 45-year witness to your sacrifices in taking care of our families of working kids. These families gradually become able and ready to help others still caught in the circumstances they used to be in before their participation in the Center's programs. Your donations have been a contagious power precisely because their source is God in all of you. It is the power that transforms the devil's promotion of mean tricks back into the enjoyments of generosity practiced by our families as a result of your generosity to them. In the long run of salvation history, this is what problems, crises, sacrifices and sufferings are all meant for. God is still in charge and you are the important players in the plan.

SOME GLIMPSES OF ALL THE FUN GOING ON

Teaching classes is always part of the work of the college graduate volunteers from the U.S.A. who have taken turns helping at the Working Boys' Center - A Family of Families for decades now. Some volunteers' parents were volunteers at the Center with similar work schedules years ago. Our families in the Center learn from all of them about stateside life and about the different cities the volunteers come from. Before they come to the Center, each group of volunteers confirms in writing that their intention is to do Christ's work in this world. So there are no mysteries about who the volunteers are, where they come from and why they are here. The only astonishments are about the miracles they do.

Love and laughter are the main educational materials they use during their long hard days of teaching the parents, teenagers and kids. Of course, the volunteers are adept at using all the modern visual aids and classroom management skills. Occasional field trips are very enriching to their students, especially a trip to the ice cream store on a bad day. But the basic pedagogy is from around the Lake of Galilee where Jesus used His talent and preparation for attracting His first friends to achieve happiness by living for others.

Volunteers work at all levels. With the grammar school girls they make memorable tissue paper creations, which are given as gifts to brighten the desks and cabinets in the Center offices. Their candles do not burn down too quickly and their greeting cards are marketable for all occasions. Trying to teach math on the computer is a challenge, as is teaching sportsmanship on the playing field when there is only one soccer ball for 25 boys. In the English classes the volunteers make a lot of progress teaching basic courtesy, even though sometimes the kids still say "fine thanks" when asked their age, and "I am seven" when asked how they are today. Reciting prayers in English is a major victory, and that gives the volunteers a chance to invoke the Higher Power as well.

Colegio is a favorite work area for some volunteers. Girls who need extra help with studies find solace in the volunteers who are never late for the early morning study hall, and keep on working until nightfall. The girls are helped to stop pitying themselves by the



MIKE AND BRIDGET TURN A HAND



MAGGIE'S INTENT ON FLIPPING THE FLAPJACKS



KATHRYN WORKS THE ASSEMBLY LINE



LAURA AND JESSICA GET IN ON THE ACT



AUDREY GIVES MIKE A LITTLE HELP



*THE FINAL GAME JULY 4, 2009, VOLUNTEERS
THE VICTORS*



*THE VOLUNTEERS WATCH THE GOODBYE
SHOW*



volunteer's good example and dedication to their needs. But we know there is more than good example involved in what we have all seen as a big switch from hating this life to loving it. That is gained by having someone to talk to about poverty being surmountable, prosperity being earned, a smile being an important tool, and an "I can do it" attitude being essential to finding what God wants one to do in life.

So it is with some of the boys who were taking steps to join up with others on the fast track to cutting commitments to family and any honest life style. Volunteers help these boys to change that mentality by counseling them that life goes where you point it. They tell the kids that decisions have consequences, sometimes undesirable, but that each person is in charge of deciding. In most cases this has the positive effect of turning life around for the boys in question. So we are sure they will be looking for the volunteers' addresses in the future to tell them how they finished their technical education, got good jobs and are helping their families.

All the moms and dads celebrate the volunteers for giving them an education as a preparation for better jobs and for helping to build a better society. They enjoy coming to class and having someone to share their joys and sorrows with. Sometimes they even like doing the activities they never did before because they never had much of a childhood, like painting pictures and singing songs and playing crazy games. They do not deny that having the volunteers spend Sundays with their families and help them to build their houses is memorable too. They describe the volunteers with words like serious, responsible, patient, friendly, loving, fun, and so on. But it is the solemn tone when saying these words that indicates that our people have never before had this new kind of treatment. It is a treatment that gives them strange new feelings. Most of all, they feel their own impatience with staying poor.

The constant activity of the volunteers with the kids and parents, all the laughs, the tensions, the disappointments, insurances, achievements, consolations and love, the whole mix of sharing some life, ends with the school year. That is when our folks try to thank the volunteers and show them that the WBC family thinks volunteers are real winners. They even let them win the final soccer games on the 4th of July. But deep down the families know that they don't have to let the volunteers win anything. The volunteers have helped them grow into their destinies as Jesus missioned them to grow. That merits their place in the winners' circle.

RUNNING FOR OUR LIFE”

There are no such things as limits to our volunteers’ brave sacrifices for the Working Boys’ Center. Ten thousand feet up here in Quito, the challenge to run a ten mile marathon up and down the hills through the city was not taken up by the faint hearted. Sponsors had offered to pay per mile; and our 2008-2009 team of volunteers accepted the offer en masse to win us a fortune. Proving themselves equal to any fast deal right from the start, our volunteers had the sponsors pay top dollar for the shirts with sponsor advertisements covering their bodies flashing through the town. The advertisements were printed in big letters on the front of each shirt and WORKING BOYS’ CENTER - A FAMILY OF FAMILIES on the back. But everyone who saw the runners could see who they represented. The race was an extra bit of service to the Center and was not even slightly easy. The very early morning long practice runs and the short ones late at night instead of rest were witnessed and recorded only by the angels in charge of Heavenly rewards after arrival. Here in Quito, we were on hand for our volunteers’ crossing the victory finish line with twelve thousand other temporarily insane men and women running a ten mile race at this altitude.



SOME OF THE VALIANT RUNNERS

Year of the Padre Join us for a yearlong celebration of Padre Halligan’s 80th birthday, and 50th year in Ecuador! Please visit us at www.workingboyscenter.com to find out about all the festivities honoring Padre Juan for the incredible and inspirational work he’s done! Or email us your contact information at: info@workingboyscenter.org

Tax deductible donations can be sent to:

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Mrs. Patricia Parks, President

12750 Stephen Place

Elm Grove, WI 53122

Visit us on the Web @

<http://www.workingboyscenter.org>

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