

Short Term Doesn't Mean Doing Nothing

The Center also is grateful host to about two hundred working guests who come as USA college, highschool and adult parish groups. Of course they don't all come at once, They arrive in scheduled groups that Judy Conway is still managing. So, all of them considered, there have been some thousands of persons who over the years have power-driven that special happiness that came to and stayed in the Working Boys' Center from its earliest days. It doesn't have a description other than happiness.



Annual faithfuls from Fordham Prep

In the case of these short term groups of student and adult volunteers, at a visitor's first glance it might appear to be too much of a mix of activities on one property. But all the activities are parts of each day's planned, and needed progress. Highschool and college students and adult parish groups may be involved in the kitchen or in one of the shops or cleaning and painting, teaching special students or advanced students something we can't get a teacher for here. Our little kids love to have the volunteers help them play because they get to climb on the gringos like they're hillsides or, in the case of some bigger gringos, more like mountains. Our teenagers especially enjoy



House builders from ST Dom's in Brookfield



Short-term sprucer uppers

the meetings where they share and compare life style details with the visiting young people who say it all like it is with the special flavors of scandals and revelations. Neither group ends up too envious of the other. Our Center mothers and fathers especially profit from one on one conversations with the USA college and parish members about the similarities and differences in family life here and there. It dawns on all participants that there's a huge variety of ways people enjoy life in this big world. Darwin's theory of evolution gets lost in the facts of so many kinds of people enjoying their differences God gives them.



You volunteer, you work

Please mail contributions to

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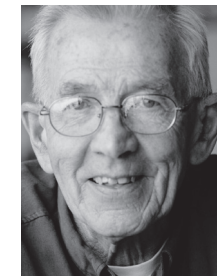


THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • FALL 2017



Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

We can all feel God's presence.

I think most if not all of our loyal benefactors of the Working Boys' Center - A Family Of Families know that Center Number One has been closed for financial reasons. Now, after the fact, I occasionally daydream that maybe we could have robbed a bank and pleaded leniency based on our very good cause and long record of helping families out of poverty. But my conscious and serious thoughts are all about the overwhelming gratitude we all have in WBC to all of you for staying with us in the struggle and keeping the movement alive.

There's no lack of evidence that there's a big need not for just this one Center we still have. There are countless neighborhoods in need of WBC Centers that teach and show the folks how to practice the Gospel values that'll

get them out of the poverty that endangers their salvation and ours. So, I'm more than ever hopeful we can all stay with the project God has inspired these past five decades. We can show, by successful operations that the Devil is not going to have the last laugh at families passing on their poverty from one generation to the next.

The big news in this issue of Shoeshine Special is about the importance of our WBC volunteers whom God inspires you to support and what a vital gift from God their presence is to the Working Boys' Center. But, before that, a bit of straight talk on "loving thy neighbor" from George Borja.

God bless.

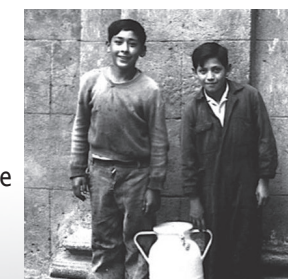
John J. Halligan, S.J.

John Halligan, S.J.

That's What George Said

One of our values is personal formation in doing good things for others voluntarily, i.e. without pay, in imitation of Christ Who wants us to imitate Him doing the good things for others that'll help them get to Heaven. There's no money involved; but this dealing in favors, giving and getting, is life's most important business. We always made lists of the kids with their assigned tasks to serve each other's needs. But, scandal of all scandals, the expected enthusiastic generosity didn't flourish. Imagine! Poor kids barely at the survival level acting like the rest of us are their slaves!! Ignoring our good counsel, they skipped their turns at helping out. They just didn't like to serve the meals, to struggle with the pails of water from the spigot in the patio up the bell tower stairs to to the kitchen, to help do the dishes, to clean the Center, to take charge of the games closet, etc. Volunteerism wasn't one of their priorities and we didn't want to scream at the kids and have the neighbors think we were into slave labor. It was a family problem until one of the kids, George Borja, grew up.

As one of our original members back in the 1960's, George Borja, showed himself to be a leader without any shadow of a bully about him. After graduation from grammar school, he took the usual eight or twelve months



The water carriers

of training for a good paying job. He chose marketing, He already had the natural business talents of charming and winking at the customer. He needed to learn the professional salesperson's skills like scribbling receipts. In the course of time, George started making good money in the sales world. But we asked him to also to stay on with us directing the Center.

George knew exactly how to sell the kids on not skipping out on doing their voluntary tasks. He called a meeting where he had them all read together, louder and louder, a big sign he had made that said: IN OUR CENTER VOLUNTEERING IS OBLIGATORY.

I was tempted to laugh; but I suddenly remembered reading something just like that about the Kingdom of Heaven in the Bible. Without quoting chapter and verses, George did talk about other Biblical ideas on contributing like Saint Paul's about not eating if you don't want to work; and George made it all fun. But the rest of this issue on voluntarism is about those hundreds of men and women from other countries who have come to Ecuador with the vocation to do good things on site for the poor families in our Working Boys' Center.



Young director George Borja (in white)

Stay Calm and “Voluntario”

It’s dangerous to mention any names of distinguished volunteers because the memory of so many other exceptionally generous persons immediately objects: “How about so-and-so also?” But I’ll face that danger with just two names. The first name is also of the very first volunteer, Miss Mary Lou Pelland. The “miss” in that name is important. The kids always called her ‘Mees’ not “miss” like the opposite of a “hit”. That



Judy (left) Mary Lou (right) friends for life

wasn’t because they couldn’t manage the right pronunciation. It was because even in Spanish “mees” meant each kid wanted her to belong to “mee”. They knew she was here for them. She was a three year very special experience for all of us. From 1969 to 1972 we could see that without any kind of competing with each other, every single kid felt Mary Lou belonged especially to him. They put their hearts into learning and memorizing all the stuff they had to learn from other teachers because Mary Lou said they should. She is the first person in our Center’s history to brave teaching fifteen and sixteen year old working boys the higher math they needed in all the trades (“higher” than making change in a deal). Those kids are getting old now and she is still dearly remembered as a special friend. The other name I dare mention is Judy Conway’s. Decades back, when the Center was in its self-identification stage deciding what it could or couldn’t and should or shouldn’t do for the poor, Judy sized

up its situation as her own personal challenge. She could either make herself a fortune in USA involving herself in Human Relations programs or pioneer the more important activity of teaching poor people in our Center to prosper acting out their very special worth to others. She spent nine years doing that on site here at the Center. She has come back to help one or two times each year since then and is still managing our program of groups from USA who are invited to come and share our life style for a couple of weeks. Theirs is busy schedule with nobody earning education credits; everybody’s making new lifetime friendships.



Year-long volunteers, what would we do without them?

Every year the Center is enriched with a few college graduate or that age group volunteers who come to donate a full year of their lives to helping



They’ll go to work soon



May I please have this dance?

in the Center. They used to call themselves “long term volunteers”, – a whole year. As time passed and their links to the Center remained unbroken they now call themselves “lifetime volunteers”. They pay their own airfare and all their personal expenses while they’re here. The Center supplies room and board. The food is especially good because we have two angels from Heaven who do the cooking and cleaning of the common areas in our volunteer house. The conversation is also good because, as the volunteers themselves will tell you, they get more than they give out of the experience of living in and appreciating a different culture. These volunteers are especially needed as teachers. So their relationships with the folks in the Center, both with the kids and with the adults,



Helping spread joy with christmas bundles



How do you spell Michael in english, children?

inevitably become lifelong. I guess a lot of us know that similar experience of some teacher who has meant a lot in our lives.

Those of us in the old guard who stay here year after year always accompanied by volunteers keep catching or renewing from them our own permanent status as visiting volunteers lovingly accepted by poor people heroic enough to take a chance on friendship. In an atmosphere like this, a grounds-keeper. a teacher, a cook a fund raiser a director. a nurse, a librarian a cleaning crew member, the priest who celebrates our mass. a bus driver and any of all volunteers knows and feels that she or he is not just accepted but integrated into our mystical body, needed, wanted and loved. That’s a very special self esteem we share with our benefactors who know exactly what they are supporting: i.e. all of us people helping each other “make it big”.