

AN INCOMPARABLE SERVICE

Every year during the past three or four decades, a repeated favor from God to The Working Boys' Center, *A Family Of Families* (WBC), has been a team of about fifteen young college graduates who come and donate a full school year of service in our educational programs for kids and parents. In all of our history, each one of those hundreds of volunteers has been a personality overflowing with fun, affection and a special teaching talent at our service. For all of us, they have been an annual source of new and vibrant life on our team each year, all the way up to and including the school year 2014 – 2015.

For some still unexplained reason, the expected volunteers for this year – *all of them except for one young lady* – didn't show. Rhiannon Monta, the exception, and a graduate of Yale University, arrived from California expecting to be one with a group of other volunteers we had told her were also expected. At our first encounter at the airport, when we had to tell Rhiannon she was to be this year's one and only, she didn't even look at us with suspicion that we're some kind of story telling nuts. Her valiant acceptance of the situation was a special relief and happiness for us; and right on top of it God was preparing another special quick lift to our spirits. Olivia Young, a year before this, had completed a donation of two years of her life as an exceptionally successful volunteer in the Center, and she was back in USA, immersed in the work world in Chicago. On a return visit to the Center, she heard about Rhiannon's full year sentence to a year of hard work and out of a big volunteer residence, haunted by a very ancient priest and two less ancient nuns. Olivia loves the Center; so she simply decided to rearrange her life plans to include a new

and third year dedicated to the Center, accompanying Rhiannon. So now we have two full time volunteers this



Rhiannon Monta and Olivia Young

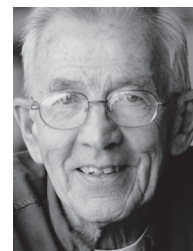
school year, but only two. They can't do all the work usually done by fifteen volunteers. That would kill them. But the look of them at supper late each Friday night, after the week's grind, reminds me of the epitaph on the graves of soldiers: "*Fallen On The Field Of Honor*". I don't dare say that to them because it might get me killed. Besides, our volunteers don't want any memorials or plaques to honor them. They live their own memory of how very much of their own selves they give to our people who need them. Very poor people like ours usually stay convinced nobody can teach them the tricks of worldly success because poor people like ours usually don't have the friendship of volunteers like Olivia and Rhiannon, who discover and reveal the treasure inside each student. I couldn't begin to describe how much digging is needed to bring to light those treasures.

The experience of this year with only two volunteers has us more alert to attracting volunteers so as not to repeat the shortage in the future. That experience also makes very clear that we need the volunteers for the success of the Center. We couldn't simply hire other workers to do the volunteers' part. What the volunteers do can't be hired or paid for with salaries. They don't leave behind simply a total of hours of work done or results measured in some number of students promoted. What each one of them leaves behind is his or her unique ability to attract their students into wanting to help others like the volunteers do. This has no price tag on it. *But you benefactors are financing it.*

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • SPRING 2015

Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

In the Working Boys' Center, the peace of Christ in this year, 2016, doesn't feel anything like a calm year's stroll in our world, enjoying each other's places in the immensity of God's glorious creations.

Rather, were having intimations of urgency. The quick arrival of Lent leading up to Easter glory before we hardly get past Christmas, is a jolt out of relaxing in Jesus's company into matching His awareness and alertness to being part of creation's momentum and steering it all toward Heaven. The feeling is that no matter what day it is of the week or of the year of this lifetime, time's a wasting.

This impression passes its reality check with the presence of so many new families who are inspired to be part of our family of families in which we can all give as well as get. The new recruits are enjoying the transforming experiences of

eating good meals, getting medical and dental attentions, starting realistic programs of education for good jobs and learning the tricks of creating the kind of prosperity that includes the priority of getting to Heaven. But their most dramatic transformation is each family's newly found self awareness as one of God's family of families each one with a vocation to contribute no matter how much money they don't make. We latch on to their style, and simply ask God to keep His providence working, as it has for fifty years through you benefactors. That's all we need in order to face up to the spiritual needs, number of meals, health care, education and foibles of this next generation. This 2016 year's liturgical seasons' jolt shocks us into getting up to a new speed with living Jesus's best human self in us.

John J. Halligan, S.J.

FINDING THE WAY

I have a question for you: Which visiting group brought our kids gifts of stuffed toys that included a big variety of red, yellow, green, brown and blue kangaroos all poised to jump into the kids' arms? You guessed it. All the way from Australia. They have lots of kangaroos there and also Jesuits.

Father David Braithwaite, S.J. and Professor Cathy Martorana accompanied some young men and women on a short mission experience with us here at the Working Boys' Center in Quito. They did some helping out in re-painting walls, cleaning and organizing our warehouse, a day of house building, a lot of serving meals, teaching kids new games, making friendships with our families and, in everything they did, showed how very happy they were to be here with us. That's how our folks' self esteem grows solid. It's not everybody here that can talk about the friends they have so far away in Australia.

We also shared something else very profound with them. They all belong to a group named "Cardoner",



Our Australian friends introduced us to the culture from "down under".

after a riverside spot where Saint Ignatius had a unique experience of a personal chat with God helping him see the best road to take in life. So their trip to Ecuador and the Working Boys' Center wasn't only a friendly event for all of us. Very definitely, their intention was to get to know some facts in the life situation of us families of working kids that might inspire them to do some things with their own life situation. It's clear that we matter to them. They made a long, and not so very easy voyage to come all the way here, gambling all the way on getting a good reception from us. They showed affection for us all, especially for our kids. Some of them may compete with the toy kangaroos and spring for a full year of volunteering help in our educational programs.



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This is the "BEFORE" picture of the Maza Tandazo family.



Christian gets in the swing of making candles.



Yazmin, on the right, is the family scholar.



Henry's real passion is baking.



And here's the "AFTER", the Maza Tandazos today.

OUR FOLKS ARE SPREADING & NOT JUST JOINING THE KINGDOM

The geographical location of Center Number Two is a good background against which to feature the change of any one of our families, from its bad situation to its good one, going on as a result of its membership in the Center. CMT #2 is surrounded by high hills up which the families climb to where they live in crowded neighborhoods. Up there the dark nights can be too cold and the daytime poverty in and around all the shacks can be awfully lonely without even a tiniest advantage in sharing tears or laughter about it. Christ doesn't come walking along personally saying, "As I live and breathe, so happy to find you Jenny and Mickey and Tommy; I want you all to come down and join us in the Working Boys' Center - A Family Of Families. It's where you can learn a new way that goes to Heaven." That's not how the families join the WBC. Rather, our promoters, like Mrs. Teresa Ramos, do all the recruiting using mouth watering descriptions of delicious meals and other miraculous sounding attractions to attract a steady stream of new families into our mystery of transformation.

One day many years ago, Theresa made friends with the Maza boys who were making money shining shoes on the streets. She got herself invited to visit their shack where she invited everybody to visit the Center. Theresa gave them a tour of the place explaining that

membership in the Center was an option for families who needed help but also wanted to be able to help others. This was the handclasp without the slightest hint of a handout that the Maza family suddenly realized they had been secretly craving. They did need some help. But they were especially attracted to the activities like house building in which all the families helped each other.

That was sixteen years ago. Since then, the older six kids have been through the Center's formation, graduated in various trades and, single or married, are earning their livings in automechanics, baking, beauty-care and industrial sewing. Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Luis and Orfa Maza were blessed with their additional last three children: Yasmin, now sixteen years old and Henry, fifteen, are both studying baking in the Center and, Christian, fourteen, who's learning how to make and sell decorative candles.

I asked the parents and the three kids still in the Center to join me in a bull session to compose this article about the transformation we all experience in the Center. The whole Maza family has never been fast with books and pencil and paper stuff or at articulating profound thoughts. But, as often happens, that can be an advantage. They used the fewest of words to express how their time in the Center keeps moving like a fast but



Henry participates in a class participation.

smooth hurricane of families swirling around encouraging, impressing and helping each other in Christ's style of "membership".

Orfa and Luis still vividly remember the happiness many years ago of getting all the kids enrolled in the various levels of the Center's education system, and then suddenly BAM! They were stunned by the first blow aimed at themselves. They had to enroll in school themselves! Otherwise they would never be eligible for the legal minimum wage, no matter in what job. So they did it. They rolled with that punch for one hour every evening during three years. But they didn't go it alone. Tens of other married couples and single parents were with them enduring the necessary misery. They also remember, among many recalled delights over the years, achieving the construction of a ground floor with all the posts standing for their new house. That meant being chosen as next beneficiary of Jim Parks Jr.'s next work group of professionals who arrived from Wisconsin, along with a gift of six thousand dollars worth of building materials paid for and ready to build a roof and second floor over the Maza residence up there in Pisuli. The neighbors have yet to recover from the shock of seeing



those gringo executive types, with no hand callouses, work faster, harder and more efficiently than the natives in Pisuli.

Our interview became ever more relaxed as we all remembered, talked and laughed. The three kids enjoyed hearing some family history they had been too young to be conscious of. For instance, there was big brother Henry's felonious addiction to using his sister's skate board on the forbidden main drag where trucks roll along. He was caught not once but twice within the same half hour, and was featured as cute criminal of the season in a Shoeshine Special about eight years ago. Orfa and Luis, usually so silent, were almost chatterboxes when talking about how the Center's programs have enabled them to help so many neighbors in Pisuli. This is the jackpot I wanted to hit when I asked for this interview.

We have some Italian missionary nun friends who work up there and sing high praises of the Center families: the Bunay's, the Florencio's, the Melgar's the Romeros's, and so many others, but most especially the Maza's who have a special knack for making sure nobody's left out.

Sister Maria Gracia says she can always identify what families are or have been Center members because they so easily make and help others to make new friendships. The friendships, of course, power-drive everybody's transformation. She keeps pictures of our people instead of the saints on her cellphone and talks about inviting Pope Francis to pop over for a round of parties with her folks. She knows Francis would be delighted with how her guys and gals in Pisuli have achieved the street smarts to find the Way to help other people in need. •