

Shoeshine Special

News from the
Working Boys' Center
Quito, Ecuador

Summer 2008

Dear Folks,

In our daily celebration of life in the Working Boys' Center, our 400 families pile up an enormous number of accomplishments that barely get the grateful attention they deserve. So, the SHOESHINE SPECIAL can't share much of all the fun going on. But it's always a delightful opportunity to share some of the news as proof that we're still working lots of miracles of change from misery to prosperity with your help.

Every day we have the ongoing basic activity of education for jobs. The little kids and teenagers enjoy the ongoing learning process. The parents get their kicks by lamenting that they are too old to learn what they are learning every day and they help each other suit up psychologically to drown themselves in an ocean of worry that they are going to "flunk" even though adult classes don't have any exams. Against this background of learning professions for achieving future good jobs, we also have an annual series of highlight activities. After Easter Bunny's party with little baskets of treasures for everybody in kinder and pre-kinder, both Centers are decorated for the Holy Spirit at Pentecost because He brings all our courage and smarts for correcting mistakes. Then we redecorate for the Month of May because Our Lady takes good care of her children in the Centers. First Communion and Confirmation are also part of the "school year" before we abandon the classrooms for summer game championships. So far, this school year, we have had six groups of short term helpers. Five more groups are scheduled to join us during the coming weeks before school ends. In the next issue we'll tell you all about that.

In this issue we want to share a few other family items.

John J. Halligan, S.J.



Franklin, Patti, and their children showing off their new bakery.

WORKING CHILDREN HAVE THE BRIGHTEST FUTURES

Franklin Rey and Patricia Almachi Rey invited us to another inauguration of their newly enlarged and renovated bakery on the lower floor of their own house. The new place takes up the same space where their smaller bakery has been, plus the new space where Patti's beauty salon was. Patti will run the new bakery with some help from Franklin, who'll keep his high paying job as a sales rep for a big flour company. Their two kids will also help part time while they finish their studies at the university. They own this forty thousand dollar operation with a total debt of only four thousand hanging over it. They started years ago as working kids just like our working kids today who don't yet have a dime to spare.

About 20 years ago they graduated in the Center with their professional titles in Cosmetology and Baking. They married a few years later and have both continued working in their professions, even installing their businesses side by side on the ground floor of their home which, back then, wasn't even close to being the handsome structure they have finally achieved for their home and business. Loyalty, personal formation, family unity, work, professional preparation, religious practice, money management, healthy recreation, care of their health and decent housing are the ten values the Center concentrates on in its formation of poor people on their inexorable way to prosperity. We have thousands of graduates like these two for front page stories. You helped with your loyal donations over the years; but the working kids' families have done it. We all have reason to rejoice!

WE MUST CARRY ON



Father Halligan and Bob Schlytter check out the damage

February 2, 2008 marks an important day in the history of the Center. It was the day the RED TRUCK did its last service while on the way to do good work for the Center. It has suffered repeated complaints in the past few years, but on that day, it simply gave up the ghost.

Like in any family where the working boys and their sisters had found exhilaration in riding in the back of the truck when Father Halligan took them for ice cream or on other outings, they were devastated by the news. They immediately

suggested that we dig a grave and bury the truck, but we decided to keep it as a monument. (We can't bronze it because it is, after all, the RED TRUCK.)

After it rolled to its last stop, compunction set in about our never having given it any real name except "the red truck" even tho' it was part of the family for 35 years. We're making up for any disgrace with affection and in capital letters.

RED TRUCK is a 1973 model three quarter ton crew cab GMC pickup that always sported a very young, bright red coat. Most of its passengers preferred riding in the back to catch the breeze, but a few of us old codgers liked the room for eight people inside. RED TRUCK kept all of us safe and got us to our destinations, sometimes with a little adventure thrown into the mix - like the time we got it into a garage that was too small for it and couldn't get it out without jacking it up and rolling it out. Then there was the time we believed the "mechanic" who told us a new fan belt always makes a lot of noise, so we took a marathon drive to Latacunga, 2 hours away, to deliver some stranded volunteers to the airport and it died on the way back, out where only the stars provided light in the sky.

RED TRUCK died doing its job to the end, going smoothly along the west side highway heading for a carnival week retreat. The slightest little gasp of metal fatigue signaled that it had given its all and it stopped on the highway.

Its long career included many heroic feats. Cliff hanging visits to houses in the hills where neighborhoods were just beginning to be dreamed of by desperate settlers became normal scheduled trips after the first hundred breathless experiences. The earlier years of the Guangopolo Indian mission parish went down in history only because



Fr. Halligan gives it one last try



Father Halligan weeps for his loss

RED TRUCK made the trip seem perfectly sane. Countless tons of new and used building materials were transported for the house building activities; and so were the other tons of gifts picked up from benefactors for Christmas parties. The very long trips down to the coast and back up to the sierra were hard for the travellers; but our good and faithful hero gave us the confidence and inspiration to make the trip all of those hundreds of necessary times. One of RED TRUCK's feats was at least equal to Rudolf the red nosed reindeer's moment of glory. It was during the shooting war some crooked

community leaders instigated among the misled and desperately poor settlers in one of the new settlements in the north of Quito. It got to the point where all outsiders were threatened with death for entering, by both sides. Father Carlos Altamirano, the local pastor, asked Father Halligan to take him for negotiations in the RED TRUCK, which everyone knew as a friend. RED TRUCK took them in. Negotiations began. The shooting and deaths stopped; and a rather good neighborhood developed. No medals for RED TRUCK, just lasting memories.

Of course, we had to tell Bob Schlytter, the donor of RED TRUCK, as well as other Center vehicles, about the tragedy. He came from Milwaukee with his son, also Robert, and a friend, for the funeral. Father Halligan shed tears of respect; and we all showed our inconsolable loss to Bob. We comforted the children by assuring them that we will have the students in the auto-mechanics course try to rebuild the motor.

But it's difficult to keep a sad and gloomy outlook on this event when we think that, probably, all former volunteers will want to chip into a memorial fund to buy a new 42 passenger student bus to replace RED TRUCK. We can also use it for work crews. It's incredibly priced at only \$80,000. You can't pass up an offer like this. After all, it's a new world out there. Civilized people don't ride around in the back of rusty old RED TRUCKS. Here's your chance to make a difference.



The new red truck, a donation of Bob Schlytter and Jim Parks.



Friends who came to see if anything could be done.

IN MEMORIAM

James Gilbert Lehman, lovingly known by many of us as “Charlie”, was a beautifully simple human being. What you saw was what you got. He was a refreshing antidote to those folks who are trying so hard to be something they’re not. He was a faith filled family man who gave freely of his time and talent to make this world a better place. When, as a boy, he studied at Campion High School in Wisconsin, he met Jim Parks. It was through Jim that he came to know the Working Boys’ Center and to work for its cause from its earliest days. He and his wife, Sharon, joined the Parks family working on mailing out the Shoeshine Special in days before computers and other helpful devices. “Charlie” was the one who researched and went out to search for unusual items which the Center needed.....things like parts for antiquated machines or brand names that had disappeared from the map. And, of course, Charlie and Sharon became regular contributors to the mission.

Charlie and Sharon were a vital part of things even before Pat and Jim made Family Unity International, Inc., a legalized agency in the Milwaukee Archdiocese, with a 501 (c) 3 tax exemption number, in support of the WBC. After Sharon died, Charlie became the volunteer who recorded all checkbook records on the computer and balanced the checkbook every month.

Charlie died suddenly on April 14. Our Family Unity Office in Milwaukee, and the Working Boys’ Center in Quito have suffered a great loss. Of course, we were not surprised to be told by the Lehmans that Charlie left a big donation for WBC in his will. He probably knew it would take a fortune to try to replace him!



Jim (Charlie) Lehman

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>