

# PROJECT SALVADOR

## UPDATE

The Mission of Project Salvador is to support the people of El Salvador in implementing their own vision of justice. We express our solidarity and deepen our relationship with El Salvador by creating awareness in the United States of the plight of the marginalized in Central America and by supporting grassroots community development through funding of projects in El Salvador.

Visit us at [www.projectsalsalvador.org](http://www.projectsalsalvador.org)!

### March 2015

#### A New Clinic for La Laguna

by Tony Gasbarro, Scholarship Coordinator



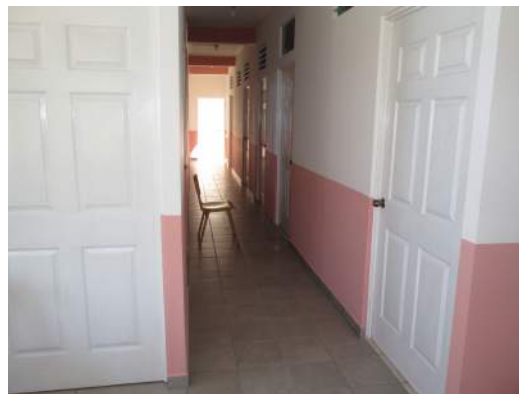
Original day-care shelter

About a year ago the Carmelite Missionary Sisters of La Laguna, a small town in the Department of Chalatenango in northern El Salvador, requested \$5000 to upgrade a day-care center for seniors. When I visited the project in December 2014 I was overwhelmed to see that an entire clinic had been built. The sisters had leveraged our donation to apply for grants from Spain and obtained enough money to construct a clinic to not only house the day-care shelter, but also several medical consulting rooms and a small pharmacy

Using money from the profits from their second-hand store, the sisters have been able to hire a half-time doctor and nurse. Future plans call for a small laboratory for processing blood samples. The doctor, who wants to dedicate her life to helping the poor, is willing to take a small salary of \$500/month.



Newly constructed clinic



Downstairs consultation rooms

#### Project Salvador's E-Newsletter!

In an effort to lower costs and be more environmentally responsible, we are now offering to send you Project Salvador's newsletter via email.

To subscribe to the electronic newsletter, please send an email to [newsletter@projectsalsalvador.org](mailto:newsletter@projectsalsalvador.org)

Once we receive your request we will add you to our E-Newsletter list and you will no longer receive a paper copy.

*Please consider saving a tree and a stamp by subscribing!*

## Scholarship Student Spotlight: *Flor de Maria Castro Mejía*

by Tony Gasbarro, Scholarship Coordinator

Flor graduated in 2012 with a degree in sociology from the University of El Salvador. I have known her since she started high school. Flor has always been involved in social and environmental issues. She has done a lot to make people aware

of fire and soil erosion in the forests above her community. When she completed university studies she had difficulty in finding full-time work, so she decided to spend an additional year becoming a certified teacher. With her certification she obtained full-time work teaching sociology at a university level nursing school.

Flor really wants to return to her small community in the mountains. She loves her mother and wants to care for

her. She loves to read and recently suggested that I read *Infinity in the Palm of Her Hand: A Novel of Adam and Eve* by Gioconda Belli. I've read it. Try it.



Flor at her graduation.

## Meet Our Scholarship Coordinators!



Humberto, Natalia, Marisol, & Ana Valencia

These are a few of our amazing scholarship coordinators who live in El Salvador and work tirelessly in support of our scholarship students. Humberto, Natalia, and Marisol are siblings, and Ana Valencia is married to Humberto. They have been part of our on-the-ground team for many years and are an essential part of the scholarship program. They meet regularly with the scholarship students, ensure all funds are distributed and spent appropriately, and identify new students for the program. They help keep the scholarship program running smoothly. Project Salvador would not be able to support so many students if it were not for this team's dedication and passion.

## Tilapia Farming

Canton Plan del Pino, Municipality of Ciudad Delgado, San Salvador

by Tony Gasbarro, Scholarship Coordinator

As part of a youth development project, the Community of Carmelite Missionary Sisters constructed a tilapia farm to support activities aimed at developing vocational skills such as woodworking, jewelry making, electrician skills, and art. The tilapia farm is part of CIJUVEN, which is a youth development complex located in Plan del Pino; CIJUVEN has been highlighted in previous issues of the newsletter.

The tilapia farm is about a year old and still needs a little more work. It currently produces 300 pounds of tilapia every three months and these fish are sold to poor families in the canton at US\$2.00 per pound. This is below market price.

More details about the management and economics of this operation will be forthcoming in future issues of this newsletter. Project Salvador has been a major contributor to this project in recent years.



Sister Esmeralda feeding fish in lower tank. The fish are fed 4 times each day.



Sister Esmeralda standing by the two other fish tanks. Each tank contains a different age class of fish.

# Observations from El Salvador

by Beth Stewart, Le Grande Rotary President

I have traveled many places in my 50-some years, but none that touched me like my trip to El Salvador. I had the privilege of traveling with six other Americans to El Salvador in late October 2014. Project Salvador board member John Kukankos led our team of friends and Rotarians. I was the representative from the La Grande, Oregon, Rotary Club, which had just committed \$3,000 to sponsor 10 young Salvadoran girls through their high school years. We were thrilled to partner with Project Salvador and the Rotary Club of Wallowa County, Oregon, which has been sponsoring 12 girls from El Congo in western El Salvador. Here are a few of my observations from four short, but fulfilling days in El Salvador.



The team with Board Member John Kukankos.

## Day 1

We woke up in El Salvador to the sounds of birds and a breathtaking view from Ayagualo, a retreat center atop a volcano outside of San Salvador where we stayed. We met some amazing women today in Suchitoto who take small loans out to raise and sell chickens and pigs, grow vegetables, or sell sundries to their communities to feed their families and make better lives for their children. They manage their bancos, track their income and expenses, and have a 100 percent repayment rate on their loans. Impressive, considering the average income is \$1.50 to \$3 a day in the campo, or countryside. We were treated to boiled yucca and sliced cabbage with salsa and lime. Surprisingly delicious. As I retire to my room tonight, rain is coming down in torrents, almost deafening as it pounds the jungle of foliage outdoors.

## Day 2

Today was a heartwarming and inspiring day. We met with nine university students that Project Salvador is sponsoring. These kids are excellent students from very poor families that would never be able to afford a college education. Now, Sonia is in her fifth year of medical school, Sandy is studying law, Brian is studying electrical engineering, and Marlon wants to be a math professor. We treated the students to lunch and took them to the beach – a first for some of them. I was impressed with their poise, their passion and their tenacity. They don't live in dorms and walk 10 minutes to class. They walk a mile or two on dirt roads to the highway where they catch a bus...or two or three...into San Salvador to the university, five days a week. Gangs are prevalent in El Salvador so the bus rides are dangerous, especially for these young girls. Against all odds, these kids are getting an education so they can break the cycle of poverty and become productive citizens and parents. It's all good.



Marlon

## Day 3

Oh, how lucky we are to live in the States with our amenities. We spent Day 3 in San Jose Villanueva with Señor Mike Jenkins, who with his wife Susan, has spent the last 16 years helping the locals. So appreciative are the local residents that they named their Main Street after Mike and Susie. We toured homes that Rotarians and others have built for various families. We came unannounced, but as soon as they saw Señor Mike, they welcomed us with open arms. The families are so proud of their cinderblock homes with bare cement floors, for they are a vast improvement over the dirt-floor shacks they lived in for years. Running water and electricity are luxuries; carpet, dishwashers and washing machines are nonexistent.

## Day 4

We saved the best for last. Today we had the pleasure of meeting some of the high school girls we are sponsoring. We spent the morning in El Congo listening to the Wallowa Rotary's students, and witnessing their progress and passion to learn, as each one shared their studies and aspirations. We then traveled to the top of a volcano to meet four of the La Grande Rotary students – Raquel, Ircia, Emperatriz and Patricia. What a joy and privilege! They were mesmerized by photos of my family and fellow Rotarians, and the Power Point presentations that the Union and Cove High School Spanish class students had prepared for them. They smiled as they read a couple of the letters and quickly scribbled a note to the Spanish students for me to bring home. Sitting in the Houston Airport upon our return, I'm reflecting on the past few days and so grateful for my new, inspiring friends – both from my traveling team and the young students who are now our partners on this journey.



The team visiting with scholarship students sponsored by the Wallowa Rotary Club.



University scholarship students at the beach.



Beth Stewart with La Grande Rotary scholarship students (l-r: Raquel, Ircia, Emperatriz, & Patricia).

**Project Salvador Board of Directors:**

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~~~~~ **Mil Gracias!** ~~~~~

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**WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:**

***DONATE:***

- \* Make a one-time donation to cover mailing costs of this newsletter. (\$10 suggested).
- \* Make a one-time / monthly donation to Project Salvador.
- \* Become a Proyecto Los Niños monthly donor @ \$25/month.
- \* Make a one-time / monthly donation to a specific Project Salvador project:
  - *Microlending, Scholarships, Center for Arts and Peace, PICO community organizing, CIJUVEN, or the Fr. Dean Brackley, S.J. Scholarship Fund*
- \* Donate new or used laptops for university scholarship recipients.
- \* Donate \$125 to cover the cost of an E-reader to allow students access to reading materials in areas with no libraries.
- \* Donate your car that we can sell to raise funds.
- \* Include Project Salvador in your will.

**Checks can be made payable to Project Salvador and mailed to Project Salvador, PO Box 300105, Denver, CO 80203-0105.**

***HOST A SPEAKER:***

- \* Project Salvador is happy to speak to your group about our projects, life in El Salvador, and related topics.

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