



Durham - San Ramón Sister Communities

Hermanamiento News

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Things Have Changed in San Ramón Since My First Trip

By Ken Knight

Social Worker, Wake County Public Schools

There have been a lot of changes since my first visit to San Ramón three years ago. Here is what I noticed:

1. The road to Finca Esperanza Verde is in excellent condition. When I was there two years ago, even in dry season it was difficult. This time it was rainy season and the passage was easy. The local people who use this road really appreciate it.

2. The comfort level at the farm is greatly improved. For example there are new mattresses, there

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As an expression of gratitude, our partners in San Ramón presented us with this aerial view of the town, painted by Johayda Davila, a graduate of the San Ramón Arts Program for Children.

"Put aside everything and go. This is the trip of a lifetime. Don't miss it for anything!"

— Fran Schindler, RRN

Ecotourist trips to San Ramón In 2003

Jan 18 - 25

SW Durham Rotary and friends. 919 489-1656.

Feb 8 - 15

Cultural Immersion—Tropical Explorations—All About Coffee. Leaders: Richard and Lonna Harkrader, 919 489-1656

[<harkrader@mindspring.com>](mailto:harkrader@mindspring.com)

Feb 15 - Mar 2

Discover Nicaragua, for Swedish teachers of Spanish, Geography and Civics. Leader: Ulla Norrman, 0565-430 78

[<ulla.norrman@telia.com>](mailto:ulla.norrman@telia.com)

Feb 22 - Mar 1

Cultural Immersion Ecotour Especially for UUs and Friends. Leader: Candace Carraway 919 493-3208

[<standup50@aol.com>](mailto:standup50@aol.com)

March 7-16

Ecotour for Durham Academy students. Leaders: Jennifer Garci and Lizzie Clark 919 419-9647

[<jgarci@usa.net>](mailto:jgarci@usa.net)

March 29-April 5

Ecotour for E. Chapel Hill High School students and parents. Leader: Sandy Williamson, 919 732-2991

[<swilliamson@chccs.K12.nc.us>](mailto:swilliamson@chccs.K12.nc.us)

April 4 - 13

Birding extravaganza. Ecoquest Tours. Leaders: John Connors (919 755-0253) and Dave Davenport (919 963-3038). Call Ecoquest Tours for trip price.

Note: Other dates are available. Please contact us to plan a trip whether it be one week or several days.

The trip price: Dec. 15th through April 30th: \$720, \$650 students; May 1st through Dec. 14th: \$620

Included are meals, lodging, transportation, and a full schedule of organized activities and cultural performances. The trip price is low because the organizers in the U.S. are volunteers. Host families, the Tourist Guide Club, farm staff, and cultural performance groups greatly appreciate the income ecotourism brings them and their economically depressed community. In addition, 10 percent of the trip fee is designated for projects which improve health care, education and cultural arts for the people of San Ramón.

Children on the Brink

By Francis Schindler, RRN, Health Committee

There is an orphan crisis today in 88 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Why? The HIV/AIDS epidemic is so powerful that it is causing the overall orphan rate to rise. At the end of 2001, in the 88 countries studied, 13.4 million children currently under 15 years of age had lost a mother, father, or both parents to AIDS. By 2010 this number is expected to jump to more than 25 million.

It is difficult to overstate the trauma and hardship that children affected by HIV/AIDS are forced to endure. One of the strongest indicators that orphaned children are suffering is their absence from school, and the education and sense of stability and hope for the future it can provide. Children impacted by HIV/AIDS are also at serious risk of exploitation, including physical and sexual abuse. Isolated from emotional connections with the family, some turn to risky behavior. Those forced to live on the streets may turn to prostitution, drugs, and crime as a means to survive. Moreover, children living on the street are far more likely to spend time in prisons, where infection rates are traditionally high, sex is forced, and condoms are unavailable. While most of these children were born free of HIV, they are highly vulnerable to infection.

At the XIV International AIDS Conference in Barcelona, July 2002, Director Peter Piot challenged government leaders to keep their promises to fight the

AIDS epidemic on the political stage where struggles over power and resources are fought. "The pharmaceutical industry must keep its promise to make AIDS drugs available to developing countries at affordable prices. Scientists must be willing to work where the real needs are, not just where the money and glory lies. NGO leaders must be uncompromising advocates for all their constituencies, not just the elite."

"Parents the world over have made promises to their children:

I will protect you, and I will give you the knowledge and support that will let you protect yourself.

On a local level Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities is assisting the parents of San Ramón to keep their promise to protect their children. We are supporting a new group called "Teens for Safe and Healthy Lives." The group is led by Dr. Leslie Rodriguez of the San Ramón Health Center. DSRSC has supported the development of this group through financial donations to rent a space for bi-monthly meetings. In addition, we have donated funds to buy food for lunch so that those who have traveled in from the rural areas will be better able to enjoy and participate in the meetings.

The safety, health, and survival of all children in the affected countries continues to be jeopardized due to the devastating effects of AIDS on families and communities. To learn more, contact "Keeping the Promise" (www.unaids.org).

Things Have Changed in San Ramón Since My First Trip

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are solar shower bags for warm showers, there are hammocks for relaxing and there is a wonderful bonfire area for enjoying the evening. The food was excellent, almost gourmet quality.

3. The staff at the farm is very professional and dedicated. Don Agustín is extremely knowledgeable about organic coffee production and seems to love his work. Ernesto gives careful attention to the butterfly project. They have done a wonderful job of clearing paths around the farm for nature walks. We felt loved and cared for by the staff.

4. Our reception in our guest houses was wonderful. This is a service that did not exist when I was there in 1999. We all felt at home and were fed well and all of our needs were attended to graciously. We all felt so loved by our families that we cried when we had to leave them.

5. The municipal band was new for me also. They played an exuberant concert for us and the en-

tire town on our last night in town. All of these instruments are second hand, supplied by our project.

6. The Tourist Guides of San Ramón were another delightful addition. This is a club of young people organized to develop status and self esteem and a chance to get to know foreign visitors. Our guide, David, was well informed, gracious, and enthusiastic.

7. The town of San Ramón seems cleaner than I remember it before. A friend of mine who lives in another part of Nicaragua visited me while I was there. He has traveled all over Nicaragua, and said that San Ramón has a higher level of civic pride and friendliness than he has seen anywhere else in Nicaragua.

I felt like an honored guest everywhere I went. Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities projects continue to have a significant impact on the people there, and they really appreciate us. Eco-tourism has brought income to many small businesses in San Ramón, which is very important in such a poor country.

The Human Face of Globalization: Economic Violence in the New World Order

Learning that a small shiny red bean, el Rojo Chiquito, has been hybridized to replicate the bean cultivated throughout Nicaragua by 200 thousand farm families (representing 1.5 million people), and that it will be grown in the United States and exported to Nicaragua, sent Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities into action to learn how competition from imports of subsidized agricultural products affects local production and food self-sufficiency in developing countries. Our teach-in on globalization, held September 28 at the Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Durham, delivered up-to-date information about issues which affect life around the world.

"The energy in the room was palpable — dozens of people were waving their hands in the air with questions! With the anti-globalization protests, and the corporate scandals this past year, we're all trying to make sense of the financial news. It's way past time that we try to reclaim some control over corporate behavior and our foreign policy if we're going to call the United States a democracy."

Prof. Sandy Smith-Nonini

We started the program with a fair trade coffee tasting by Counter Culture Coffee and an open-mic "speak-out" about the coffee crisis in Nicaragua and other coffee producing countries. A clip was then shown from "Life and Debt," a documentary about the economic collapse in Jamaica as a result of U.S. subsidized milk and other farm products flooding the market. This was followed by a panel discussion led by three dynamic speakers. A synopsis of their presentation follows:

**Bernadette Orr, Senior Program Officer,
U.S. Program, OXFAM America**

The price of coffee, cotton, corn, wheat, and other commodities has dropped drastically, reaching all-time lows. These low prices are not reflected in food prices for the people. In Mexico, while the commodity price has gone down, the price of tortillas has increased 400 percent since NAFTA, and 500 U.S. farmers go out of business every week. How is this possible with huge federal farm subsidies?

The agricultural policy of the U.S. is designed to help agribusiness, as is our foreign trade policy. For a long time, the government set a floor under U.S. farm commodities, to protect farmers' prices. This policy has shifted in recent years, and now supports farmer income, like welfare. Exporters benefit from lower prices, which threaten producers in other countries. Third-world farmers cannot compete with these subsidized exports dumped in their local markets.

Of the \$180 billion in the new farm bill, almost 70 percent goes to farmers who raise commodities, and 70 percent of the subsidies are going to 10 percent of the farmers. Most farmers are not benefiting from this program, especially the small farmers, but rather are being hurt by the low prices.

We need a policy that respects food security and food sovereignty, where each country can protect the production of food that is essential to their consumption and their domestic economy. A fair policy would target assistance to the poorest farmers and would limit the amount of subsidies going to wealthy farmers and corporations. We need policies that support the right of small farmers everywhere to have a dignified livelihood, to earn fair prices for their products, to have the opportunity to have access to their own markets. I urge you to find out what is being done to make trade fair. We can make a difference.

**Sandy Smith-Nonini, Professor of Anthropology
and Sociology, Elon University**

I have been working with a group of migrant farm workers from Mexico who are no longer able to make a living farming in Mexico. In the early 1990s I did research with small farmers in northern El Salvador who had to migrate due to land appropriations for export crops.

Why are third-world farmers so poor, and what is the role of the IMF? Third-world debt has grown significantly since the oil crisis of the early 1970s. The green revolution in the late sixties led to farmers being encouraged to adopt more "efficient" scientific methods, using fertilizer and pesticides. But when oil prices went up in the early 1970s, this drove up the

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The Human Face of Globalization

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costs of these inputs, forcing many small farmers into debt. So the first wave of small farmer bankruptcies was in this period. At the time, many of these countries had incurred debt, in part due to industrialization, and in part due to the oil crisis, and many of these governments were repressive military dictatorships at the time. These governments took on loans to repay their debts, only becoming further indebted. In 1982 Mexico nearly defaulted on their debt and the United States and the International Monetary Fund intervened.

Under the IMF, Mexico (and later other countries) nationalized their debt under structural adjustment programs, while at the same time the U.S. neoliberal policy was to encourage countries to privatize their national resources. Under the structural adjustment packages that the IMF requires to restructure a country's debt, countries are required to reduce their tariffs, allowing the import of foreign goods, reduce subsidies to farmers, privatize government services, and decrease social spending. As countries began to import more, small farmers produced less subsistence crops, being encouraged to produce world commodities like cotton and cattle for export. As the prices have decreased, these farmers have suffered. Farmers are charged high interest rates (above the interest rates paid on IMF loan moneys) and they have to have high collateral and meet many requirements to get loans, a process that excludes most small farmers. Since NAFTA went into effect, the amount of corn exported to Mexico from the United States has tripled, while the price has decreased from \$5 to \$1.80 a bushel for Mexican farmers.

**Tony Avirgan, Global Program Coordinator,
Economic Policy Institute**

The Global Policy Network had a recent meeting in Africa, with representatives from 14 countries. We heard the same story from all of them: the IMF imposes the same program on each country, regardless of their history, economy, or agricultural situation. The IMF was supposed to support troubled currencies with short-term loans. However, they have gone way beyond that by imposing so called prescriptions for economic recovery.

In the U.S., the Federal Reserve lowers interest

rates and increases government spending during economic downturns. The IMF demands exactly the opposite policy in countries that require IMF bailouts. They demand that the troubled country restrict the money supply and float interest rates that can typically rise to as much as 50 percent. This is like throwing oil on a fire and is exactly the opposite of what the U.S. does. This approach is becoming increasingly discredited, Argentina being a good example. The election in Brazil may result in a government resistant to the IMF/World bank programs. This is happening in many countries around the world.

There are many stories such as in Bangladesh, where the World Bank insisted on the privatization of fertilizer distribution. Private traders then started fraudulent labeling and sale of fertilizers, resulting in starvation and civil unrest. In South Africa, half a million jobs were lost due to privatization between 1994 and 1999, this in a labor market of 11 million workers. A similar situation occurred in Colombia. Colombia used to be self-sufficient in food, but now imports food, with thousands of acres becoming idle because of IMF policies. There was a huge uprising in Costa Rica when the government tried to privatize the efficient and popular phone and electricity companies.

There will be more of this type of event.

While wealthy nations expand their markets to 'feed the world,' poor farmers are driven into deeper poverty, unable to compete and prevented by World Trade Organization rules from protecting their markets with tariffs.

Question-and-Answer Period

Q. Why can't Jamaica complain to the WTO about the U.S. farm subsidies?

A. Although the WTO can impose sanctions for disallowed subsidies, U.S. policies are carefully designed to avoid the legal definition of "trade-distorting" policies. Of course the policies were written by the U.S. Other kinds of policies can be defined as "trade distorting" such as concerns about genetically modified organisms, or health and environmental concerns.

Q. Whom do the IMF's policies benefit, and how?

A. The winners are multinational corporations that export goods, and the losers are the middle class and the poor. Worldwide, about 10% of the population is getting richer, the middle class is disappearing, and the numbers of the poor are growing. Banks in the United States are among the greatest beneficiaries. Private banks hold a lot of the debts that the money is being borrowed to repay. Cargill's profits rose 20 percent in the first three years of NAFTA. A lot of this



Mauricio Perez and family produce certified fair-trade organic shaded coffee. Ask your favorite cof-

profit has been used to pay lobbyists to influence legislation. About 75 percent of the cost of your food goes for marketing! There are fewer and fewer companies in the food business.

Q. If what we have learned today is news to us, what can we say about the large number of people who are uninformed about these issues? What would happen if we had more of these teach-ins? How would it change the policy?

A. You start small and keep moving. The farm bill includes many other programs like food stamps, the WIC program, and addresses environmental issues. Many groups were involved with this bill. People need to link agricultural policy to these other issues and form coalitions. Right now, proposals for a new free trade area of the Americas are a good focal point for coalitions. I do think there are a lot of things happening.

The teach-in concluded with the following list of actions to take to reduce the negative impact of globalization:

1. Get involved with organizations running campaigns for economic justice, including RAFI USA's National Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform and OXFAM America's Fair Trade Coffee Campaign.
2. Choose vacations that support local economies. Learn about a country's history, current events, and culture before you visit. Stay in people's homes. Show respect for the social values of the community you are visiting. Buy crafts produced locally.
3. Join a fact-finding delegation to Colombia with Witness for Peace.
4. Use your purchases to send a message.

Boycott Taco Bell and Mt. Olive Pickles.

5. Visit farm labor camps with your congregation or local farm labor support group.
6. Support export of renewable and efficient technologies to developing countries and oppose export of fossil fuel technologies.
7. Reduce your own use of fossil fuels: purchase an energy-efficient vehicle and appliances, and use renewable energy whenever it is available.
8. Live the belief that all the world is one family.

Information resources to learn more:

- www.oxfamamerica.org - Oxfam America
- www.epinet.org - Economic Policy Institute
- www.gpn.org - Global Policy Network
- www.rafiusa.org - The Rural Advancement Foundation International
- www.citca.org - Carolina Interfaith Taskforce on Central America
- www.witnessforpeace.org - Witness for Peace
- www.uua.org/csw/SA10103resourceguide.pdf - Unitarian Universalist Association
- www.coc.org - Maryknoll Council of Concern
- www.allafrica.com - All Africa News Service
- www.responsibleshopper.org

A great video about globalization, "Strong Roots, Fragile Farms" narrated by Willie Nelson and produced by United Church of Christ, is available for purchase by calling 800-537-3394. There are many other resources listed in the "ways to get involved" section of our web page: <www.durham-sanramon.org>

“It’s Great news...

...that the three-wattled bellbirds have taken up residence at or near the Finca. I think the more permanent presence of the howler monkeys and that of other species as well, is attributed to having a good track of forest with no persecution. As long as the forests surrounding the Finca stay intact (or are enhanced via the addition of more protected acreage) and offer protection from hunting then I believe you will continue to have species/individuals moving into this area. These species or individuals are also likely to stay for the same reasons.”

—Dave Davenport, Herpetologist, NC Museum of Natural Sciences

Thanks to Everyone

**You made good things happen
in San Ramón**

We especially want to thank the following, who provided service free of charge:

Counter Culture Coffee for roasting Café San Ramón each month
Blast Internet Services, web page designers located in Pittsboro, NC <www.blast.com> for creating and hosting our web page
Ken Howard, PA, CPA, for filing our tax return
Mike Calhoun, Attorney

We thank the following for their donations and support:

Congregations:

Duke University Chapel
Durham Friends Meeting
Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Sacred Heart Cathedral

Businesses:

Counter Culture Coffee
Glaxo Smith Klein, for matching contributions
Durham Co-op Grocery
One World Market
Ten Thousand Villages

Schools and clubs:

Southwest Durham Rotary
Rotary International
District Rotary 77-10
Cub Scout Packs 451 and 424
East Chapel Hill High School Spanish Honor Society



Elva Pravia teaches sewing to mothers of handicapped children on a sewing machine donated by DSRSC.

Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities

Board of Directors:

Chair: Lonna Harkrader
Vice-Chair: Candace Carraway
Secretary: Pablo Torres
Treasurer: Richard Harkrader
Members: John Chase, Ken Knight, Sally Poland, and Jonathan Sheline

Committees:

Webmaster: Pablo Torres
Education: John Chase, chair; Sally Poland and Ken Knight
La Chispa Elementary School special project: Charles Eilber
Health: Fran Schindler and Jonathan Sheline
Café San Ramón marketing: Lonna Harkrader
Coffee baggers: Marjorie and Bill Cowan, Gail Curry, Sally Poland, Lyn Gould, Amanda Vanega, Cara Foster, and Lonna Harkrader
Craft and coffee sales: John Chase, Ken Knight, Lewis Carson, and Bill O'Connor
Finca Esperanza Verde: Richard and Lonna Harkrader
Tourism: Candace Carraway, Richard and Lonna Harkrader
Database Manager: Doug Henderson-James
Translation: Adriana Oller
Newsletter editor: Jim Jensen

The Home Video

A story about San Ramón's first environmental fair

By Julie Anne McLaughlin
Peace Corps Volunteer, San Ramón

Almost two months after the big event I sit in my living room watching it for the first time from a distance. Ironically, it is only now that I finally see all the exposition tables in detail and hear each representative proudly speak into the camera about their organization's mission regarding the environment, while breathing calmly in the rocking chair. However, the strangest feeling is looking at my own eyes as I speak into the camera and noting the stress and exhaustion that I desperately try to hide in front of 700 some odd people present.

As I sit down to write about the environmental fair I organized with the community of San Ramon, memories of planning come to mind with ease. I remember distinctly the day I ignorantly proposed that an environmental fair would be the best educative method to reach the largest number of people about environmental issues. I knew I had to take full advantage of the generous donation Counter Culture Coffee had offered me, through Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities, for an environmental education project. Of course what I didn't know was the enormous amount of work and stress I had indirectly agreed to.

I can recall vivid images of planning the thing to death by copying neat packets for every participant to inform them of important meetings, descriptions of how the day would run, and hints on how to plan table expositions. Up until the Saturday night before the fair I can remember preparing materials until 12 AM. After that my memory becomes a blur and this is where the home video made by the local cable guy comes in handy in allowing me to experience the fair I obsessed over for so many months.

Looking through the camera's eyes I see lots of people, all ages, all classes, mulling around the stadium and sitting in quiet observation from the bleachers. Children swarm around fellow volunteers who transform their faces into butterflies and tigers, assist them in making creepy crawlies out of egg cartons and pipe cleaner, entertain them with games and help them transform strings into candles. Kids bounce around the fair in pure gayety with beautiful grins wide across their faces. Looking at them I know they feel special as if the fair was their very own playground designed especially for them.

As the camera scans the stadium, stopping at each booth to interview the host organization I witness the participant emanate pride as they point and explain their intricate hands on displays and informative posters adorned with action photos. Various environmental themes abound in front of the camera; everything from organic cultivation of basic grains, to me-



Julie (at left) organized San Ramón's first annual Environmental Fair with the full and enthusiastic participation of the community of San Ramón. It was "everything from organic cultivation of basic grains to medicinal plants, water contamination and treatment, environmental education, and commercial exportation of honey and butterflies, just to name a few."

dicinal plants, water contamination and treatment, deforestation, environmental education, and commercial exportation of honey and butterflies, just to name a few.

We especially succeeded in reaching the community children that day. A change in their consciousness is evident; one of my fifth grade students writes, "Nature is beautiful and we shouldn't destroy her because thanks to her we exist and for that it is important to take care of her".

People no longer crinkle their nose in confusion at the mention of the "feria de medio ambiente". My hope is that I can assist the community in taking ownership of the fair as every organization took ownership of their work that day. And as the fair slogan suggests, "If we are going to save the planet, the biggest task is to educate".

Café San Ramón is a great way to spice up your day at the office and to serve at your congregation to enhance awareness of global trade issues. To buy some, contact: 919 489-1656 <info@durham-sanramon.org>

You can help: If you or an organization you are part of wishes to be involved with a third-world project, please speak with us. We offer ways to be part of our people-to-people project that suit your special needs and goals. Whether you have lots of time or only a little, lots of money or none at all, we can help you participate in a way that brings you joy and the satisfaction of caring for others.

Include me as a Durham -San Ramón Sister Communities partner. Enclosed is \$_____ to support community and economic development projects in San Ramón. A minimum contribution of \$25 (or whatever you can afford) ensures that you receive the newsletter.

Please use my donation for:

- a program for senior citizens
- art classes for children
- renovation of the town's dilapidated water system
- school supplies
- production of videos about San Ramón

- I would like to see a slide show
- I can supply a frequent flier certificate
- I want to join an eco-tourist trip to San Ramón
- I have an accordion or a band instrument to donate

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

The Durham -San Ramón, Nicaragua, Sister Communities is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Please make tax-deductible donations payable to:
Durham -San Ramón Sister Communities, 1320 Shepherd Street, Durham, NC 27707

Call to get involved: (919) 489-1656

We welcome you to our meetings the 4th Monday of each month at 7:30 p.m., January through October, at the Eno River Unitarian Fellowship, 4907 Garrett Road, Durham (on the left 1/2 mile from 15-501). Our mission is to strengthen awareness, friendship, and cooperation between San Ramón, Nicaragua, and Durham, NC, through people-to-people exchanges and social and economic development projects that support justice and our belief in an interdependent, one-world family.



Durham-San Ramón Sister Communities
1320 Shepherd Street, Durham, NC 27707

Check out our gorgeous web page:
<http://www.durham-sanramon.org>

**We will be awarded the
NC Peace Prize
Sunday, November 24, at 6 p.m.
in the Magic Wings Butterfly Pavilion
of the Museum of Life and Science,
433 W. Murray Ave., Durham.
Please join us for the
award ceremony!**