

SERFAM NEWS

January-
March
2004

Bryce & Noreen King - Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship in Mexico

CENTRO EDUCATIVO "BLAS PASCAL" Great News!

For the last two years our academic coordinator, Marcos Ramírez, has been working on his Masters Degree in Education. Now that he is in his final stages, he is working on his thesis. For better or worse, the topic of his thesis is the evaluation process for a school and... *we are the school he is evaluating!* As part of this project, Marcos suggested that we find some kind of testing instrument to evaluate our students. Only recently has there been any such testing available in Mexico that has some means of determining how we would stand against a National Standard. Like the SAT, the CENEVAL is beginning to be used as an entrance exam for High Schools and Colleges. Also, like the SAT, students usually have some foreknowledge that they will be taking the exam on a specific date and they have a study guide to prepare them for the test. In our case, in order to see how we were doing in the classroom, Marcos and Lupita decided that it would be better not to inform the students (or the teachers!) and to apply the test without any warning.

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SERFAM
A.C.
Mérida, Yucatán
MEXICO

THINKING MAPS UPDATE

As you might remember from our last issue, Leslie Fortier, a teacher from Jones County Junior College in Laurel, MS had come to work with us in order to introduce an educational concept called "Thinking Maps". Les returned to visit with us in March as a follow-up to her Workshop with our Staff in November of last year. As usual (see the "Great News" article), Lupita and I were very concerned that our teachers, although they had really enjoyed the Workshop, weren't really using the Maps in class. Also, as usual, we were wrong!



Les with Teachers at Thinking Maps Workshop

After arriving on campus and meeting with Lupita, Les expressed her desire to observe some classes to see if anyone was using the Maps. As we walked around campus, much to our amazement, teachers or students were using the Maps in 4 of our 6 classrooms! (God is so good!). After observing a few classes, Les was very excited to talk to Josué Fuentes and to see what he had been doing with the translation of the materials she had left with us. It turns out that the author of this concept, David Hyerle, will be coming to visit us in May and that he has been in dialog with someone in the National Educational System and is attempting to bring the Maps into Mexico. The problem, David was told, was that they would need a school where the Maps could be tested and modeled so that the teachers involved in the initial model school could be used as trainers for other teachers... it appears that the Lord has already resolved the "Problem"... we'll see, and we'll keep you posted.

MISSIONS: Family Style

In early March we received a visit from a Missions Team from Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, TN. One of the unique features of this group was that it consisted entirely of families. The trip was led by Todd Erickson who brought his own family along with 4 others. Although we had hosted teams from Second Pres. in the past two summers, they were your “normal” Youth Group/Work Teams. Although we enjoy hosting work teams, this one was really special as it had been a concept that both we and Todd had envisioned for a long time.

The primary focus of the trip was that of “being” here, not necessarily “doing” some kind of construction project (although we did have a work project). Our goal was to introduce the Second Pres. families (now friends) to our friends, the culture, history and the worship of the church here in Mexico. The idea was that families can better pursue and understand world missions if they have had a “cross cultural” experience. Typically, most short term experiences are very “project” oriented and the task tends to take priority over gaining an understanding of why the task might be needed. We (I say “we”, but Noreen did most of the work) decided that the best way to combat this tendency would be to give pre-field “homework” assignments to each family covering topics like history, the church, Mexican heroes, etc. AND that, while here, each family would have an evening to present their findings to the rest of the team... usually the day before we would visit a site that was related to their topic. Another way of working through this was to talk about things as we went along and to assign each family a given topic to observe each day (transportation, food, people, architecture, plants and animals). The idea was to have each member try to understand some of the differences and similarities between the two cultures.

I did mention a construction project... in the last Update we told you that we are hoping to build a new building where a set of bleachers is (was) currently located. The Second Pres. Group converted our bleachers into ruins! Their work will allow us to move forward on this building project this summer.

At any rate, if you or your church would like to do something similar... please contact us. We'd love having you come too!



Here are (were) the Bleachers! On the left you can see what remained after the Memphis Group finished... on the right, the following Friday we brought in a Bob-cat and Dump Truck to finish the cleanup. Some day we'll have a building here!

Great News!

Continued from Page 1

Having made this decision, we surprised the entire school on Friday, January 23rd. Although one of the reasons we didn't let anyone know the test was coming was to see how we're doing in the classroom, the other reason was that we were afraid we wouldn't do very well and that our parents would become alarmed... so we wanted to keep it "in house" and use it as a diagnostic tool for a self-evaluation.

Three weeks later we received our results. Much to our relief, we did really well! (Now we can tell the parents!) The tests applied were the entrance tests for High School and College and they were given to our 8th and 9th and our 11th and 12th grade students. Our 11th grade group scored 3 points below the national norm (900 points) while the rest all scored significantly higher, giving us a global average of around 960 points. It was neat to see that all of our students, almost without exception, scored their highest scores in the reasoning sections of the tests. The lower scores in subject areas usually indicated that the exam was asking for a process or information that our students hadn't learned yet.

Please give thanks with us for this confirmation that we are on the right track!

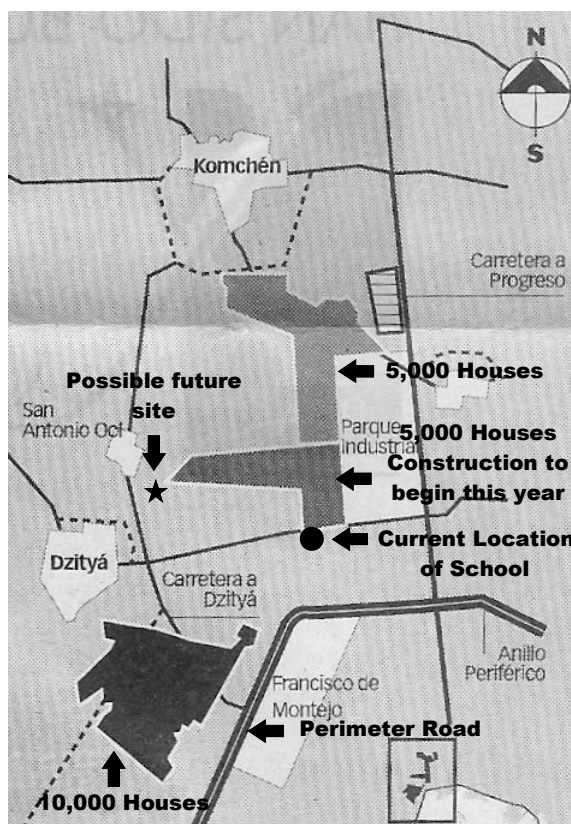
EDUCATION: Elementary Dear Watson

Since we began the Project of developing an Educational Center, our vision has been to expand beyond the limits of a Jr. & Sr. High school. Our original plan was to expand upward into University level, but... we have been experiencing a strong demand to expand downward and open an Elementary and Preschool.

Having discussed this idea amongst our leadership, we decided that starting an Elementary and Preschool is the best course of action. This, of course, has a lot of implications. Right now we are in the process of identifying the personnel that will be needed for this project, but more importantly; we will need to find a suitable facility to temporarily house the Elementary school while we locate and purchase new property. Long range, our goal is to build a new facility to house the upper level schools and to have the Elementary school in our current location.

As we began discussing these options, we discovered that the government recently approved three federally funded housing projects within about a 3 mile diameter from our current location. These three projects consist of two neighborhoods of 5,000 and one of 10,000 1-3 bedroom houses. According to our findings, construction of one of the 5,000 house neighborhoods is projected to begin by the end of this year. For this reason, we are now moving forward as quickly as possible to try to find an appropriate site for the school before prices skyrocket.

Overall, we're very excited about these recent developments and we're looking forward to see how the Lord will confirm our vision. Once again, we ask that you be in prayer with us about the future of the Blas Pascal Educational Center.



Just to give you an idea of what we're talking about—the 3 new neighborhoods are only a part of the development that is happening in this area—the possible future site of the school is about 2.5 miles from our current location

A SPECIAL THANKS TO:

CEBP Foundation Group

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Mr. Luís Canto
Ms. Dulce Canto
Mr. & Mrs. David Hoffman
Dr. & Mrs. Rubén Madera
Dr. & Mrs. Ricardo Santana
Shalom Pres. Church - Men's Group
Shalom Pres. Church - Session
Shalom Pres. Church - Youth Group

Project Development 2003-2004

Christ Pres. Church, New Braunfels TX
Evangelical Pres. Church, Annapolis MD
Second Pres. Church, Memphis TN
Trinity Pres. Church, Charlottesville VA
Woodland Pres. Church, Hattiesburg MS

In Our Next Issue (Tentatively)

Thinking Maps Update

Teaching Teachers

Project Update

PRESBYTERIAN EVANGELISTIC FELLOWSHIP

PEF, the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, is a nonprofit faith mission whose purpose is to practice, train and equip God's people to do Biblical Evangelism, anywhere, anytime with anyone. The PEF Center in Decatur, GA houses our administrative team. The US team is spread across many states, and the International team labors in twenty-five nations and two regions beyond our domestic borders. For more information about PEF Ministries or short-term ministry opportunities, please call the PEF office at (800) 225-5733 and speak to either Laurie Miller or Peter Siaway.



SERFAM, A.C.

SERFAM, A.C., is a satellite ministry of PEF in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico and is directed by Bryce King - General Director, Manuel Glory - Treasurer, and Wilbur Madera - Secretary. As a non-profit organization, SERFAM, A.C. offers family services through the development of educational, recreational and community projects. Our primary goals are to evangelize, promote biblical values and minister to family and community needs while at the same time providing leadership training for Mexican men and women.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you read through the newsletter you will have seen that we are attempting to embark on an expansion program here. As with all projects of this nature, we will need to raise money to fund the purchase of new land and the construction of the new facilities. This is a major undertaking... far beyond the scope of anything we have ever done before. For this reason we ask you to pray:

1. For wisdom regarding the best means for financing this project.
2. For clear guidance as we look for land and temporary housing for the Elementary school.
3. For committed Christian staff and teachers for the Elementary and Pre-School.
4. For endurance and patience as we walk through the processes involved with both accreditation and construction

If you would like to help support this project financially, are interested in organizing a missions trip or would simply like to visit Mérida to learn more about how you can be involved, please contact us directly at:

brycesking@yahoo.com or pefmerida@yahoo.com

Tel. 011 52 (999) 946-6436

Hey! Check out our Updated (finally) Website
www.geocities.com/pefmerida