

SISTER ISLANDS

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SOMOS ISLEÑOS

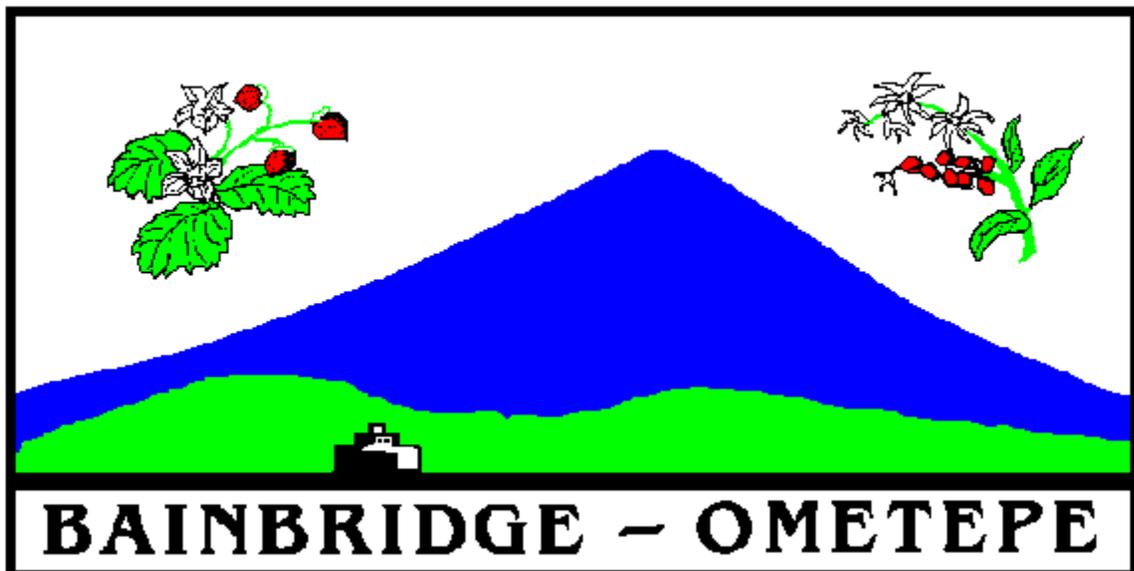
We tend the relationships...

Spring 2005

the projects we do are secondary to the friendships we build.

Our Annual Report Issue 2004 activities

MISSION: To promote friendship and mutual understanding between the residents of Ometepe and Bainbridge islands through peaceful exchanges of all sorts. We expect the relationship to deepen over time, and to involve a steadily increasing number of participants from both islands. Our friendship will be mindful of human dignity and the necessity of expanding co-operation among peoples of the earth, irrespective of political philosophies.



Specifically, we plan to:

- ❖ Develop people-to-people contacts
- ❖ Support educational, technical and cultural exchanges
- ❖ Carry out projects of mutual interest and benefit
- ❖ Increase awareness on Bainbridge Island of the problems confronting developing countries
- ❖ Promote understanding of the special problems faced by the people of Ometepe, and by Nicaragua in general

Mission and goals formulated in June, 1987

Community	Description of 2004 Project	Partner (if any), Otherwise, funded by coffee proceeds
Altagracia	Educational road signs about HIV/ AIDS, contraception, and protecting natural resources	
Altagracia	High School library furniture	
Altagracia	Materials for blind students	Bainbridge Visually Impaired Persons
Altagracia, Pull, San Marcos, and San San Sylvestre	Day of the child celebrations. (Altagracia high school students took toys to Maderas communities.)	
Balgüe	5 th year student project: bike rack for school	
Balgüe	Girls' soccer team	Bainbridge Youth Soccer Assn
Balgüe	Two Literacy Project teacher salaries	Grace Episcopal Church
La Paloma	Roof for La Paloma school	BHS Delegation
La Paloma	Work on ceiling – La Paloma school	BHS Thank you \$
Los Angeles	Classroom for 4 th & 5 th year	BHS 05 & Wilkes calendar
Merida	5 th year student project: drinking fountains	
Pull	Preschool storage room	
San Marcos	Classroom floor	BHS Delegation
San Pedro	Road repair	
San Ramon	Classroom	BHS Delegation
San Ramon	Latrine and fence for school	BHS Thank you \$
San Sylvestre	Fence around school	BHS Delegation
Tilgüe	Library construction	BHS Delegation
Urbaite	Latrines	BHS Delegation
Urbaite	Repair wall around cemetery	BHS Thank you \$

Report from our office on Ometepe

My thoughts drift back to the past year of 2004. A year equal to those since 1986 in which we have seen the development of many new projects. When asked to write our favorite memories from 2004, I felt stressed because all the projects, both large and small, are very relevant and important in our communities. It is difficult, but I will write about some events I consider to be the most relevant:

One of the most outstanding things was the acquisition of two scholarships for the new secondary schools of Merida and San Jose del Sur. The association and the scholarship committee on Bainbridge have put their hearts into obtaining funds to give the youth on Ometepe the chance to become professionals.

It has been amazing for me knowing that volunteers that have shared part of their life with me and helped in the development of projects on the Isla can return. For example, my dear friend Siri gave me that great pleasure in 2004. Now, I think of Brett, Brook, Katy Childers, Norita Fern, Amy Harrington, Jim Starrs and Jackie Finkler (who put up with our noise, dust and hot climate). Thanks to all of my dear friends you have been volunteers in our office.

It is outstanding that our sister island association continues every year to help the communities. We have reached out our hand to large communities as well as the smallest and poorest on the island. We have gained popularity and respect for the simplest work. We have offered friendship and received it as well. We have worked to change the economic problems in each community, and have been able to help in many. We are well known and recognized here on Ometepe. Also, in the year 2004, an agriculture delegation from Bainbridge made its first visit. Every year we have a student delegation and a coffee delegation, but it was nice having the shared experience and friendship between agriculturists from Bainbridge with those on Ometepe. It was a great experience, and we await their visit again in the future.

I could continue reminiscences about the success of the organization, but I would never finish and the newsletter would just be my article! I am very proud to have worked with the association and very thankful for your love and friendship. Personally, I wanted to tell you that it was an amazing experience to be recognized with a diploma for my five years of work with you in the office and the community. I have kept that diploma as one of my most treasured items. I end every day tired, but I only have to think of the great love, care and support you have offered us and feel revived and strong to continue working for BOSIA and my Ometepe. Gracias—Dorita (office manager)



Former & current office staff photo by Nancy Quitslund

En español de la oficina

Mis pensamientos se trasladan al pasado, al año 2004, un año que igual los anteriores desde el año 1986 se mantienen vivos por las cosas relevantes que se desarrollaron.

Cuando Ela diciendo que enviáramos nuestros pensamientos, sobre lo más relevante del 2004, me paso como estresada, pues, yo considero todos los proyectos pequeños y grandes tan relevantes, tan importantes en nuestras comunidades. Sentí tan difícil contestar eso. Ahora que tengo que enviar un artículo sobre eso, me doy cuenta que existen en 2004, cosas relevantes y son las siguientes:

Una de las cosas más sobresalientes fue las nuevas becas de secundaria que se le dieron a los Colegios de Mérida y San José del Sur por ser nuevos colegios completo con bachilleres. Con esto percibo que La Asociación o el comité de Becas en Bainbridge de su corazón por conseguir fondos con tal de ofrecer siempre a los jóvenes de Ometepe una oportunidad de ser profesionales en el futuro.

Es relevante para mi saber que los voluntarios que han compartido conmigo parte de su vida en el desarrollo de los proyectos en Ometepe pueden regresar a repetir esa experiencia como voluntario. Pues Siri Kushner me dio esa gran alegría de tener la esperanza de trabajar de nuevo con ellos, por ejemplo: Brett, Brook, Kathy Childers, Norita Fern, Jim Starrs and Jackie Finkler (relevante saber que Jackie soportó nuestro polvasal, nuestro ruidos, nuestro clima tan seco y caluroso). Gracias mis voluntarios amigos.

Es relevante conocer que nuestra asociación Islas Hermanas va adquiriendo como todos los años, extender su apoyo, ha logrado expandirse y dar su mano a las grandes comunidades, así como a las más pequeñas y más pobres de ellas. Hemos adquirido popularidad y respecto, solo por el más sencillo de los hechos, brindar nuestra amistad, recibirla, pensar en solucionar los problemas económicos de cada comunidad y a la vez dar solución a ellos. Somos reconocidos en la Isla de Ometepe. En el año 2004 se da por primera vez la visita de Delegados Agricultores, pues anteriormente y cada año vienen las delegaciones de Cafeteleros y de Estudiantes, pero a la vez fue grandioso darnos cuenta que hubo una delegación de agricultores quienes compartieron experiencia con nuestros agricultores Ometepinos, lástima que no vinieron este año. Pero siempre esperaremos a ellos y a otras delegaciones que vengan.

Podría continuar con mis pensamientos hacia los distintos logros y éxitos que nuestra asociación obtiene, pero no terminaría y el newsletter solo sería para mi artículo.

Me siento tan orgullosa de trabajar an la asociación y muy agradecida de su amor y amistad. Aprovecho para hacer relevante para mi persona, el que Ustedes me dieran en el año 2004, un diploma de reconocimiento por trabajar con Ustedes. Ese diploma lo guardo como uno de mis más grandes tesoros y premios ganado en mi vida. Cada día termino cansada, pero de solo pensar sobre el gran amor y cariño, y apoyo que Ustedes nos brindan, me fortalezco, me siento fuerte con vigor para seguir laborando para BOSIA y mi Ometepe. Gracias—Dora

2004 Program Highlights

Water Project

Three projects were funded in 2004 from coffee sales money. 1- A new holding tank to increase storage capacity was built for the village of Madroñal. 2- An existing water system was repaired and extended to six families in the mountain village of Las Cuchillas. 3- Legal work was done to formalize the Maderas Central Water Committee. This committee will work with each town around Cerro Maderas to keep their water systems in good working condition, and to collect fees for maintenance of the systems. Most importantly, the committee now has legal custody of the streams and dams around the Cerro to protect the water.



Coffee Project

In 2004, we imported 15,000 pounds of green Café Oro de Ometepe beans. Our total sales were down for the second year in a row, perhaps due to increased competition (we are no longer the only Certified Organic, Fair-traded and Shade-grown coffee around - a mixed blessing) and a computer glitch that did not allow Internet sales for almost 6 months.

Information Services

In November 2004, just over ten years after the project began, high-speed Internet access came to Ometepe. Running on a wireless network that covers significant parts of the island, *Red Libre de Ometepe* (Ometepe Freenet) serves a mix of paying commercial customers and schools. Government offices will soon be included. Committee member Peter Abrahamsen has spent a total of over nine months on Ometepe configuring, installing, troubleshooting, and training isleños in the operation of the network. A group of nearly twenty Ometepinos has formed a company to manage sharing the costs of the connection. Other areas in Nicaragua are studying both the technology and the management model of the project.

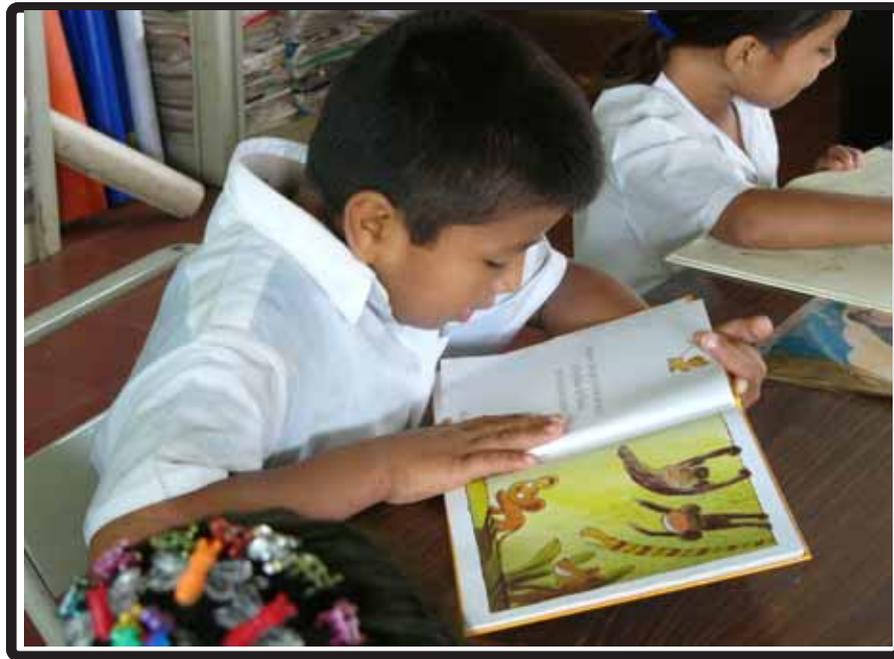
Balgüe Literacy

The Balgüe Literacy Project completed its fourth year in 2004. It offers an alternative for children who are unable to attend public school because their families cannot afford the required uniforms and books. Each year 40 to 60 children between the ages of 5 and 8 begin their education by faithfully attending classes in the Balgüe Casa Comunal. Many eventually go on to public school. Grace Episcopal Church provides funds for teachers salaries and teaching materials, and in 2004, for the construction of a latrine.



Membership

2004 witnessed a record number of memberships—117. As well, One Call for All, the Bainbridge Foundation’s annual fund drive, added 100 more contributors. Many others have volunteered their time, bought Café Oro coffee, and supported the good works of the Sisters Islands Association. It is not necessary to pay a membership fee to participate in activities of the Association, but memberships help pay for the mailings you receive.



Enjoying donated storybook photo by Kim Esterberg

Medical projects

The Medical Committee supported a community assessment for epidemiology of illnesses, as well as an educational project for adolescent girls. We made a significant contribution to the *Proyecto Alemania* for its weekly clinics to the most remote villages around the Cerro. Medical supplies were taken to several medical care facilities. We continue to plan public health projects on the Isla.

Library and Teaching Materials

In response to a “request for proposals” 13 of Ometepe’s 35 elementary and secondary schools submitted lists of desperately needed teaching and reference materials. This included basic reading, social studies, math, and science texts, as well as maps, dictionaries, and classics of Spanish and Nicaraguan literature. These were purchased in Managua, and delivered to the schools with the help of the Altagracia Mayor’s Office and Si a la Vida. For the relatively small sum of US\$3,700, hundreds and books and other materials were provided for children and their teachers. The Traveler, a bookstore on Bainbridge Island is an important partner in this project.

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Cultural exchanges in 2004

Farmers delegation

The first ever delegation of farmers from Bainbridge and North Kitsap went to Ometepe in January, 2004. It was a ten day trip to learn about farming practices on Ometepe and to introduce organic farmers from Bainbridge. There were ten people in the delegation, and we worked alongside local farmers on Ometepe. For Ometepe farmers it was very special to finally be visited by people from their sister island that had the same occupation they did. All the farmers from the north were eager that this was just the opening in an ongoing friendship between farmers on our two islands.

Sister School connection

Beacon Hill Elementary made its first visit to its sister school, La Primaria de Balgüe, in July of 2004. There were eleven people in the delegation, which included the principal, Susie Murphy, and her husband, as well as Chilo Granizo, the Hispanic Instructional Aide for Beacon Hill, who herself is Nicaraguan from the city of Granada. The teachers participated in classes, and Alan Hulsman, who teaches chess at Beacon Hill, held classes in how to play, leaving 35 game sets behind. The Balgüe teachers welcomed their sister school representatives into their homes as well. Beacon Hill is planning to return this July with a second delegation.

Coffee Delegation

2004 was the 4th year that a delegation has traveled to Ometepe to participate in the coffee harvest and learn about life on the island. The early December "coffee delegation" numbered 12, including leader Diane Jennings and naturalist Karen Matsumoto, with ages ranging from 22 into the 70s! The delegates stayed both at the Finca Magdalena coffee cooperative and with families in Altagracia.



Farmer delegates painting organic coffee bags with soy-based ink photo by K Esterberg

Student Delegation

The Spring 2004 Student Delegation was the largest ever, comprising 36 high school students and their chaperones. Three of the students worked with Si a la Vida, the home for street boys from Managua. The others lived with families and worked on community projects in five towns- San Ramon, Tilgüe, Urbaite, La Paloma, and San Silvestre. Projects included painting classrooms, digging latrines and construction of a library room. The library construction was supported by funds from the Wilkes School third grade calendar project.

Ometepe teachers' visit

We were thrilled to host three English teachers from Ometepe here on Bainbridge in 2004. They visited various schools, lived with families, worked on improving their conversational English and shared their culture with friends they made on Bainbridge Island.



*Library mural painted jointly by BI students and Tilgüe community:
"Sister Islands --Hand in Hand" photo by Linda Snyder*

SISTER ISLANDS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

- ❖ Drink Cafe Oro - organic, shade-grown, fair-traded coffee from Ometepe. All profits go to projects on Ometepe.
- ❖ Learn about our sister island - watch the video "Islas Hermanas," available at the Bainbridge Library or call David 842-6907.
- ❖ Volunteer to help package Cafè Oro - every Thursday afternoon at Pegasus warehouse on Day Road. Call Lee 842-3113.
- ❖ Sponsor (or co-sponsor) an Ometepe student - to go to college, through our scholarship program. Full scholarships \$960/yr. Call Kathy 842-9805.
- ❖ Donate School Supplies - for delegations to take to Ometepe schools. Call Jim 780-6551.
- ❖ Sponsor (or co-sponsor) a project - through your church, school, organization or family. Groups are matched with needed projects on Ometepe. Projects include clean water systems, school repair or construction, latrines, libraries, community gardens, health clinic needs. Call Emily 842-4137.
- ❖ Schedule a slide show about Ometepe - at your child's school, or your church or organization. Call Kim 842-8148.
- ❖ Donate Spanish books - or money for libraries. Call Susan 842-3984.
- ❖ Donate medical supplies or equipment. Call Diane 851-6560.
- ❖ Get involved in BOSIA. Come to our monthly Board Meetings - 7 PM, 2nd Monday, Bainbridge Senior Center. Get on our Mailing list. Call David 842-6907
- ❖ Apply to go with a delegation to Ometepe. Call Nancy 780-9422
- ❖ Needed: Co-Editors for the newsletter with Pagemaker, design and desktop publishing experience. Call Ela 842-8148
- ❖ Volunteer to take on a task from our "Volunteer Wishlist" Call Elizabeth 842-5781
- ❖ Membership Committee needs a person to mail out monthly renewal notices. Call Susan 842-3984.

Highlights *cont. from page 7*

Ometepe scholarships

Thanks to the generous support of scholarship sponsors, 34 students from Ometepe received financial assistance that allowed them to further their education at universities and technical schools in Managua, Rivas, and León. Our sponsorship base has by now grown to include 55 families, which includes three extended family groups and Alice Mendoza's 3rd grade class at Wilkes Elementary, as well as one of her nine year old students who gave \$200 in lieu of a birthday party!

Graduates from the scholarship program now number 37, and include quite a few that have returned to the island as working professionals: teachers, doctors, psychologists, and accountants, and our own Scholarship Coordinator, Maria Estela Alvarez González. Maria is responsible for coordinating with the seven scholarship committees on Ometepe, and the 34 scholarship students. She tracks student progress and scholastic documentation, and follows-up with each university to ensure that payments are timely and in order. The Scholarship program has seen a tremendous amount of growth. This means we are always looking for sponsors! (Contact Kathy 842-9805)

Special Award

Our own Kim Esterberg was one of ten finalists in the Seahawks' annual "Community Quarterback" awards, which are given to outstanding volunteers in the state. Kim was honored for his volunteering at Beacon Hill Elementary School in Seattle, tutoring Spanish speaking and other students and parents and for forging a special connection with the Sister School in Balgüe. The \$1,000 award will be used entirely for further enhancing the sister school connection. Congratulations, Kim!

Sister Islands Board & Officers

Officers

Katy Childers
Diane Jennings
Lee Robinson
Linda Snyder

Dick Baker
Elizabeth Dequine
Emily Mansfield
Susan Shaffer
Jim Starrs

Dee Caplan
Marcy Jackson
David Mitchell
Dallas Shaffer
Carol Ware

Student members:

Hannah Davis

Adrian Sampson

Trustees:

Tom Monk

Kim & Ela Esterberg
Nancy Quitslund

David Mitchell
Dale Spoor



Balgüe community Girls' Soccer team with donated uniforms

Join Us!

Thanks for your support. We use membership income wisely -
-- primarily to publish this newsletter.

Cut Here

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State/Province _____
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 E-Mail _____

Annual Membership

Living Lightly	\$10	Individual	\$20
Family	\$35	Sustaining	\$100
Life Membership	\$1,000		

I'd love to volunteer : For events _____ Other _____
 Specific interest _____

Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association
 P.O. Box 4484
 Rollingbay, WA USA 98061-0484

Membership is open to all
 who support our mission
 of...

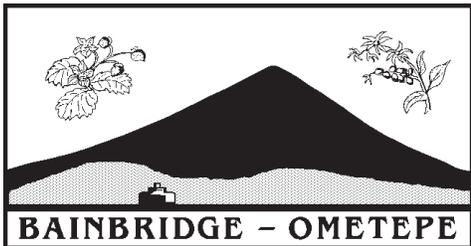
*encouraging
 mutual understanding,
 education, friendship,
 cultural and peaceful
 exchanges between
 the peoples of the
 US and Nicaragua.*

Non-profit organization
 Registered with the State
 and Federal Governments
 Our membership list is not
 for rent or sale



*Two young folkdancers , Ometepe, Nicaragua.
photo by Kim Esterberg*

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WAIT! Don't just recycle this —Pass it on to a friend!



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