

Winter 1997/98

Sister Islands receives United Nations Association Human Rights Award !

by Kim Esterberg

Every year, December 10th is International Human Rights Day. Its celebration commemorates the adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which exists to:

- ◆ Recognize the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.
- ◆ Proclaim, as the highest aspiration, a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want.
- ◆ Advocate the rule of law to protect human rights.
- ◆ Encourage the development of friendly relations among nations.
- ◆ Reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, equal rights of men and women.
- ◆ Promote social progress and better standards of life in greater freedom.

This year, on Human Rights Day the Seattle Chapter of the United Nations Association awarded the Bainbridge-Ometepe Sister Islands Association special recognition at its annual ceremony. I was honored to accept the award for our Association, but I asked our fairly large delegation of board and community members and students to take the stage, since this was a recognition of the hard work of many, many people. I wanted to share a few features about our organization that make it, I think, a good example of efforts at improving conditions for our human family and for promoting the importance of dignity in international as well as interpersonal relationships. cont...pg2



Kim Esterberg accepting the Award

Photo by Lee Robinson

HUMAN RIGHTS ...cont'd from pg 1

Right from the beginning of the sister islands idea, we were determined to have a long term relationship; one that would span generations; one that would deepen over time and one based on mutual trust and respect.

We are pleased that over these past eleven years our work has been broad-based, inclusive and very positive. We have not presumed to know the aspirations of our sister islanders on Ometepe, but have helped where we could, always in partnership with them. The leaders there have worked closely with us, as well as with their own communities, to make the very most of every project. Together we have built schools and potable water systems for remote villages; marketed organic, shade-grown, fair-traded coffee; provided scholarships for college education in a country where literacy levels are low and well educated people are rare and coordinated student and teacher exchanges. These projects have given many islanders on both Bainbridge and Ometepe opportunities for very special human connections. Also, our joint projects seem to be on a scale that is understandable for both our island communities.

Finally, since we hope this story is a long book, we just keep turning the pages. We have some ideas about the future but are open to many surprises! Who knows, perhaps our Sister Islands project is just the kind of model to inspire, invigorate and enable others in their efforts to foster respect and fundamental rights in our larger human family?



WE COULD USE YOU!

by *Emily Mansfield*

The first time I volunteered to do a “coffee tasting” and I told my daughter where I was going, she exclaimed in horror, “You mean you’re going to be like those ladies at Costco who hand out sausages?” “No,” I assured her later, “it wasn’t like that at all.” The coffee tastings—whether at T&C, the Rolling

Bay Harvest Fair, the holiday Studio Tour, or the Audubon Migratory Bird Festival—are a wonderfully social opportunity to see friends and talk about our Sister Island work. It’s not a “hard sell.” The organization’s work—and its coffee—speak for themselves.

Would you like to join the network of Sister Island supporters in a more active way? We could use you! We would like to expand our lists of potential volunteers whom we can call upon for help with these coffee tastings, as well as newsletter mailings, occasional telephone tree, special events planning, coffee packaging, or other projects.

These projects are usually a short time commitment and they are fun. In addition to more volunteer hands, we desperately need some free storage space. As we accumulate donations during various material aid drives, we need a dry, safe place to store it all. If you have room that is begging to be put to good use, please let us know.

To be added to our “Call On Me Once In A While” list, please contact Emily Mansfield, 842-4137 or e-mail manshep@aol.com. We look forward to spending more time with you!

Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association

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out!)**

**Founded in 1986 by Kim and Ela
Esterberg and friends.
Non-profit organization.**

Letter from Mayor Sutton

Congratulations on your well-deserved award in recognition from the United Nations Association. I read in the *Sun*, with great pride, that the Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association received this award for efforts to advance human rights.

Organizations such as yours play an important role in promoting world awareness in our community. Your efforts are a legacy to our young people, the future leaders of our community. Thank you for your dedication.

Yours very truly,
Dwight Sutton, Mayor,
Bainbridge Island

MUCHAS GRACIAS, ALCALDE!

Donations needed for the student trip:

Crayons, spiral notebooks, pencils, glue, pens, binder paper, construction paper, chalk, erasers, baseball bats, gloves and balls, soccer and basketballs.

Boxes will be available at Eagle Harbor, Seabold, St. Cecilia's and Bethany Churches, Paper Products as well as in Jim Starrs' Susan Koch's, Lynn Freeman's and Alice Mendoza's classrooms.

Deadline: March 14th.

DELEGATES SELECTED FOR SPRING STUDENT TRIP

by Dale Spoor

Early in November, eighteen students were selected for the annual Bainbridge High school delegation to Ometepe. As usual, the students and chaperones will live with families there and work with community members on mutually agreed-upon projects.

This year, however, we are experimenting with a visit that is a little longer than in the past. This time the students will spend two weeks on our sister island in order to give them more time to ease into the cultural context and to practice their language skills.

Thanks are due to BHS Principal Ellick and the school district for their cooperation in our lengthening this (our eighth!) student trip to Nicaragua.

Last year was the first time that we had more students applying than we could accommodate.

This year again, we had a similar enthusiastic response: twenty-eight students applied for eighteen slots! As a result, the Board has developed a new selection process. It has three components:

Each student fills out an application concerning their interest in the trip to Ometepe. Two Board members evaluate these; their

Spanish teacher evaluates the applicant's general communication skills, competence in Spanish, ability to make up missed school work, and ability to work with others in a cooperative setting; and lastly, there is an oral interview with five Board members present. Groups of four students are interviewed in a "fish bowl" situation. They respond (interacting only among themselves) to several hypothetical situations posed by one of the interviewers. Although most of this interview is conducted in English, one of the scenarios is presented, and to be discussed among the applicants, in Spanish.

At the end of the interviews, the five board members met for several hours to make the final selection. This task was especially difficult because of the generally high qualifications of all of the applicants. However, we felt the three-part, multi-faceted process worked well and we plan to use it again with some slight modifications. The eighteen students and two alternates will spend the next three months in intensive orientation sessions preparing for their adventure abroad.

Meanwhile, we are looking into the possibility of having two student trips a year to accommodate the growth in interest. A second trip could go in winter or possibly during the summer. Any ideas? We would love to hear from you!

CAN KIDS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE? ¡ SI! ABSOLUTAMENTE!

Reprinted with generous permission from Reporter Michael Wagar and the SUN, where it was originally published on 12/01/97.

In the days of multi-million dollar school building construction projects in the United States, 24 students in a third-grade class at Captain Charles Wilkes Elementary on Bainbridge Island are raising the money that will go to build the second-half of a school and the first library on the sister-island community of Ometepe, Nicaragua.

For the past five years Alice Mendoza's third-grade class has created calendars that are then sold in the community. So far the project has netted \$14,246.88, enough to build three schools. All the money raised is sent down to Ometepe and used to buy the materials needed to build schools on the impoverished island located in the center of Nicaragua Lake. This year, with the paper being donated, and with a press-run of 1,000 calendars, the students hope to bring in more than \$6,000. The project is part of the Bainbridge/Ometepe Sister Islands Association, a group that formed in 1986 to bridge the 4,500 miles and distinct cultures between the two islands.

Last week the students finished up the artwork for the calendars. The classroom is filled with memories of Ometepe, from a large map of the island to smiling pictures of Ometepe villagers. Students make ink stamps, cut out original artwork and work on the calendar grid. The theme of the calendar this year is the cultures of the Pacific Rim. Peter Rallis, 8, is busy working on the grid for January.

"Helping them out makes me feel good," Rallis said.

"I've never helped out someone who has, like, nothing. I never knew they lived like that before."

The students ponder the contrast between their warm, well-stocked school and the pictures of the humble school buildings in Ometepe. Chris Ferguson, 8, is drawing a turtle from the Galapagos Islands for the month of June.

"I think it's important we're helping out these children," Ferguson said. "We can make a difference, which is the idea of the calendar—kids can make a difference."

Ferguson, a quick study, knows the details of the project, from the money raised to the \$1,200 worth of paper donated by Unisource Paper Company and Wausau Paper Company that the calendars will be



Wilkes Third Graders show off their calendars

Photo by Larry Tice, BI Review

printed by Custom Printing. Ferguson also understands the working relationship that Bainbridge Island is building with Ometepe.

“We are a team with the people in Ometepe,” Ferguson said. “We do the money but they do all the work. They do the work for free. We’re just a team.”

Teacher Mendoza said of all the knowledge she imparts to the students throughout the year, the Ometepe calendar project is the most important.

“We live on an island that is not the real world,” Mendoza said.

“We’re well-to-do with not a very diverse population. It’s critically important for children’s eyes to be opened to the bigger picture.

Their future is really in their hands. By exposing them to a culture very different from their own, that has a personal and immediate meaning to them. And because it’s a sister island, it gets them hooked and connected, not only this year but in the future, on the power they have as children to make a difference.”

When the students watched a slide show of life on Ometepe, for many it was the first exposure to how people live in a third world country. And despite the poverty, the compelling view that emerged was the smiling faces of the children.

“Money isn’t the key to life,” said Madeline Jackson, 8. “They were all smiling and they didn’t have a lot of money. Money didn’t make them happy.”

Gretchen Hayward, 8, agreed. “We think they’re not rich with

money but they’re rich in their hearts.”

Kim Esterberg, the founder of the Bainbridge/Ometepe Sister Islands Association, said the interaction with Ometepe will change some of the students for life. When asked which students wanted to someday visit the sister island, all of the students immediately raised their hands and Hayward said, shyly, that she had already talked to her mom about starting a savings account to pay for the trip.

“What they really come away with is that we can change the world,” Esterberg said. “They really think, ‘of course we can change the world’! It isn’t just the United Nations or the United States government, it’s ours to change.”

Editor’s Note: The class voted for the proceeds from this year’s calendars to be used for finishing the first public library on Ometepe and also for a basketball court at a shelter for homeless boys in Managua.

¡¡Que Fracaso!! **

We, the editors, apologize for mis-crediting the poem in the last newsletter entitled "First Impressions" to Windy Wilkins instead of *la poeta* Margit Sperling.

** What a blunder!!



Next Delegation leaving soon

Preparations are underway for the next delegates' trip to Ometepe. The nine participants are: Nancy and Dana Quitslund, David Mitchell, Lisa Giles, Yanira Cuellar, Bob and Millie Royce and Kim and Ela Esterberg. We will be gone from February 11-28. Our busy agenda includes: organizing homestays and community projects in three towns for the Bainbridge students who will come down on March 21; delivering proceeds from the 3rd Graders' calendar project for the library and the basketball court; meeting with Scholarship Committees; attending the inauguration of the Taguizapa Water system; negotiating this year's coffee purchase; taking school photos; celebrating Si A La Vida's 4th Anniversary and any other events that may magically happen! We will be pleased to hand-deliver any letters to friends and organizations on Ometepe. But, Hurry. **The deadline is February 9th.** We will carry down material aid including computers for the Engineering University in Managua in hopes of improving e-mail contact with our friends in Nicaragua. No more items are needed for this particular trip. However, we encourage you to start gathering items for the upcoming student trip. (See wish-list on page 3).

1997

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

These are summary highlights from the Annual Meeting:



Coffee Committee

David Mitchell

- In March we imported 8,250 lbs. of green coffee. By the end of December, we had roasted and sold about 60% of it.
- \$29,000 of the coffee profits were used to fund gravity feed water systems.
- This year we marked the completion of our fifth water system in cooperation with Ometepinos, who volunteer all the labor towards the construction of their community systems.
- The combination of water systems built to date serves approximately 10,000 people.
- James Templeton, long-term volunteer extraordinaire, coordinated the research, planning and funding for the water system in Urbaite, which will serve thousands of people.
- Special thanks to volunteer coffee baggers: Carmen Rivera, Helen Merrill, Elinor Yost, Lee Robinson, Nancy Quitslund, Bob Drew, Dale Spoor, and many more including Pegasus employees Jenny Chu, Doug Walker and David Chu.



Medical Committee

Kathleen Kler

- Volunteer Dr. Reena Koshy worked as the primary physician on the remotest parts of the Island from Nov 96 to July 97. Her experience and insights are

providing the Medical Committee a clearer picture of the medical situation and needs for the south end of the island.

- Rosario Paisano, assisted by Peace Corp. Volunteer Leslie Moses, conducted workshops for teens which included discussions on human anatomy and reproduction, family responsibilities and readiness, role and gender issues and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.
- Rosario also taught classes to women which included physical health, reproductive choice, family planning, parenting, exploring the roles of women, uses of natural medicines, voting rights and economic justice and domestic violence.
- Over 750 Ometepinos were reached last year through the teen and women classes.
- A new medical information form has been devised by Kathleen Kler and Dr. Tom Monk. It will be used to provide more careful planning and advising prior to departure for all future delegates.



Student Delegation

Jim Starrs, Susan Koch

- The '97 Student Delegation was our seventh, and the first time that more students applied than could be accommodated.
- The large number of applicants for the '97 Student Delegation led the committee to develop a more structured and formal selection process. (See page 3).
- 18 students and two alternates have been selected for this year's

trip (March 21-April 4).

- This year we are experimenting with chaperones-in-training in anticipation of continued increase in participation in our student trips.



Scholarships

Nancy Quitslund

- We are beginning our eighth year of post-high school scholarships. As of 1997, six of these students have graduated in a variety of majors including Medicine, Psychology and English.
- Currently 19 students have scholarships. Most students are supported by single sponsors or by sharing the costs between individuals. One student is sponsored by Bethany Lutheran Church, another by the Eagle Harbor Congregational Church and a third by the Bainbridge High School Spanish Club.
- The current sponsorship per student is \$600/year (\$50/mo). This year we hope to increase the stipend to \$900/year to reflect increasing costs of education in Nicaragua.
- We are looking for additional sponsors who want to share or co-sponsor a student.



Sintiope School

Steve Deines

This was truly a joint effort between BOSIA, Bethany Lutheran Church and the Sintiope community. The community provided the organization and labor in the construction of a preschool, and reroofing of the

grade school. Bethany Lutheran provided most of the project's funding, and BOSIA helped with Scott Renfro's oversight, and logistical support for the delegation.



Newsletter

Yanira Cuellar and Ela Esterberg were recognized for their work during this year. Your humble editor reminds the community that contributions of articles, poetry, drawings or photographs are always welcome.



Bylaw Change

In order to accommodate the school year, Article III paragraph B "Term of Office" has been

changed to read: "Regular Directors shall be elected for a term of two (2) years. *Student Directors shall be appointed to a (1) year term, running from September 1 through August 31.*"



Treasurer's Report

Lee Robinson

- Last year BOSIA spent \$29,000 on water projects, \$2,000 on medical projects, \$11,000 on scholarships and \$16,000 on other aid to Ometepe including the Ruben Dario Library, paint for Las Pilas Elementary and a classroom in San Sylvestre.
- The Bainbridge Foundation's One-Call-for-All brought in \$5,521, up significantly from last year. We have participated in this

campaign since 1992.

- Membership increased 19% last year.



Elections

President *Dale Spoor* replaces Nancy Quitslund
 Vice-President *Emily Mansfield* replaces Dale Spoor
 Secretary *Carol Ware*
 Treasurer *Lee Robinson*
 New Board members *Jim Starrs, Nancy Quitslund, Adri Van Bianchi and Chelsea Minyard*

Continuing members: *Yanira Cuellar, Bob Drew, Kim Esterberg, David Mitchell, Susan Sullivan and Keith Wentworth*

Gracias especial to departing Board Members *Kathleen Kler, Alissa Moen and Ben Ruder* for their devotion and hard work.

Cut Here

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Annual Membership
 Living Lightly \$10 Individual \$20
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 Bainbridge Ometepe Sister Islands Association
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Join Us

- ◆ Membership is open to all who support our mission:
To encourage 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

MUCHAS GRACIAS, BUSINESSES

- ◆ **To The Traveler**, our island's most complete selection of travel books, maps and accessories (Susan Taylor and Barbara Tolliver) for donating **5% of all their December sales** to purchase maps and geographical books for the new Ruben Dario Public Library.
- ◆ Donations to the Calendar Project: **Unisource Paper, Wassau Paper, and Custom Printing.**
- ◆ **To The Traveler**, who is co-sponsoring an evening with **Rick Steves** (see calendar)
- ◆ "Kids can make a difference" t-shirts: **Daryl West of Dyno Transfer and Don Morris.**
- ◆ **Adobe Systems:** donation towards web-site enhancement.
- ◆ And of course, the faithful **Pegasus, Town & Country Thriftway, Central Market, PCC and MarketPlace** for our coffee project.

SISTER ISLANDS CALENDAR --Mark these dates!

Monday, Feb 9: Deadline for letters going with the next delegation (see pg 5)

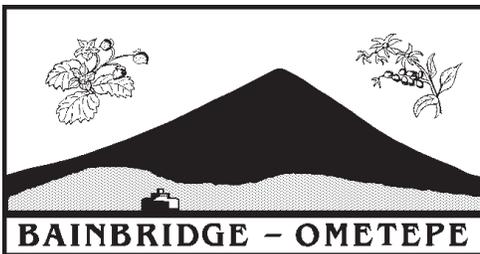
Tuesday, February 24: Rick Steves Europe through the Back Door 7 P.M. LGI, Bainbridge High; all donations benefit the Sister Islands Association

Saturday, March 14: Deadline for donations of school supplies and sports equipment going down with BIHS students (see pg 3)

Tuesdays, Jan 13, 27, Feb 10, 24, Mar 10, 15: Student Orientations

2nd Monday each month: Board Meeting 7 PM. Eagle Harbor Congregational

Finished Reading? Don't just recycle this newsletter -- pass it on to a friend!



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