

## DANCE BAILE DANCE

*by Linda Snyder*

October 7 2002, was slightly overcast and it threatened to rain all morning.....but by the time the 10:35 ferry arrived, patches of sunlight gave way to two vans of smiling dancers from our Sister Island of Ometepe. Northwest Friends of the Orphans, together with BOSIA, co-sponsored the visiting Ometepino Dance Troupe for a day of sight-seeing and performances on Bainbridge.

These twenty dancers and musicians, ranging in age from 12- 22, were touring and performing across the Northwest raising funds for their orphanage and school on la Isla de Ometepe. In colorful costumes they had made themselves and with music that was lively and engaging, the group performed a mid-day show for the enthusiastic K-4th graders at Wilkes Elementary School, sponsored by the Wilkes PTO. The visiting troupe even had several Wilkes students up and dancing to the Nicaraguan beat!

In the evening there was a second *Fiesta, Baile y Mercado* (festival, dance and market) for the general public. It was held at Bainbridge Performing Arts courtesy of a grant from the Tony Hall Foundation. Those in attendance were treated to tables full of wonderful hand-crafted folk art from Nicaragua and applauded these energetic young people as they performed their traditional and regional dances. At one point, costumes were misplaced, but volunteers came to the rescue. Refreshments were served and the show went on! This was a fund-raising two weeks for these youngsters and we are pleased to



*Young folkloric dancers perform at BPA (photo by Sara Robinson)*

report that the Dance Troupe met its financial goal.

In addition to the musical events the Ometepinos and their chaperones were treated to a grand shore-side picnic at the home of Dallas Shaffer. We all enjoyed an impromptu guitar solo, a short course in the art of marshmallow roasting, and most importantly, laughter and friendship-building between our two islands.

*Those interested in reading more and in seeing a few photos of this Ometepe Dance and Musical Troupe in the Northwest can visit the BOSIA website for a link to Friends of the Orphans Northwest.*

# WOW! look at our 16 year history of delegations! \*

## Official BOSIA Delegations to Ometepe

- 1986 - Kim Esterberg searches for sister island
- 1987 - Mary Gleysteen takes suitcase of supplies
  - Melissa Young, Mark Dworkin make video
- 1988 - Sister Cities Conference/Ometepe visit - 8
- 1989 - Earlham College construction brigade, Sintiope-4
- 1990 - Election observers & medical delegation - 18
- 1991 - Two separate medical delegations, total 24
- 1992 - Two separate medical delegations, total 9
- 1993 - Medical delegation - 9
- 1994 - 3 people deliver ambulances full of supplies
- 1995 - Environmental delegation - 10
- 1996 - Bethany Lutheran Church construction brigade-4;
  - Medical delegation -2
- 1997 - Delegation to prepare for student trip-5
- 1998 - Water inauguration, coffee negotiation,
  - scholarships - 9; Coop electrification project - 6
  - Mark & Melissa make another video
- 1999 - Email delegation work on computers - 3
  - Nora Ferm & Caitlin Gerds (photo & medical)
- 2000 - Mitchell & Dessinger coffee delegation - 2
  - Deines & Mansfield families' delegation - 8
  - Email delegation - 9
  - Swinging HepCats dancers - 17
  - Coffee pickers - 16
- 2001 - Coffee pickers - 13
  - Faulkner medical delegation - 2
- 2002 - Accounting & scholarships - 2



Mary Gleysteen in 1987 (photo by Kim Esterberg)

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

## Long-term Volunteers on Ometepe

- 1989 - Christine Marinoni, teacher
- 1996 - Jim Starrs, teacher; Kim & Ela Esterberg; James Templeton, water engineer; & Dr. Reena Koshi
- 1999 - Bret Clifton, Brook Maddox, Siri Kushner set up office
- 2000 - Alexis Bonoff, Jeremy Shapiro & Adri Van Bianchi, Sí a la Vida; Siri Kushner, office staff
- 2001 - Katie Jo Slaughter, Arianne Llewellyn, Nora Ferm; Siri Kushner, office staff
- 2002 - Katy Childers, office staff

## Ometepino Delegations to Bainbridge

- 1989 - Padre Juan Cuadra
- 1992 - Four Peace Trees volunteers
- 1995 - Chepita & Dorita, English teachers
- 1996 - Bernabe Lopez
- 2000 - Petrona & Estela, English teachers
- 2001 - Ten guests for Fifteenth Anniversary

\* And, this list does not even include our annual student delegations, which number 174 different students in 12 visits thus far!

*see related story "retreat" on page 4*

# Library News

by Dallas Shaffer, Library Committee Chair

Great things are happening in Ometepe school libraries these days. In April the Library Committee on Ometepe planned and presented the first ever workshop on the importance, use and management of school libraries. It drew 30 school directors and librarians from primary and secondary schools representing 14 different Ometepe communities.

The activities included brainstorming, lectures, discussion, practice in classifying books, and presentations on keeping an inventory, controlling borrowing, managing reading rooms, and types of books in a library. The workshop was under the auspices of the Ministry for Education, Culture and Sports and BOSIA funded the expenses for handouts, food and transportation to the meeting site.

It all began last fall when the 5 educators who were visiting Bainbridge met with our Library sub-committee. It was then that the Ometepinos identified training and basic packets of materials (*paquetes basicos*) as the two greatest needs. This summer we began to work jointly on the second issue. The Ometepinos developed a list of basic library materials needed in secondary schools. They include dictionaries, maps, basic textbooks and literary classics and cost about US\$250 each. This summer the Board funded packets for all 8 secondary schools on the island. To qualify for the packets, each school must show that they have a secure place to house the materials and that they have a librarian.

The next phase will be providing *paquetes basicos* for the 34 elementary schools. We have received generous donations to help fund this project including the proceeds from this spring's Wilkes Elementary School Readathon and The Traveler bookstore's gift of 5% of their December sales, but it will be a challenge to raise the approximately \$9,000 needed. Please consider donating!

*Editor's note: The Traveler on Winslow Way has once again offered to donate 5% of their December sales to the Sister Island. Shop there for your Travel and Holiday needs. Support them and all our local neighborhood businesses.*



## COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS -an update

by Nancy Quitslund

When the Ometepe scholarship program began in 1990 with the Bainbridge High School Spanish Club sponsoring Altagracia student Harry Cardenas Barrios, none of us envisioned the degree of growth and success we have witnessed in 12 years. Now Harry is a physician, 14 other students have completed their degrees, 25 Ometepinos are currently supported by BOSIA sponsors and 4 high schools (Altagracia, Moyogalpa, Bague, and Urbaite) participate in the program. In 2002 La Flor High will graduate its first students, soon to be followed by San Jose del Sur, Merida, La Palma, and Los Angeles/Esquipulas.

Last fall scholarship recipients responded to a questionnaire that helped us understand their situations a little better. Our committee learned that the \$60 stipend left students unable to purchase textbooks and even to meet basic needs. As a result, we raised the monthly stipend to \$80 starting in March 2002.

Last year the scholarship program received an extremely generous \$35,000 anonymous donation that will be used in two ways: to augment the scholarships where sponsors are unable to pay the extra \$20 per month, and to help pay fees necessary for graduation. Although tuition is extremely reasonable at the universities, there is usually a fee of up to \$250 for the graduation exam. Students can also be charged up to \$1,400 in tuition and processing fees for their *monographia* (a research project and dissertation required for some degrees). We will request documentation from the university before paying these expenses. All sponsors will have the opportunity to cover part or all of those costs, and we will use our anonymous fund, when necessary, to help students to graduate.

In February I traveled to Ometepe and met with each of the four committees to discuss standardizing the process. The consensus reached includes expanding all Ometepe committees to at least five members: one (graduated) scholarship student or a parent of such a student, a member of the High School

continued page 6

## RETREAT ADVANCES DELEGATIONS

by Emily Mansfield

### “This trip changed my life!”

How often we hear this after a Bainbridge Islander returns from Ometepe! Chatting (or pantomiming!) with one's new family for hours on the dirt stoop around a candle after the sun has set, traveling in the back of a pickup with 13 other people because the bus broke down, picking coffee painstakingly slowly alongside a lightning-fast picker from the Magdalena co-op - these experiences bring tremendous learning and new perspectives to each of us during our visits to our sister island.

Since people-to-people relationships are BOSIA's business, delegations are an especially important aspect of our work. But delegations don't happen effortlessly and there can sometimes be uncomfortable unintended consequences along with the expected rich rewards on both sides of the exchange. With this in mind, the Board decided to devote our day-long retreat this year to a discussion of delegations. Under the leadership of facilitator Julie Shryock, we asked ourselves about the benefits and the unexpected pitfalls of our adult delegations — student delegations, we agreed, should be discussed separately. The insights we shared and the ideas we developed did not stop when we folded up the chart paper notes at the end of the day. This is an on-going discussion, just as learning about cultural differences constantly shifts and evolves for each of us. We

would like to bring all of our members and newsletter readers - especially past and future delegates - into this discussion. For this reason we offer a summary of the themes that emerged and hope that we hear back from some of you:

### **Resounding endorsement to encourage as many delegations as possible.**

The Board wants to encourage Bainbridge Islanders to visit our sister island. Clearly, not all people traveling to Ometepe need to be part of a delegation. We have informational handouts as well as informal advice which we'll share with independent travelers upon request. We would hope that learning from BOSIA's experience can help prepare travelers so that both sides of the exchange are positive. Official BOSIA delegations are another matter. They are explicit cultural exchanges, not vacations, and delegates are direct representatives of the organization in the homes and communities they visit. Therefore, they take more planning and orientation. With volunteer time limited, our desire to officially sponsor more delegations may well outpace our ability to organize, orient and lead them.

### **“Official” delegations should be guided by the Board's oversight**

We agreed that if people are going to Ometepe in the name of BOSIA, we want them to be well-versed on our philosophy so that their actions reflect our vision and programs. How our approach plays out in real life on Ometepe is not necessarily readily obvious. For

example, in our efforts to balance the scholarship aid given out on Ometepe, to reduce competition between communities and to make the award process fair, we have painstakingly, over years, developed committees in various communities (see "Scholarships", pg 3). These committees receive and review scholarship applications and select the scholarship recipients. A well-meaning delegate who offers scholarship money to a child in his homestay family unwittingly undermines the local scholarship committees' role. Since an integral part of our philosophy is to maintain equality in our relationships with our counterparts on Ometepe, these committees' power as the decision-makers is a critical counterbalance to the money resources Bainbridge provides. The well-meaning delegate may be unaware of this dynamic and may be thinking only about making education available to his new Nicaraguan niece.

Another example: because of our emphasis on establishing long-term relationships, host families have come to expect that BOSIA homestays create long-term family ties. They expect their Bainbridge sister or brother to stay in touch over the years. If communication stops after a few months, the Ometepe family feels abandoned. To avoid misunderstandings like these, a good orientation (like the one provided for student delegations) is important for all BOSIA delegates. Since adults have less time available for orientation meetings, we discussed making a video with cultural sensitivity training with

concrete examples of situations that often arise. The Board also wants to work closely with delegation leaders on important aspects of the trip such as the towns that will host the delegation, the BOSIA projects the delegation will undertake, the material aid that will be carried in the suitcases.

### **Efforts to minimize unintended negative impacts of delegations.**

Too much stuff Regardless of our intentions, the disproportionate resources and money we Bainbridge Islanders have (or at least represent) can create an imbalance in our relationship with our sister islanders. We may be seen as “*patrones*” whether we want to be or not. As one veteran delegate put it, “Our resources--and thereby our power--can overwhelm the quiet voices that need patience to be heard.”

Every time we send a delegation to Ometepe, we have an opportunity to slow down and listen, trying to understand those voices or to re-emphasize the discrepancy in our material resources, tipping the imbalance even further. Most of us feel overwhelmed by the material differences between our two islands when we first visit Ometepe. In our desire to reach out and “help” these wonderfully warm and generous people, we instinctively want to “share” our abundance. What we may not realize is that to maintain their self-respect in our relationship, they might reciprocate by spending resources they can’t afford.. Somehow, we need to put the emphasis back on the non-material aspects of our cross-cultural friendships so that we meet on equal ground.

Competition BOSIA’s presence, through our projects and through delegations, fosters competition within and between communities on Ometepe. Communities have learned that in addition to new friendships, BOSIA brings much-needed support for new school classrooms, medical clinics, school supplies, etc. Delegates bring gifts and thank-you money. Naturally, everyone wants a piece of this action.

The impact of our presence is very tangible. When a delegation goes to a “new” town that BOSIA has never visited before, there is a sort of innocent freshness that is noticeable. Subsequent delegations to the same town may find increased expectations from homestay families, depending on the nature of gifts or other benefits conferred by the

previous delegations. We must try to minimize the interpersonal competition and jealousy by encouraging delegates not to bring extravagant gifts to their family; rather, the delegation brings material aid to the town as a whole so everyone benefits, not just the host families.

Land use Like tropical paradises everywhere, the presence of foreigners can affect land use and ownership patterns. The more foreigners who go to Ometepe, the more inevitable are the tourist hotels, resorts and other accommodations that will occupy the beaches, consume a community’s water supply, and create a two-tiered economy. (Cabo San Lucas looms large as a cautionary tale.) The more of us who fall in love with Ometepe, the more land is sold to non-Ometepinos, elevating other land values and changing communities and social structures. While most of this is far out of our hands, it is something that all of our delegations should talk about. In what ways might our mere presence be contributing to Ometepinos’ loss of the lifeblood of their “*oasis de paz*” - the land they were born and raised on?

Change Are our delegations harbingers of change, bearers of change or do we merely follow in its wake, trying to undo some of the bad impressions brought by the American TV shows so ubiquitous in even the smallest dirt-floored homes? These questions and the nature of cultural imperialism in general merit much fuller airing than the Annual retreat or this article permits. Pull up a chair and a cup of Café Oro de Ometepe (or tea) with your favorite BOSIA members and dive in on your own!

### **Always a need to re-assess and re-sensitize ourselves.**

In the end, we are all learners in this process. Seasoned delegates to our sister island still wrestle with the questions and concerns the Board grappled with. First-time delegates, with a “beginner’s mind,” sometimes have insights where longtime visitors have become desensitized. Our challenge as an organization is to remain aware of our cultural differences and sensitive to the impacts of our interactions. How the Board keeps itself alert and helps prepare delegations to meet this challenge is an on-going process. At the least, we know what we want: when we sit on the stoop, ride in the pickup, or pick coffee together, we want to do so as partners, with mutual respect.





## BAINBRIDGE-OMETEPE SISTER ISLANDS:

### How you can get involved

- \* **Drink Café Oro-** organic, shade-grown, fair-traded coffee from Ometepe. All profits go to projects on Ometepe. Available at Winslow T&C, Central Market in Poulsbo or [www.bosia.org](http://www.bosia.org)
- \* **Learn about our sister island** by watching the videos available at the Bainbridge Library or call David @ 842-6907
- \* **Help package Café Oro** every Thursday afternoon at Pegasus Warehouse on Day Rd. Call Nancy @ 780-9422
- \* **Sponsor (or co-sponsor) an Ometepe student to go to college.** Full scholarships are \$720-960/yr. Call Chris @ 780-5018
- \* **Donate school supplies** for delegations to carry down. 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. These include clean water systems, school repairs or construction, community gardens, health clinic needs, etc. Call Emily @ 842-4137
- \* **Schedule a slide show/talk about Ometepe** at your child's school, your church or organization. Call Kim @ 842-8148
- \* **Donate Spanish books** or money for libraries. Call Dallas @ 842-3002
- \* **Donate medical supplies or equipment.** Call Sara @ 842-9508
- \* **Build a house for a needy family on Ometepe for \$1,000.** Call Lee @ 842-0774
- \* **Get involved with BOSIA:** come to our monthly Board meetings -7p.m., 2nd Monday, Bainbridge Senior Center—or get on our mailing list. Call Mike @ 842-5409
- \* **Apply to go with a delegation** Call Dale @ 842-5171

# Join Us!

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

*Cut Here*

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#### 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

#### **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

## Great Holiday Gifts That DO good!

World-Famous **CAFÉ ORO de OMETEPE:**

\*Certified Organic \*Shade Grown/Bird Friendly \*Fair-Traded In festive gold foil for the holidays!

1lb.....\$8.50 8oz..... \$5 (postage may be added, if necessary)

**BOSIA COFFEE MUGS with 4oz of coffee beans** .....\$10

**Sister Islands T-SHIRTS & SWEATSHIRTS**..... \$14 to \$24

**2003 CALENDARS** (made by Ms. Mendoza's 3rd grade students).....\$10

**FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS and BOOKMARKS by street kids** .....\$2 to \$5



OR, How about giving a “non-materialistic” gift in the name of someone you love?

**UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP: more sponsors desperately needed...**

for a high school graduate from Ometepe.....\$60-80/month; \$720-960/yr. Sponsors may share one student.

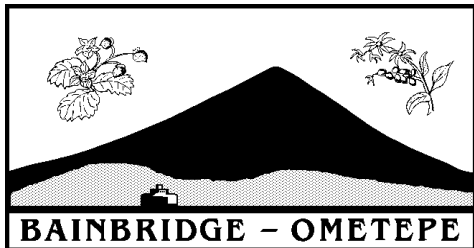
**SISTER ISLANDS MEMBERSHIP**..... \$10.....\$35.....\$100

**SPECIFIC DONATIONS** for pure water projects, community libraries, classrooms...also welcome

Happy Holidays ~ Feliz Navidad ~ Winter Solstice ~ Kwanza ~  
Diwali ~ Idd Mubarak~ Hanukkah ~ Birthdays ~ Happy New Year



.....  
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