SISTER CITY NEWS

Sister city project sees improvement

(The following is part of a continuing series providing information on Arlington's sister cities.)

One of the most satisfying aspects of the Arlington-Teosinte Sister City Project is being able to see an improvement in the lives of the people of El Salvador directly due to our intervention. We were reminded of the importance of our work this month upon receiving a final report for 1990 from the New El Salvador Today (NEST) foundation which coordinates sister city projects between U.S. and El Salvador.

According to NEST's report, Arlington's support benefitted a population of 360 people (72 families) including 170 children between ages 2 and 6 years in Teosinte through its contributions and human-rights intervention. In the past year, the villagers have acquired 52 cows which provide milk for Teosinte and surrounding villages. Our contributions also supported the formation of workshops in weaving, tailoring, shoe making, and carpentry to support the village now that agricultural projects have proven disappointing.

Our efforts have also supported the formation of a health clinic staffed by six health promoters, a school which serves 147 children through high school age, and a pastoral team which provides Bible study, Mass, catechism, and pre-baptismal instruction. In addition, money received from Arlington was used to buy shoes for the entire community.

number of problems were also outlined. The land in Teosinte is not very good, and only enough food was raised in 1990 to last the villagers for four months following harvest. The workshops which were then organized to provide funds for the community do not have access to high quality materials. While buildings have been constructed and restored, the infrastructure is still not adequate for the workshops, school, childcare center, and clinic that the villagers would like to have. In addition, the military continues to harass villagers, making progress difficult. For instance, earlier this year the military confiscated the village truck following a minor car accident and stripped it of parts.

Following a review of this report, Arlingtonians active in the Sister City Project expressed a desire to renew fundraising efforts on behalf of Teosinte. The group sold Central American craft items on April 27 at the Indian Pow Wow in Arlington Center. On May 5 we will sell crafts at the Harvard Square crafts festival, and also at the Arlington Arts Center on May 18. We have a list of sponsors who pledge $5 to $20 each month to aid Teosinte. Anyone interested in becoming a sponsor can call Judi at 646-3976.

We are also looking at ways of working more cooperatively with sister city groups in Watertown and Belmont, which both have sister cities near Teosinte in El Salvador. Several members of our group including Cindy Silver, Jim and Mary Megson, Jim Roettger, Rick Rabin, Sally Rogers, Ted Sanger, Judi Paradis and Bob Carter attended a potluck dinner hosted by Watertown on March 24. We exchanged ideas for building community support, fundraising, and maintaining contact with our Salvadoran sister villages. We also discussed the possibility of organizing joint delegations to El Salvador for the summer and autumn of 1991.

Also in March, several members of the sister City Project join with members of Pax Christi and the Arlington Interfaith Clergy Association to commemorate the eleventh anniversary of the death of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and to call for an end to U.S. aid to El Salvador. Featured speaker Sister Patricia Lambert urged those attending to support current legislation to end all U.S. funding for El Salvador.

For the children of Arlington

Dear remembered sister city of Arlington,

Greetings to my valued little friends in Arlington. With much affection I wish you all the very best health, together with your parents and families. After this short hello I will go on to the following.

Friends, the reason for writing is to tell you about the situation we are suffering here because of the war in our country and the effects of the aid that the U.S. Government sends.

I ask you, my little friends, to help us by asking your government not to send military aid to El Salvador any more because it does not help us in our poverty. We need to study. We need houses to live in. We need food. I am an orphan and I am 13 years old and this terrible situation really makes me think.

Today is the 15th of February and we are marching in the main streets of San Salvador asking the Cristiani government for demilitarization; that there should be no more bombings, or machine gunnings or captures here in our repopulations where they don't let us work for our daily bread.

Thousands of people are mobilized in this march. While we were travelling in a truck towards the University we were detained by the Treasury Police and soldiers from the First Detachment. They threatened us with their machine guns in their hands, but we were so brave that we got out of the truck and demanded that they return the papers and circulation card to the driver because he was so worried. They had taken everything away from him.

They detained us, but with everyone's resistance the situation was solved and we were let go. About 150,000 people took part in this march. Well, brothers and sisters, I wait for your response.

Until Later,
Monica Beatris Alas

Residents of Arlington's sister city Teosinte, El Salvador.