Arlington-Teosinte Sister City Project

In September of 1988, the Arlington Board of Selectmen officially recognized Teosinte, El Salvador, as Arlington's Sister City. Many communities throughout the U.S. have sister villages in Central America. In the Greater Boston area, Arlington is joined by Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Newton, and Watertown, and Somervillle in pairing with villages in Central America.

The people of Teosinte returned to El Salvador in August of 1988 from a refugee camp in Honduras. Arlington's support has been crucial to them, and they are depending on us as they continue to rebuild their community. In words spoken to a recent delegation from Arlington to Teosinte: "Everything that you see here in the way of advancement is a result of international solidarity."

Historical Background of Teosinte Villagers

Until civil war broke out in El Salvador in the early 1980's, the people of Teosinte farmed the land as their families had for generations. With the onset of war, 1.5 million Salvadorans were displaced from their homes. Villagers were

Teosinte is nestled among beautiful maountains The church , a religious center for the area, shows heavy damage from the war.

forced to flee, most of them to neighboring Honduras, where they were confined to the Mesa Grande refugee camp. There was no land for them to farm in the crowded camp, and they were subject to harassment. They were dependent upon the charity of the relief agencies. Frustrated by the lack of power over their own lives and saddened by the knowledge that some of their children had never seen their country, these Salvadorans were determined to go home.Following the courageous lead of a group of 26 families who left Mesa Grande in 1986, hundreds of other Salvadorans began returning to their homeland. Among them were those who resettled in Teosinte.

Teosinte Needs Arlington

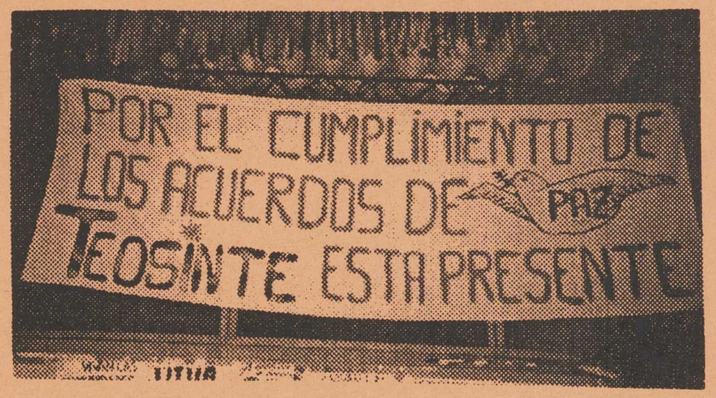
The people of Teosinte arrived empty-handed, but they are energetic and organized.
The citizens of Arlington have helped them to build a community which is inspiring in its achievements and its caring for all of its people. Arlington has raised funds for seeds, farm animals and equipment, building repair and construction, transportation, medical and school supplies, teacher stipends, clothing, and sustainable development projects such as the sewing cooperative. The moral support given through

Children play beneath the village bells

our correspondence, delegations, and awareness of their plight has been invaluable to Teosinte.

They are now growing corn and pineapples as well as other food for their daily living. Cows provide milk for the children and for making cheese. They have school through the ninth grade, and a daycare center built and furnished with Sister City funds. A sewing cooperative and bakery are now functioning. Cut off by the war and by political conditions from govenment assistance , much of this growth and development has been made possible through Arlington's aid.

Early in 1992, Peace Accords were signed and a cease-fire declared. The people of Teosinte hold out great hope for the success of the accords. If much-needed land reform is carried out, and they no longer have to fear harassment and killing, they have many reasons to rejoice. They have



Banner at the 4th anniversary celebration of their return to El Salvador, reads, " For the Fulfillment of the Peace Accords, Teosinte is Present."

suffered greatly, so they are vigilant about the carrying out of the agreements.

Arlingtonians can help ensure the success of the Peace Accords, by urging our government to send aid for the implementation of the Peace Accords and for reconstruction, not for military purposes.

Arlington's Sister City Commitment

During this difficult reconstruction and transition period, Teosinte is still in dire need of Arlington's help. The Arlington Sister City Project needs community-wide support. Efforts on behalf of Teosinte include:

- sponsoring public forums and house parties; distributing literature to inform Arlingtonians about the conditions in Teosinte

- exchanging letters, photographs, and tape recordings with Teosinte

- sending delegations of citizens to Teosinte to learn first-hand about the villagers' lives; to deliver material aid; and to enjoy their grateful welcome to their community