



Making a Difference

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Twenty-four Hours that Changed Our Lives

by Barbara Simonetti, Board Member

My husband, son and I left our comfortable home in Brookline, Massachusetts to visit the people and the projects in Peru. A memorable part of our trip was our stay in a remote Amazonian village where One Heart, Many Rhythms is funding the teacher certification of Juan Flores Agustin, a member of the Shipibo culture.

To reach the village, we flew into the market town of Pulcallpa where our hosts, Juan's parents—Herlinda and Enrique, met us to shop for supplies and to share a wonderful traditional dinner before embarking on the 90 minute boat ride to the village. The market in Pulcallpa is a series of tinned roofed stalls selling everything from pig heads to internet access. The city teems with hundreds of pedestrians and three-wheeled motor cabs that bring chaos theory to life. There are no traffic signs or signals and there are no accidents or road rage. The drivers and the walkers just work it out. It was the first of many assumptions about “civilization” that would be challenged.

When we arrived at the long wooden dock that marks the village entrance, we were greeted by a group of children including Lisbeth, Juan's 5 year old daughter. Lisbeth happily accepted a ride on my husband's shoulders as we all paraded to the family compound where we would spend the next 24 hours laughing, eating, sleeping, playing, and learning the difference between poverty and misery. The Shipibo people have little in material wealth but have abundance in the harmony of their families, the inquisitiveness of their children, and the beauty of their natural environment. These riches make them

happier than most of the families we left in the states.

The accommodations were basic—we slept on mats on the floor under a thatched roof and water ran only intermittently in the outhouse across the yard—but the hospitality was warm and the company was charming. We were



taken for a long walk into the jungle to see their gardens and treated to a stew of vegetables proudly harvested by machete. At every meal, the one long table was filled with food and the extended family who gathered would wait for us to serve ourselves before they filled their plates. Children did not take plates, but wandered from adult to adult who gently put pieces of food into their mouths.

For thousands of years the Shipibo have been creating intricate patterns on their clothing, pottery, boats, and homes. We learned that these patterns are actually words and melodies that

contain their cultural and healing knowledge. We spent the afternoon at an impromptu family gathering where everyone—male and female, young and old—showed us their wonderful and unique patterns on cloths, pots, and jewelry and sang the songs.

One of the most talented artists is Suzie—Juan's 14 year old sister. She and the other village teenagers welcomed our 15 year old son Michael who was just as curious about them as they were of him. In broken English and Spanish, they talked about school and soccer while they literally “hung out” in hammocks. At the end of our stay, Suzie gave Michael a beautiful cloth embroidered with the Song of Good Luck that now hangs above his bed, and he gave her his English-Spanish dictionary. They continue to be in touch via email even though the nearest computer is a 90 minute boat ride into Pulcallpa.

To visit the Shipibo is to visit a wonderful, contradictory, and endangered place. Throughout our stay, we would be interrupted by missionary sermons and political messages being broadcast throughout the village via loudspeaker. Our hosts advised us to just ignore the chatter, but it was a good reminder of why our work there is so important. The Shipibo culture is under attack by the encroaching

We can only highlight a few initiatives here.

Please visit

**www.oneheartmanyrhythms.org
to see the others.**

Holiday Gifts that Matter

Make your holiday gifts to friends, relatives, and clients make a difference. You can purchase a set of 4 note cards that are reproductions of the paintings by the children of the Amazon who have attended the Yarapa School of Art. Each set is \$18 which includes shipping. To order, visit <http://www.oneheartmanyrrhythms.org/store.html>



Travel to Match Your Interests to the World's Needs

Join a "Fundraising Event" for One Heart, Many Rhythms. Members of the Board of Directors invite you to join them on a tour of the best of Indochina to extend our knowledge of the needs of the communities we find there. Come experience the magic of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. For more information, visit <http://www.oneheartmanyrrhythms.org/tours.html>

presence of modern trinkets and competing religions. Indigenous teachers like Juan are desperately needed in the schools to ensure the best of the Shipibo culture—their

language, their art, their healing practices, their sacred traditions—are taken forward into the 21st century. I know our visit changed our lives forever for the better.

Project Update: Juan Flores Agustin has completed his coursework and his research project required for his teacher certificate. Next, he will go before the board and present his project and take his final exam. Juan hopes to have his certificate in place by the beginning of the next school year, March 2007.



A Bundle of Happiness

by Satyabrata Misra, Director of NASI Center, India

Your letter of support arrived on a very special day, the Holi, the festival of colors. It carried from you a bundle of happiness, excitement, strength, and color for us. It is your love and concern for us that have made this possible to happen. It is your blessings on us. This help from One Heart, Many Rhythms will give an essential boost to NASI Center to grow and to serve. The beginning of summer is the time when we prepare the land for our most important crop, the rice. Now we do things like tilling

the land to kill the weed and prepare the pits for the plantation. When we receive the first monsoon rain the weather is cool and pleasant after long days of summer heat. The air is filled with the fragrance of the wet soil. The power tiller, the cows, and the watering equipment are the most essential instruments for which we were not able to do enough cultivation efficiently. All this will contribute a great deal to NASI for many years to come.

Project Update: NASI Center is a rural village school located in Orissa, India. The improvements made to the NASI Organic Farm will not only provide for the nutritional needs of the children who attend the NASI School, but also help the school become more sustainable.



A Living Classroom

by Devorah Brous, Director of Bustan L'Shalom, Israel

Al Mastakbal School is an extraordinary school. This year's Spring Festival, organized by the teachers and the students, featured a very special achievement by the students. After clearing the vacant lot adjacent to the school that had been used as a garbage dump, the director of the school approached Bustan L'Shalom for help in creating a living classroom. Bustan is a partnership of Jewish and Arab eco-builders, architects, academics, and farmers promoting social and environmental justice in Israel/Palestine. Al Mastakbal School is located in Abu Tlul, one of the seven unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev. In partnership with Bustan, One Heart, Many Rhythms supported a week

long work camp where a team of students, friends, families, artists, educators, green builders, and activists created The Desert Ecology Living Classroom.



Project Update: Bustan is continuing to support the project by sponsoring workshops to help the villagers become teachers of the traditional wisdom of desert ecology as well as hold additional work days to expand the irrigation system.

Part of the Dream

by Caryl Dalton, Board Member

Agustin Guzman, founder of Comunidad Tawantinsuyu, has a dream that each child of the earth has the opportunity to live in joy and peace. Comunidad Tawantinsuyu and One Heart, Many Rhythms partner to sponsor an after-school art program in a remote area of the Amazon near Iquitos, Peru.

I visited the program and was struck by how much pride the children obviously had in being able to cross the river from their village to work with the 3 teachers in the thatched roof building that serves as a studio. The younger children are being taught basic painting techniques and how to make simple designs. The older children are drawing and painting jungle landscapes and animals. The more advanced students are painting scenes from their cultural myths and legends.

The children have only basic materials—paint, brushes, and paper. There are no easels so they prop rustic boards up against nails protruding from the frame of the building to support their art paper. They share and recycle plastic containers to hold paint. Every child was delighted to have the opportunity and many expressed their dedication to advancing their skills and spent additional time at the studio practicing.



I was also able to meet with the families of many of the students. One mother said that they had been unsure about the strangers coming into their village, but now they were strong advocates of the program and the opportunities for their children. A father, who is clearly a strong role model for many of the families, expressed his humble gratitude with much emotion. He has dreams for a stronger future for his son.

It was touching to meet with all these children and their families who live at the mercy of the river in simple homes built on stilts. The children show great pride in their achievements and their parents show great pride in how the children have learned to capture the essence of the jungle they all call home.

One Heart, Many Rhythms has printed note cards showing some of the original art from the children. When I presented a set of these cards to Agustin, he was very touched and quite emotional. He described a dream he had as a child and declared that the

friends of One Heart, Many Rhythms are obviously part of the dream. He is very excited that the art program has attracted the attention of his North American friends and the support and enthusiasm of the families in the Amazon. He is excited about the possibility of expanding the program and its dream to other communities in the future.

Project Update: Thanks to your generosity, the Yarapa School of Art was able to extend its program for the children to six months instead of three.



A Truly Open Heart

by Caryl Dalton, Board Member

As a child psychologist, there are many children who spent a little bit of time in my waiting room. So, I try to make it easier for them by having wonderful art and unusual artifacts from my travels for them to look at and inquire about. I had several paintings displayed from the children who attend our after-school art program in the Amazon. One evening, a sweet 5 year old girl named Briana was waiting with her mother. Briana told me, “Dr Caryl, did you know I want to be an artist when I grow up?” She was fascinated by the paintings and asked many questions about the art program and the children from the jungle. I knew the family well, but never realized how well

her mother had instilled in her children the need to be kind, generous-hearted people. At the end of my session with her brother, Briana’s mother handed me a donation envelope filled out by Briana herself. Inside was \$5.00. She apologized that she only had \$5.00 left from her allowance and said she would give more later. She wanted the money to go to the children at the Yarapa School of Art. True to her word, Briana gave an additional \$5.00 the following month. She is our youngest donor, and perhaps, our most generous one.

