



# Update

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## Message from the Chair

It is exciting and encouraging to share stories about the “fruits of our labor” in the communities of Northern Peru. The commitment we made to focus our work on empowerment of women has been met with an overwhelming positive response.

As we receive reports from our programs and stories from our trip participants we are lit with excitement and renewed energy for our work. We are able to witness that our commitment to empowerment of women is making a difference with the women of the Comedores and the participants of our leadership training programs. Our trust and support of our mutual efforts to sustain a participatory process in our partnership is transforming both in Canada and Peru.

We are challenged by our com-

mitment to live out our desire to walk WITH each other in terms of our Board and Committee work and walk in solidarity WITH the groups we support in Peru. It is an enormously difficult task and it is only through trust and compassion for each other that we continue to go deeper in our understanding of the work that is needed to change systems which exclude and exploit the poor.

We have taken up the challenge of “slowing down” our actions and impulses to ensure that there is participation. To this end we have decided it is time to re-vision our work awareness trips to Peru. We have cancelled our July 2008 trip and given ourselves the time that is needed to design a process that involves input from our partners.

We recognize that our work in Peru fans the embers of our concern about poverty and leads us to a greater understanding of the systems which promote rivalry and exclusion. Our sense of interconnectedness shifts the locus of our response from witnessing poverty of “other” to recognizing our interconnectedness as global citizens. We are continually broadening our understanding of what we need to let go of so we can become “more.” I urge all our readers and supporters to please consider ways you can support Heart-Links. We are asking you to join us by helping increase our donor base, and by recruiting volunteers for our Committees and Board.

## Work Awareness Trip 2007

### Rosa by Dean Kelly

The first time that I met Rosa was one of our first days in Peru. The Heart-Links Team was visiting the three comedores (community kitchens) in the area, and the Zaña comedor was the last one on our list. Since we arrived in the afternoon, the children and mothers

had already picked up the lunchtime meal. We were greeted by the two women performing the last few cleaning touches on what was already a very tidy and well-kept community kitchen. Rosa did not like having the focus on her, and allowed the other woman to answer our many questions. Although

saying very little, Rosa's big attractive smile and infectious laughter communicated much love and affection.

My next visit to the Zaña comedor allowed for a more intimate meeting, as there were only three of us from

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the Awareness Trip Group. We arrived while the lunch was being cooked, and therefore were able to interact with many more women and, in a very small way, take part in the food preparation. I was very happy to see that Rosa was working that day. With much dedication and love, she quietly went about her tasks, keeping the room brightly lit by her smile, laughter and good cheer.

When the time arrived for the daily walk up to the market, I was happy to accompany Rosa. Since I spoke very little Spanish, communication between us was a bit of a struggle. She was very patient with me through my language stumbles, and my frequent requests to repeat what she was saying. To this day I am not quite sure what I admitted, agreed, or gave approval to, but Rosa was always satisfied with my answers, and smiled and chuckled all the way to the market and back. I was amazed at the number of people that went out of their way to say hi to Rosa; it was quite apparent that she was not only well known, but more importantly, well loved in her community.

I kept thinking how lucky this woman was to be so filled with happiness. Through the gracious translating by Barbara, we were able to find out a little more about our friend. Rosa gave birth to 17 children, although 9 of them died, most in their infancy. Her first husband was abusive towards her and the children, and her second husband left her a widow. Despite all this pain and heartache, she was always sporting the biggest, genuine, infectious smile, often ac-



**A fond farewell from the women of Aviacion**

companied by a laugh revealing a deep inner peace and happiness.

As I was sitting alone journaling in the town square one afternoon, Rosa came along, and very kindly gave me a tour of her part of town. She showed me where she worked at making bamboo boxes, and then brought me to the house that she shares with her son, daughter-in-law, and several grandchildren. The home was a very humble hut, one of the poorest homes that I visited in Peru. As she brought me into her home and showed it off, she was beaming with pride.

At the end of our stay in Zaña, we celebrated with the community at the "Canada-Peru Night", an evening where we attempted to entertain each other and show our gratitude for our friendship. Through every act, Rosa beamed with such joy, and warmly supported everyone brave enough to step up in front of the group. I will always treasure the moments where I could hear Rosa's rich laughter fill the room. Fortunate for all of us, those moments were numerous.

Rosa is just one of the many incredible Peruvians that left such a deep impression on me. I regret that I did not have the language to better express my feelings and gratitude to her, and to the others. I hope that I may soon return to do this.

### ***Aviacion by Jennifer Slauenwhite,***

Often joyous moments in Peru were complicated by pangs of sadness. When we went to Aviacion to see the children from the three centres at their monthly get together, we were all in high spirits. First we got to watch the youth do some of the things they always do at gatherings. They had mixers and games to re-acquaint each other and to break the ice. All the children were clean and well dressed and full of excitement and enthusiasm. The leaders who organized the day were wonderful. They allowed the children to express their energy, but also managed to channel their interaction into exploration of shared values. It was obvious that the leaders were very intent on building self-esteem and encouraging self expression.

The morning went on with

*I was amazed at the number of people that went out of their way to say hi to Rosa;*

many performances that were very memorable. One young girl had memorized Jingle Bells in English and sang it dramatically without knowing what it meant. Her friend who sat beside me told me she had been practicing for weeks so she could sing to us. All of us visitors got to know the children sitting around us as we chatted between breaks in the action. They were vivacious and affectionate., curious and open. Gordon and I sat under an open window. When the singing began children who were outside and not part of the comedor were drawn to the window, boosted each other up and peeked inside. They were not clean; they were not dressed in their best cloths. Their curious hands reached for things we had been given. There was a spider and a turkey made out of shells presented to us by the children of Zaña. We tucked these treasures protectively under our seats and they sit on our fireplace mantle today. As much as we reveled in the joyous expression in front of us, we were achingly aware of the children in the window.

When the food came, we and all the children and adults had

a drink, and a bun from the Reque bakery. Gordon and I put our sandwiches and drinks on the windowsill and they quickly vanished. In Peru, there are always more children waiting outside.

### **HUGS! by Alona Black**

Hugs, hugs and more hugs! Being a hugger myself I treasured each and everyone so freely given with deep sincerity. In witnessing their poverty and struggles they definitely have my utmost respect and admiration. These people deal with extenuating circumstances and challenges in their lives but their strength, resiliency, tenacity and faith in God and their generous spirit of giving humbled me to the core.

### **Gifts by Gordon Price**

The first day we were in Zaña, we visited a small farm on the edge of town. As was often the case, Barb took pictures of the family and friends. When we were in Cajamarca, Barb had these photos developed with the idea in mind to take them back and give them to the family.

It was a quiet afternoon and the activity that had been scheduled was cancelled, so we all went different places. Barbara told us where she was going and invited us along. Dean, Jennifer and I

went with her. When we reached the farm the mother immediately came out to meet us. She took us into the open room where they have tables and chairs and she and her adult daughter wiped down all of the chairs for us in spite of our protest that they not bother.

Barbara gave them the photos and they were deeply touched to have them. They laughed and beamed. The son and father whom we had met on the first day were out working and the daughter was meeting us for the first time. We heard that when we had first come to this farm, she had been in Chiclayo where she does volunteer work at a women's shelter. She told us about this work and we praised her for her kindness. During the visit the mother told us about how hard it was to farm in Peru. They had to borrow money from the bank to buy the seeds they would plant. Often she said people would lose their farms because they would need to put them up as a surety, but in their case, she told her husband to sell all of the animals but not to use the farm as surety.

As with many people we visited, the farmers were incredibly open about their lives. They spoke of recent tragedies in the family, but moments later were also quick to laugh and enjoy a good story. The visit was nearing an end when the daughter left us and returned with a gift for each of us, she had a decorated cardboard box from her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, another cardboard box, shaped like a shoe, a big hamburger CD case and a small stuffed satin heart. We

*The farmers were incredibly open about their lives.*



**Youth Group Meeting Aviacion**

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 were deeply moved but told her we could not take these things; she insisted, but we said no, but she insisted. Finally we explained that we were travelers and we could not take these delicate things in our back-packs because they would be destroyed. I held the satin heart to my chest and said I would take this one thing and always keep it to remember her. After many hugs we said goodbye.



**Some of the delegation: Linda Maniowabi, Barbara Boles-Davis (group leader) Alona Black and Dean Kelly”**

## Growth and Progress in the Comedores

Heart-Links believes sustainable development for the poor and most marginalized happens when there is community participation and the empowerment of women.

This is being demonstrated by the changes taking place in the 3 comedores (or community kitchens) in the Zaña valley.

Comedores enable mothers in a community to work together to provide a mid-day meal for the most at risk children. Whereas the comedores were centrally managed by the former Peruvian agent, in September 2006 Heart-Links transferred responsibility for them to a new agent, Violeta Nauca. The mothers themselves now run the comedores and all of them to participate in decision-making. Together with the Family Worker (Delicia Romero), Violeta is accompanying them in the capacity building process of learning the skills and obtaining the information and experience they need to manage the comedores effectively.

Ultimately the dream is that the comedores will be self-sustaining.

In addition, at the request of the mothers, a program to develop the leadership skills of adolescents in the three comedor communities – Zaña, Aviacion and Mocupe – have been established.

The changes in the mothers’ self-esteem and self-confidence over the last year have been phenomenal. Now they feel ownership for the comedores and they have a vision for the future.

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**Violeta Nauca, Rosa (See Dean’s story pg 2) and Delicia Romero**

## Spotlight on Heart-Links Associate Violeta Nauca

Violeta Nuccia joined Heart Links last September. She is now Heart-Links' representative in the Chiclayo area, including the Zana Valley. Violeta joined Delicia Romero, our woman in Zana and the two of them are a powerful force in the lives of the women they work with. Violeta lives in Chiclyo with her parents and commutes to the various comedores making for full and fruitful days.

Violeta's job is many sided. She identifies areas where there is a need for development. She is a mentor and a guide. Violeta also supports initiatives that expand the programs of the comedores. She loves nothing more than to see the women and youth nurturing not just their bodies but also their hearts and minds. Violeta encourages

them in self-expression classes and dance classes and she buoys their self-esteem by recognizing all sides of who they are.

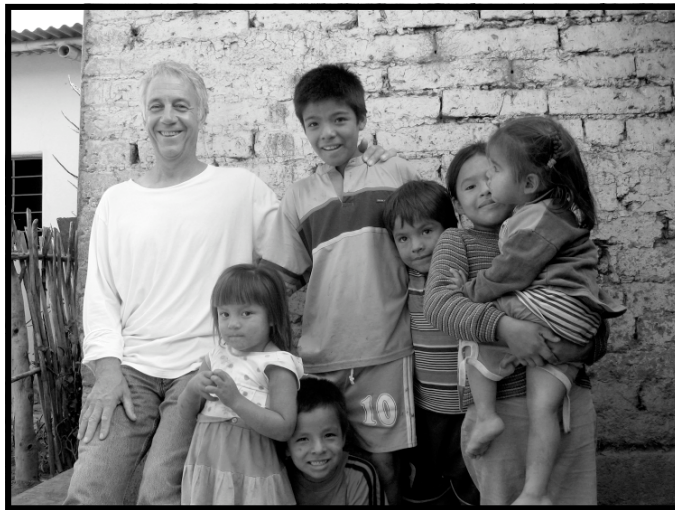
Instructionally, Violeta helps the women with principals of budgeting, nutrition, communication, health, safety and general wellness. She leads frank discussions and bolsters the women's efforts to determine their own paths as much as possible. At heart Violeta is a deeply practical person and so she sees opportunities to expand the youth programs as a means of building leadership continuity within their communities.

Violeta's boundless enthusiasm and high-energy style are combined with years of

experience in the field. She is a retired schoolteacher and at university she was a National Union of Catholic Students volunteer and she has been immersed in community social work ever since.

Violeta is obviously loved and respected by the women she works with. As soon as she walks into the comedores the women flock around her. Always quick with a smile and laugh, she raises the mood of everybody around her. She has earned the trust of the women and while she encourages them to develop greater self-determination, her insights continue to shine the light for Heart Links.

*Always quick with a smile and laugh, she raises the mood of everybody around her.*



**Gordon Price and friends**

**TIME IS RUNNING OUT!!!**  
**HEART-LINKS ANNUAL FUND RAISING DINNER**

Date: Friday, November 9, 2007

Marconi Club, 120 Clarke Rd., London (Plenty of free parking)

Doors open at 6 pm- Dinner at 7

Dinner includes a full-course served sit down meal

Tickets \$50 per person (includes a charitable tax receipt for \$25)

After dinner entertainment by singer/songwriter Chuck Stevens

For information on reserving a table please call:

A. Irwin                    **519-686-3804**

B. R. Elward              **519-642-2995**

See you at  
the Fund  
Raising  
Dinner

*Heart-Links would like to express their appreciation to BMO Financial Group*

*Bank of Montreal has generously offered to waive all administrative and transaction fees related to the processing of pre-authorized donations.*

*This means that Heart-Links will be able to offer its donors and supporters the ability to make monthly, quarterly or annual gifts with automatic withdrawals from their bank accounts, at no cost, to Heart-Links.*

*The Fund Development Committee is currently working on finalizing the process. We will let you know as soon as this is in effect. Stay tuned!*

**HOW TO CONTACT US:**

For more information, or for a presentation and speaker to address your school, church, or group:

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