

Solidaridad



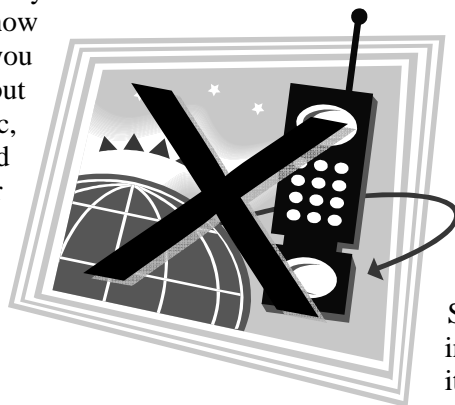
Published quarterly by the Teosinte Committee of the St. Sebastian Parish.
One in solidarity with our sistering community in Teosinte, El Salvador.

JULY 2003

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? ...

(“No, there’s no phone!”) By Beth Hammer and Duane Pickering

Communication – the most rewarding and sometimes difficult part of any relationship. Have you ever tried to get to know someone without communicating? Recall your friend that lives across country. Remember how you always said you would keep in touch, but as life got more hectic, you gradually drifted apart. Without regular communication (phone calls, letter, e-mails), you lost the emotional bond that kept the relationship alive.



Two-way communication is important in any relationship, and this certainly holds true for our relationship we strive to maintain with our family in Teosinte, El Salvador. Our relationship with our extended family offers us rewards and many challenges.

The **rewards** may not be obvious to members of the St. Sebastian community, but they are many. They include the opportunity to learn about each others’ cultures and the challenges of our every day lives. Ultimately, the reward is sharing and acknowledging the same gifts that God has bestowed upon each of us, no matter the different life styles we live.

The main **challenge** we experience with our sistering community in Teosinte is that of communication. Regular contact with the people in Teosinte is difficult and often times frustrating. Yes, there is an obvious language barrier, but even if most of us did speak Spanish, the convenience of picking up a phone to call “Geovanni Hernandez”, the Junta Directiva Presidente of Teosinte, or anyone else, is not feasible. **There are no phones in Teosinte. And other options of rapid communication, like e-mail, are non-existent.**

However, it is possible to communicate via e-mail with the Teosinte community indirectly. We have been able

to get information to Teosinte through a regional office that works with communities in the Chalatenango region, where our sister community is located. This means that our communication is often inconsistent. We have also sent e-mails through the SHARE field office in San Salvador. Through this avenue we have been fortunate enough to have had, at most, monthly contact with someone from Teosinte. There is also sporadic communication from various individuals in the United States who have made occasional trips to Teosinte. These individuals have come back home to provide some updates on the daily activities in the community.

So what is the best way to communicate with our family in El Salvador? We face this challenge everyday ... and it boils down to old fashioned letters.

Letters from St. Sebastian’s to Teosinte are translated from English to Spanish before getting the international stamp to be sent on its way. This courtesy is done because there are few people in Teosinte who can read English. The letter then gets delivered to the Teosinte mailbox in Tejutla, a town several miles away from Teosinte and is picked up only when someone from Teosinte passes through Tejutla. Likewise, when mail is sent from Teosinte to Milwaukee, it must be taken to Tejutla or given to someone from SHARE to mail.

All correspondence that we receive from Teosinte is hand written and in Spanish. This means, that someone from St. Sebastian’s must translate the letter before it can be shared with the parish. This translation process takes time and expertise. (If you can help in this area, please call Beth at 414-774-4934.)

Communication with Teosinte has been and continues to be a challenge. Like your friend across country, we need to take the extra effort to communicate, in any way possible, to build and maintain the relationship. Perhaps we need to stretch beyond ourselves to find ways to strengthen communication methods. By doing this, we will strengthen the bond that ultimately holds us all together – regardless of where we live on this earth.■

A LETTER FROM TEOSINTE



Following is an excerpt from a letter sent to our St. Sebastian Parish from Teosinte in November 2002. It contains the most updated information about the progress in their community. We hope you will take the time to read and learn about the lives of our extended family in El Salvador. There is a lot of information written here. Perhaps read a bit of it, set it down for a moment, then pick it up again and try to imagine a lifestyle different than yours.

Note: St. Sebastian's has received follow up letters from Teosinte in January and April 2003, outlining details for building four new homes. The community has decided to forgo the approved windows and doors in each new home so that those funds can be used for repairs on other homes. In addition, they thank St. Sebastian's for helping them realize their dreams for a "pretty church". They hope that we will be able to send more financial assistance for the church, as they continue to raise money on their own. They send a blessing: "May God reward you with the same generosity that you, with so much love, do for us. May God always protect and care for you. Remember that Teosinte will be grateful for the kindness you show us."

Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Sebastian Parish,

Receive a warm greeting on behalf of the new Directiva Comunal [Board of Directors] of Teosinte and on behalf of all people here, hoping that God is keeping you all in His care and you are in good health, and we wish you success in your daily endeavors.

Presently in the community the project of a footbridge [over the river] by Teosinte is coming true. This project has a total cost of approximately 30,000 colones of which 23,300 colones have been financed through CCR to cover the materials and the rest of the total amount is what our community is contributing in labor as our contracted obligation. For us and for the community, this project is of great importance since in winter the river's water level raises a lot and poses a real threat to those who daily cross it, as many of our people have garden plots (crops) on the other side of the river.

Also being completed at this time is a project of latrines which has benefited all the families of Teosinte. This project is of vital importance for us, as it has provided a latrine [letrina abonera] for each family. These latrines have been designed especially for rural areas such as ours. With these latrines we hope to reduce the level of contamination of our grounds and therefore contribute to our search for better, more healthful environmental conditions.

On the topic of education, we want to share with you the successes we are having with the youth of our community. This year two of our youth graduated as teachers from the University of El Salvador, and another six received their bachelor's degree. We proudly share these triumphs while at the same time we gratefully acknowledge the financial help you have offered and continue to offer through the scholarship program started by Sylvia Gregory [Women's Empowerment Partnership].

Regarding the youth – we want to tell you we have a group of boys and girls studying sketching, painting and music. Their workshops are being implemented by two students from the Plastic Arts section of the University of El Salvador. With these workshops it's hoped that our youth will spend their free time advantageously, and will have a

chance to discover their hidden talents that they can use in their daily lives. All of the children are interested, but there is a problem of not having sufficient materials or instruments for each area of study.

We've related all the above so you'll be aware of some of what's going on in our community. Obviously we have short and long term goals which we are taking measures to bring to concretion through governmental and non-governmental sources depending up the situation.

We have diverse needs, some of greater priority than others. Thus as a Directiva and as a community we have analyzed the priority ranking for each one. The three most pressing needs at present are: boosting our existing supply of drinkable water; the construction of four houses for an equal number of families whose houses are in extremely poor condition; and the expansion of the education center [school] due to the fact that it is very small in proportion to the number of grades which attend.

We know that you have always supported us and we trust that you will continue to do so. The Directiva is conscious of the responsibility it has assumed, and for that very reason is disposed to do the humanly possible to forge ahead every day. We know that with the help of God, and of the community, and from you, of course, we shall succeed.

Brothers and sisters, in the name of the entire community of Teosinte we send you many greetings and many hugs. Que Dios Los Bendiga! (God Bless You!) With great affection,

*The Junta Directiva and the whole community.
Signed by Geovanni Hernandez, Presidente*

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

The date of August 18th has special recognition for the people of Teosinte as it recognizes the day of their settlement in Teosinte in 1988.

The parish of St. Sebastian wishes them much happiness as they celebrate this important day and month in the history of their community.

