



## **ColombiaCare Progress Report - #8– August, 2006**

ColombiaCare supporters,

The following is the eighth ColombiaCare report to its donors and other interested parties. Again, we want to thank you all for your support. With this report and future ones, we want to assure you that your generosity is already making a difference!

If you missed a report and/or would like to see the previous reports, you can find them on our home page [www.colombiacare.org](http://www.colombiacare.org).

Part of this report is a trip report from Victoria and Carlos Perez, who were in Colombia in July, 2006.

As in Victoria's trip in January, we had a very good feeling as to how all the projects are going. Our partnership with Cali's JERA Foundation continues to be very productive. The projects they are managing are doing very well. In addition, seeing the smiling faces of the children and observing the positive impact we are having as an organization is more than rewarding. It is exhilarating and we are definitely re-energized to continue with our efforts. Below there is a brief summary of each on-going project. We really encourage you to go to the appropriate links to see the pictures in our site. We want to share with you the pleasure of seeing those beautiful smiles.

### **After School Project – Tunja, Colombia**

This program, as you may recall from previous reports, is an after-school program focusing on art, dance and music. The children are from a very poor area in Tunja, a city near Bogota. Tunja has received a large displaced population driven away from the countryside by the on-going Colombia conflict. It was very satisfying to see in person the work that Maria Clemencia Buitrago and her team are doing in Tunja. Unfortunately, most of the children were not there the day we visited since they were on vacation. However, those who were there gave us a taste of the dances and songs they are learning in this program. In addition, we were able to see some of the artwork the children have made. We also brought a number of supplies that the First Presbyterian Church, Circle 5 from Freehold, NJ under the leadership of Lori McCoy and Wendy Harman provided to ColombiaCare. Our contribution for this project is \$5,000. You can see pictures of the Tunja visit at the following link: <http://colombiacare.org/Tunja.html>

### **Improving Communications Skills Project**

The objective of this project is to improve the reading, writing and communications skills of the children in the Altos de la Cruz School. As mentioned in our Report #7, the progress the children made this year thanks to this program is most impressive. The difference in the level of writing, communicating and attitude is very tangible. The work that the children did as part of the program shows their amazing change and progress. We had an opportunity to see the children's work, their essays and Wall Newspaper. We also saw the children and interacted with them. (See below). This project really represents the positive impact we are having on Colombian children. Also, as part of the program, a library was built and provided with books. A very good friend of ColombiaCare, Marsha Vaughan, gave a significant contribution to acquire some of the books.



The academic year was over in June as well as the project. However, given the success of the program we are considering sponsoring one more year. ColombiaCare's contribution for this program was \$6,000.

Despite the fact that the academic year and the project were over, the two inspirational women we mentioned in the previous report, Luisa and Francia, continue to work with the children in a Summer Camp of sorts. They are using the School facilities and neighboring areas for the recreational activities. The children are having a blast since this is the first time in their lives that they have had some organized summer activities. Visit our page to see pictures of the children in the final days of the project, during their summer activities and in the School library.

<http://www.colombiacare.org/Communicationsimprovementprogram.html>

### **Vocational Program**

The objective of this project was to provide vocational education to young people to give them an opportunity to improve their lives. The targeted young people are between 15 to 19 years of age, who are neither going to school nor working. They are wandering the streets, very likely getting in some sort of trouble. In the previous report, we had described the preparation and the initiation of this project. For this project we had obtained a grant of \$78,000.

We are delighted to report the very successful completion of this program. There were 120 young people who registered, out of those, 95 finished. This is a very high number for this population. Seven already have a job, one is starting a welding business and several are applying to continue their education in welding with el SENA, a government technical training institution. This project was very successful in many respects. Not only were 95 young people given a chance to have a productive life, but the equipment and program curriculum can be used for additional training. In fact, the curriculum, a combination of technical and personal development, is being looked upon with a great deal of interest by other local organizations to use in their work. Also, JERA is conducting Construction training for another set of young people using a similar format. Carlos and Victoria were able to appreciate the quality of the work these young people did during their training. In particular, they built all the tables, stools, and equipment support for the above Construction seminar. The quality of their work is excellent.

Also, Carlos and Victoria had the opportunity to attend the graduation from the training. It was a beautiful event. The pride that these young people demonstrated at the graduation gave a very good indication of the success of the program. They brought their families and friends; they wore their best clothes. One of the students spoke; this was a very emotional moment for the audience. His story, not much different than the others, was very heart warming. He had been in various troubled situations in the past, and at the beginning of the training he exhibited a lack of self confidence and very little motivation. This young man said that the training he received not only opened doors for him, but that it reminded him of his long-forgotten talents and how much he had wasted them in the past. He was very honest in acknowledging all of the effort and work he had to do in order to keep it up, but he said the training had given him the "push" that he needed so much to help him see the light after the tunnel. By the way, this young man is one of seven that already have a job.

We will be presenting a proposal for a continuation grant for this project, and will let you know if we obtain it.



If you go to this link you'll see more details on this project and some pictures of the work the students did and of the graduation day <http://colombiacare.org/Vocationalprogram.html>

### **Homework Clinics:**

As we mentioned in our previous report, we submitted a proposal for a grant for an after school program that we are calling Homework Clinics. We are very pleased to inform you that we obtained a \$36,000 grant for this project. The target area is the same as the Vocational and the Improving Communication projects, that is, Communes 18 and 20 from Cali, Colombia. This is a very depressed area with a very large population of displaced families. The population in those two Communes is approximately 240,000 people. The Homework Clinics will officially start in September with the School year. Some of the children that will attend this program are the children from the School that we have been working with, plus children from other neighboring schools. In the next report we would be able to let you know how the project is progressing.

### **In the pipeline:**

As mentioned before, we will be submitting a proposal for additional vocational training in other subjects. And we are still working on the proposal for a computer lab.

### **Fundraising:**

The group of volunteers that support us has been very active. We had two “Viejotecas” in NYC – (Sunday-afternoon dances in some restaurant in NY ), other small parties and a raffle. Those events have generated over \$8,000 in donations. We are preparing some additional events for the second half of the year. Your donations are welcome any time. You can make a donation directly from our page. Don't forget that you can also give donations as a gift for others. See our home page for more information [www.colombiacare.org](http://www.colombiacare.org).

We want to remind you that if you need a proof of donations for your tax returns, please let us know by responding to this e-mail with an address indicating where you would like the certificate to be sent. The IRS only requires a certificate for donations of more than \$250. However, if you prefer to have one for your records, let us know. You can also use, as appropriate, our Employer Identification Number (EIN): 20-0076096 for your tax documents.

As we said in the previous report, it is your generosity that re-energizes us and maintains our dream to improve the chances for a better future for some Colombian children. We have seen concrete results and we all should share the pride of our positive impact.

If you don't want to continue to receive our reports, please respond to this e-mail.

ColombiaCare Board of Directors