

# Reflections from Honduras

## *Keeping You In Touch*

Fellow Man International - July 2010

### The *Chula* Cornfield - Expanding FMI's Agriculture Program

I would just like to declare that hunger is the enemy around here. I'm tired of the heartache of seeing children with thin, pale faces and women who deliver under-weight babies. Every day I pass by lands that could be cultivated to help feed the hungry. Yet, those choice lands have been inaccessible to me. When the opportunity to utilize the Villela ranch (*see the story about hope on page four*) for cultivated crops came along, I jumped at the chance. Alfonso Villela owns a choice piece of property along the river on the way to Buenos Aires. His ranch is called the *Jewel* because its lands truly are a treasure of rich, fertile soil. Because of the seriousness of Alfonso's illness and his inability to manage his farm, he offered me the once in a lifetime chance to utilize his land. "Take the land and use it as you see fit Lisa," he said. I was overwhelmed by the generosity of his offer. Let's just say I jumped on that opportunity like a Honduran dog jumps on left over table scraps!

The first order of business was to organize the men of Buenos Aires to get the fields cleared and the weeds sprayed. We had over 20 men show up to help work. Excitement filled the air as the

sounds of machete whacks rang out in unison. We used Roundup to kill off all of the weeds. The next order of business was to rent a tractor to till the soil and then plant the corn. We decided corn would be the first order of business since Honduran authorities have predicted a shortage of basic grains. Once I found a tractor that we could rent, I had to find some seed corn. Who could have ever guessed Roundup Ready hybrid corn would be available for sale in Honduras? I found a business in San Pedro Sula that had everything I needed all in one store. It was like the Wal-Mart of agriculture! They had fertilizers, DuPont chemicals for fumigation and best of all Pioneer hybrid, Roundup ready corn. I was in heaven! I was even able to purchase anti-caking granular fertilizer specially designed for our soils to be used for seeding corn. Best of all though, for the first time in a long time, I had real hope of feeding the hungry in a substantial way.

We planted four hectares of corn using a John Deer tractor. It's now been four weeks since planting and the corn looks great. The locals have all been interested in the process. They say the field is "*chula*" or, in other words, God willing, we will have a high yield! Look for updates in future newsletters. Many blessings, Lisa

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#### Honduras Nutrition Facts

- Twenty-five percent of all Honduran children under the age of five are stunted.
- Iron-deficient anemia affects 37% of all children under the age of five and nearly 20% of all women of child-bearing age.
- Birth defects are the leading cause of death for children under the age of 1. Many of these are preventable with folic acid.



## Fresh Cheese - It Does A Body Good!!!



**Fresh milk is poured over cheesecloth to remove any foreign material that could contaminate the cheese.**

The grade school teachers of Buenos Aires are not sure if fresh milk products are a blessing or something else for the students. With their parents facing days and weeks without any source of income, the children often times come to school without breakfast.

School lunch is the highlight of every day. During this time of year, school lunch is many times the only meal the children eat for the day.

Because the Honduran economy has been drastically affected by last year's political turmoil, the price of milk has dropped. As Hondurans tighten their belts, they have been purchasing less milk and milk products sticking with only the very basics of beans, rice and corn. One of the local producers in Pinalejo found himself without a buyer for the nearly 70 liters of milk his cows were producing daily. It was an opportunity too good to pass up, so we began to produce fresh butter, buttermilk and soft cheese. Some of the milk products are sold through the trade store, but a good majority of the

cheese has been used to feed the school children. The teachers jokingly accuse our cheese of making the children hyperactive. But, all of us understand the children simply do not have enough food to sustain their energy to play. As midmorning approaches, the teachers report the kids look out the school windows toward the kitchen, just waiting for signs of hot tortillas and fresh cheese. Seventy liters of milk produces more than twenty pounds of cheese a day. How good it is to be able to feed the hungry with something that sticks to their ribs!



**Pictured here is Mayra Martinez, manager the trade store. Twenty pounds of fresh cheese are processed every day. The school children have been enjoying fresh cheese and hot tortillas every day for breakfast. Yummy!**



## Chanute FUMC Vacation Bible School Class Raises Funds to Purchase New Hen Chicks

We would like to say a big "thank you" to all of the kids who participated in First United Methodist Church's vacation bible school. The VBS participants were able to collect two hundred dollars for the FMI project. We decided to purchase one hundred fifty layer hen chicks to replace our old and less productive laying hens. These chicks are special because they are a dual bird created from the local disease resistant "Indian chicken" and a commercial bird called Highline. The hens will

begin to lay at about 17 weeks of age. They will give brown eggs which are preferred by the Honduran public. With 150 layers, the mission will easily be able to provide plenty of eggs for the school children of Buenos Aires. Eggs are an important source of protein for the kids who traditionally suffer from protein deficiency. We offer our deepest gratitude to the children who provided the funds to make this special purchase. It seems only fitting that the gift be from one child to another!



**Cruz Cardona, the mission's agronomist carefully removes the chicks one by one from the carton in which they were shipped. More pictures to come as the birds mature!**



## Until We Meet Again - In Memory of Danilo Paz

Finding a place where one can just swing in a hammock and talk with a friend in Honduras can be a challenge. Yet Danilo Paz always left his door open for this missionary far from home. It was Danilo who taught me everything I know about coffee farming. He shared with me his love, artistry and talent for bringing a superb cup of coffee to the table. Words could never express the deep appreciation and affection I have for this man who shared his life's passion with this small town girl from Kansas.

Many of you will remember Danilo. He often opened his home to mission group members. Whenever a tour of his coffee farm was requested he was always willing to share his pride and joy with others. Those of you who supported the Green Parrot Coffee project in the beginning may remember those trips to his coffee farm close to the small village of Rio Blanco. Danilo often joked with mission team members when they would

come to his home to pick up packages of roasted coffee. The packages of neatly stacked coffee on the kitchen table looked more like a drug dealer's stash than that of a budding coffee export business.

In June of this year, Danilo passed away because of complications from his long term battle with diabetes. It is a sad thing for all of us to know we will have to wait a while to see Danilo again, but most especially for his son Mauricio who in response to his father's failing health had taken on the responsibility of managing the family's coffee farm. None the less, Mauricio has finely honed his own version of his father's craft. Though his father was unable to visit the farm in his last days to see Mauricio's fine work, it stands as a living memorial to Danilo. His fingerprints remain on every coffee bean produced there. I will miss the man who always shared his table, a cup of coffee and wisdom with me. Still, it's not goodbye it's just until we meet again.

## FMI Makes Another Major Medicine Purchase



**Here Dr. Marvin Pineda along with FMI clinic nurse Nidia Ramirez place bottles of antibiotics in suspension on the pharmacy's shelves. Dr. Pineda is conservative in his treatments always weighing efficacy and cost of the medications he prescribes.**

Keeping a talented physician in a rural health care setting requires a well-stocked pharmacy among other things. One of Dr. Marvin Pineda's greatest concerns with regard to caring for Honduras' poor, is that the clinic's pharmacy be supplied with enough of the most commonly used medications to treat the patients who find their way to our door on a daily basis. Dr. Pineda understands the extreme financial struggle many patients face when asked to purchase

their medication in a commercial setting. "There is nothing more frustrating for me as a physician, than the knowledge that a patient is correctly diagnosed, but can not afford the medication to treat the condition," he said. FMI recently purchased nearly three thousand dollars of medication to help treat the people who come to the clinic looking for their health to be restored. Many medications were purchased in bulk by the gallon or in bottles of one thousand capsules to help reduce cost. Thank you to all who give so generously to help provide life-giving medication for those who could otherwise not afford their treatment.



**Many medications in liquid form can be purchased by the gallon helping to greatly reduce costs.**



## With All My Heart I Believe - *Choosing Hope Over Despair*

There are so many heartbreaking things in Honduras that have the ability to steal all hope away. I find myself once in a while tempted to give into despair when I can't make things right for the people I love. Recently Alfonso Villela, a good friend and confidant was diagnosed with a brain tumor. The tumor was benign, but it was pressing in on the frontal lobes of his brain, greatly affecting his personality and causing profound depression. Surgical intervention was urgent but carried great risk.

After many appointments with multiple specialists, Alfonso was scheduled for surgery. Everything was in place to reduce his risks as much as possible, yet the neurosurgeon in charge of his case was very clear. The complications ran the gamut, everything from blindness to stroke or even death. It felt like doomsday as the

surgery date approached. Alfonso had his good days and bad. He had to sell off a good part of his family farm in order to pay for the surgery. When high doses of steroids were administered to reduce the swelling of his brain, there were moments in which Alfonso seemed to be his same old self.

Soon surgery day was upon us. I drove to his house in the early morning. Alfonso was sitting at his kitchen table still wrapped in a towel. He looked up at me and said, "I'm not exactly afraid, but I haven't got the courage to go". I struggled to find the words. My dear friend was walking in the shadows and there seemed to be no way to walk along side of him. Finally, he got dressed and sat in the front passenger's seat beside me. I secretly wondered if it would be our last trip to town together. When we arrived at the hospital, once again it seemed as though de-

spair was upon Alfonso. When he opened the door of the truck he seemed to hesitate. He slowly stepped out of the cab, then walked to the back of the truck and looked up at the sky. He looked at me and said, "Do you really think heaven exists?". "With all my heart," I replied. In that moment I was reminded why I came to Honduras. What a privilege to assure God's children that even in their darkest moments they are never alone. After a few moments of sharing those things of faith that really matter, Alfonso turned toward the hospital's front door and with a renewed sense of conviction walked toward hope. When it came time to be taken to surgery, the peace that enveloped Alfonso was palpable. It's now been three weeks since his surgery and despite an eight day stay in ICU, his recovery is going well.

## Men and Machetes - Thank Goodness for Stitches



**While this hand did not suffer tendon damage, the patient walked quite a distance seeking medical attention.**

men in our area work in the fields with razor sharp machetes, injuries are frequent and oftentimes serious. As the strong men swing their blades at heavy vegetation (and sometimes each other), all it takes is a moment to create a real medical emergency. At the Fellow Man clinic machete wounds are common. Sometimes the wounds are so deep they involve tendons and arteries that require repair. If a patient is referred to the government hospital for surgical repair, more often than not, the patient's skin is sutured together and the tendons are left unrepaired. The patient will have to schedule the tendon repair at a later date when precious surgical suite time is available.

You would never believe having a variety of suture material would make a clinic a sought after health care facility. Yet, as the government clinics and hospitals become more and more overwhelmed every day with patients, their medical supplies quickly become depleted. Because a great majority of

Both arteries and tendons retract into surrounding tissues when severed. The longer the patient waits for surgical repair, the more difficult it is to recover full function of the affected limb. This can be especially incapacitating when the injury happens to a dominant hand. There are many people in our area who have limbs that have been permanently damaged due to lack of medical attention. In Honduras, general practitioners learn how to repair damaged tendons and sometimes arteries. Hand surgery is performed in a clinical setting under local anesthesia. There simply aren't any other options in many cases. One other problem is the availability of appropriate suture material. How fortunate we are to have operating room staff in the U.S. who save suture material for us. It really makes a difference!

