



Annual Report January 2009

Prepared by Erik Nielsen, President

Our scholarship recipients continue to make progress although the school system was shaken by prolonged strikes in support of President Zelaya. These were primarily in the elementary school system. Fortunately the middle and high school students were able to complete their annual exams and the year. The students all lost out on many days of class but we hope this next year will proceed smoothly and the kids can make up any lost ground. Due to the uncertainty associated with the political turmoil in Honduras, we have not yet initiated a significant fundraising initiative and are thus behind on meeting our 2010 obligations.

The big news is that the first ECOS supported student to attend the university graduated with a degree in middle school education. He is the first person in Las Marias to obtain a university degree.

This 2009 Annual report provides an overview of the scholarship recipients, the administration of our program, our financial status, fundraising goals, and potential strategies for this upcoming year and the need to identify a new board member.

1) Scholarship Recipient Update

The summaries below are based on communication directly with the student's themselves (e-mail and phone) or through MOPAWI personnel and the local scholarship committee.

Continuing Scholarship Recipient Update:

Juan Angel Martinez: (2002-2009) With the support of ECOS Rio Platano, Juan Angel graduated from the Trujillo teacher's high school in December of 2005. He graduated from the Universidad Pedagogica in December. He will travel to Puerto Lempira to take the departmental teachers exam and all indications are that with this university degree he will have first priority for school selection and his clear preference is to return to Las Marias to direct the new middle school. Because of the exam and placement process take place over the course of a month, Juan Angel will be required to stay in Puerto Lempira for this entire time.

Diego Goodoy: (2006-2009) After taking a leave of absence from the teachers high school in Trujillo due to illness in 2008, Diego completed his second year of study in November 2009. He achieved high grades and will enroll this Feb for his 3rd of 4 years in the Escuela Normal.

Anna Rivens: (2006-2009) After a rough start with her education outside of La Mosquitia, Anna completed her second year in a four year tourism management program. She has achieved academic success and looks forward to continuing her studies in 2010.

David Nunez Zelaya: (2007-2009) David is our first scholarship recipient from the community of Banaka. Banaka is in a similar situation to that of Las Marias a few years ago in that they do not have middle school and do not have any teachers in the elementary school from the community. David graduated from the Cocobilla middle school in December and is enrolled in the sustainable agriculture high school program in Brus Laguna.

Eric Leiva: (2008-2009) Eric is from Las Marias and completed middle school in Cocobillia. Due to family obligations he plans to take a year off before continuing with his high school studies in 2011.

Elbia Martinez: (2008-2009) Elbia is our second scholarship recipient from Banaka. She completed middle school in Cocobilla. Elbia has also decided to take a year off from her studies to help her family but intends to continue with her high school studies in 2011.

Other Past Scholarship Recipients

Jorge Mejia Martinez: (2007) Jorge graduated with honors from the sustainable agriculture high school in Brus Laguna. Jorge is of Pesch descent. He has been working the past two year to save money for his university studies. I have made it clear that we would like him to pursue university studies, can support his living expenses, and have provide him with many potential scholarships at ESNACIFOR and other Honduran universities but thus far he has not applied for any of these programs. Communication with Jorge has been difficult but we would like to support this high achieving student to continue with his studies.

Telma Ramos: Telma graduated in 2006 as a teacher. During the period of time she was in Puerto Lempira to take the teachers exam, she became pregnant. She worked as a substitute teacher in Las Marias in 2007 and 2008 until her father Ubence Ramos passed away. Basically the family was chased out of town with charges of Brujeria and she is now living and working in Brus Laguna with her mother. She is committed to securing a permanent teaching position in Las Marias and so will take the educational exam in Puetro Lempira in early Feb 2010 to see if she can achieve this goal.

Jarlo Rivens (2002-2006): Jarlo graduated from the San Pedro Sula Escuela Normal and is currently teaching in a private school in San Pedro Sula. He attempted to enroll in the Universidad Pedagogica but encountered some obstacles. After being out of touch for three years he recently contacted me regarding his desire to pursue a university degree part-time. He would like to return to La Mosquitia and teach but he does not feel he can get a job without the university degree. I believe Jarlo will return to La Mosquitia but if we are to consider supporting his university studies I think we should attach some caveats to any support. Perhaps we could stipulate a partial repayment of the scholarship if he does not attempt to get a teaching position in La Mosquitia.

2) Program Administration

IRS Non-profit public charity status

To maintain our status as a 501(c)3 public charity we need to continue to diversify our donor base from one based on board and board family donations to a broader number of medium sized donations.

Local Scholarship Committee

The local scholarship committee continues to work on behalf of the students and counsel recipients on navigating the Honduran educational system. We have formalized an orientation to the scholarship program that covers the main points of cultural adjustment, finances, travel, reporting grades, and long-term obligation. This is now clearly stated in a letter of understanding that outlines our commitments and the student's obligations and intent to return to work in the Biosphere Reserve.

The local scholarship committee used the \$160 in funding we approved to make two trips to Las Marias and Banaka to select students, resolve issues with families and encourage the best students to continue with their education. I propose that we continue to provide them with some basic logistical

support. The head of the local scholarship committee, Prof Gildo Ramos now has a telephone in his house and so communication regarding the status of students and the selection of new students has improved dramatically. If Juan Angel is able to obtain employment in Las Marias or within the Rio Platano region, he has committed to playing a significant role in selecting and mentoring young scholars.

Payment system for scholarships

Our streamlined payment system worked flawlessly again this year. Payments are now directly deposited from MOPAWI into Banco Atlantida accounts that the students have established. For those living in the Biosphere reserve, payments are made through the MOPAWI accounting system.

Unfortunately, MOPAWI is now down to a skeleton staff of one person working in the Biosphere Reserve. Without an administrator in the office to process payments to students, Carlos Molinero, the sole employee in the zone, has agreed to take on this responsibility. If anyone knows of potential funding options to help support MOPAWI's operations in the Rio Platano or organizations who might like to partner with them please pass this information on. Administrative costs make up 7 percent of our existing budget.

Scholarship Levels

The scholarship amounts for the middle (L. 800) and high school students (L. 2000) appear to be meeting the basic needs of students.

Educational Support for Schools and Teachers

We were unable to fund a part time environmental education position with MOPAWI last year due to the cost (\$2400-2800). However Carlos Molinero and Prof. Gildo Ramos have proposed a program of small grants to schools to support environmental education activities. The cost of this program would be approximately \$500. We had offered this support last year but Carlos and Gildo were unable to implement this program. Carlos and Gildo will solicit brief proposals from teachers in the area with the max award of \$100. Teachers will provide a brief report on how the funds where spent and the program outcomes.

Website

We are not still not attracting many donations through our web site. Ideas?

3) 2009 Plans

Coordination with MOPAWI Program for work directly in the schools.

Although we approved \$500 to support a program with teachers in the reserve, we was unable to finalize a system for awarding these funds and implement the program. Carlos Molinero, director of MOPAWI's Biosphere Reserve Program, and Prof. Gildo Ramos are planning on getting this up and running for the next school year. Once Juan Angel is placed in a school we envision him taking a leadership role in this activity

Scholarship Support

- 1 Middle School Scholarships (new student from Banaka)
- 4 High School scholarships (3 continuing and one new student from Las Marias)

4) Financial Update:

ECOS Rio Platano

FY

10/01/08-9/30/09

Balance Forward	\$	2,537.74
Expenses	\$	3,000.00
Revenue	\$	3,710.00
Balance	\$	3,247.74

Our actual account balance available for the 2010 school year is \$3,276.26

Fundraising Goal and Strategy for 2010 school year:

Middle School scholarships	\$1,270	(one continuing and one new middle school scholarships for Banaka residents)
High school Scholarships:	\$4,400	(four full high school scholarships [\$1,100 each])
Support for teacher exams	\$ 525	(\$200 each for transportation and food)
Teacher programming	\$ 500	(small environmental projects led by teachers and facilitated by MOPAWI)
Administration	\$ 550	(local committee travel, phone)
Total 2010 Budget Goal	\$ 7,245	
Available funds	\$3,276	
Outstanding fundraising	\$3,969	

Each board member should aim for obtaining \$1,000 in financial support.

5) Fundraising Strategies:

Appeal Letters to individual donors: I have drafted a letter for existing donors that can be modified for new asks. It would be great if each board member could set a goal for cultivating at least 10 new donors. We need to get this appeal letter out ASAP if we are to meet the obligations no later than June.

Small Grant Proposals:

Any leads on where we might work on a small grant?

6) Board Appointment and Officers

Donnell resigned last year from the board due for personal reasons. She suggested Angela Martin, Drew Stoll or Lauri Boxer-Macomber as replacements. At this point I have not confirmed interest from any of these to serve on the board. Ryan also suggested Gary Dodge (RPCV) and Josh or Sally Dickinson. Gary works for the Forest Stewardship Council and was a natural resource volunteer in Honduras. Josh and Sally ran Tropical Research and Development and have very long ties to Honduran conservation. They are both now retired but they were very interested in the work of ECOS. We did not make any progress on filling her seat last year but we need to get some fresh blood on the board.