



OCIMA

Overseas and Continental Independent Mercy Association

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www.ocimaya.org

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May 1, 1926 - March 29, 2009
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Grayson P. Smith

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November 2009

Dear Friend(s) of OCIMA,

Although this has been a difficult year without Father Nick at our side, we have some very good news to share with you. As one of you said to me recently, Father Nick is still doing some moving and shaking and may even be more capable in his new job.

First, we want to welcome Grayson Smith to the OCIMA Board of Directors. Grayson was a frequent companion of Father Nick's and has traveled several times with us to Guatemala. Over the last few years, I've come to know Grayson as a dedicated, compassionate and competent person. In my discussions with Father Nick in the weeks before he died, I can tell you that Grayson definitely had the "nod".

During these discussions, Father Nick asked me, if at all possible, not to cancel the May trip to Guatemala. I've never been able to say "no" to Father Nick – perhaps you've had the same experience – and the trip in late May reassured our friends in Guatemala that we are committed to continue our aide through OCIMA. Many thanks to my travel companion, Carolyn, because without her, this trip would have been more than a bit daunting. We are planning our next trip for February. In the meantime, we have been keeping in touch with our friends in Guatemala through e-mail and by telephone.

All is good at the orphanage in Santa Elena and it is always fun to visit with the girls there. Since February of 2008, we have been looking into the medical alternatives for one of these young girls who suffers from a number of physical disabilities, including malformities of her arm and hand. Marta just had her 13th birthday in September and is a beautiful and smart young lady. But in Guatemala, as a female with disabilities, Marta will have a very difficult life after she leaves the orphanage. Through persistence and a number of "coincidences", we are thrilled to report that Marta had surgery on her hand last month in Guatemala City by a group of visiting orthopedic surgeons from New York. Although the full impact of the surgery is yet unknown, it is believed she will have almost full use of her hand and there will be a significant cosmetic improvement. These surgeons are returning to Guatemala early next year and will be looking to see if further improvements can be achieved for her arm. Special thanks to those of you who helped make this possible. Although Father Nick may be doing some "moving and shaking", you're the agents through whom he worked, and without you, this may not have happened. This illustrates how each one of us can make a real difference in this world.

In last year's news letter, Father Nick spoke of the dire conditions in Guatemala due to the worldwide economic meltdown. We committed to send two shipments of food this past year and our second shipment arrived earlier this month. Over 200,000 meals this year! This continues to be a critical need, further exacerbated by climate changes as a result of El Niño last June. Low rainfall in some areas has caused water shortages for drinking and irrigation. In other areas, there is increased precipitation which has damaged crops. Combined with rising fuel prices, this is causing a severe food crisis for the poorest communities who cannot afford to buy nutritious food.

We discovered this past May that many of the charitable organizations working in Guatemala stop providing assistance after a child has reached the age of six. We visited four homes and met some of the older children and young adults who need special medical attention. These young people and their families would have no place to turn without our presence through the Nutritional Center. Part of our support is directed to these older children while still maintaining other programs in hygiene and nutrition, especially for pregnant women. The Nutritional Center would not be able to sustain these programs without our support.

Our clinic continues to serve the poorest of the community and is attended by three full-time doctors in addition to visiting specialists. We also help supply two pharmacies (in Morales and Santa Elena) with medicines. Our daycare center in Santa Elena cares for close to 60 children allowing single parents to better support their families. We continue to help the school in Santa Rosa, where young women and men from very poor families are able to graduate with certificates in teaching, computer science, and tourism. Education is key in creating any kind of permanent change in Guatemala.

Our emphasis has been primarily in Guatemala, but we continue to help the poor peoples' bank and the new hospital in Ecuador.

I want to thank all of you for your continued support. At the last Board meeting Father Nick attended, he challenged each of us to get one more person interested and contributing to OCIMA. We ask any of you who believe in OCIMA and is in a position to do so to make a generous commitment to ensure continuity of Father Nick's works. And perhaps you'll also take on Father Nick's challenge. I would be happy to meet and speak with anyone who is interested in hearing more about what we're doing, including the additional projects we'd like to initiate (e.g., nursing school annex to the clinic).

From all of us at OCIMA to all of you, we extend our best wishes for the coming holidays and holy days that you may be enjoying and celebrating. Peace to all of you, and I wish you health and happiness in the coming year.

Maria Curreri
OCIMA President

FINANCIAL REPORT — 2008

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Donations in 2008:	\$ 224,011
Distribution from Endowment Fund:	9,000
Carryover from 2007:	1,834

TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE:	<u>\$ 234,845</u>
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PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:

1. GSFEPP (Ecuador) – Cooperatives, campesino bank & hospital	\$ 15,000
2. School in Chapas, Santa Rosa	41,000
3. Nutritional Center in Morales	43,000
4. Clinic, Orphanage and Day Care Center in Santa Elena	110,000
5. Purchase and packing of specially formulated food for the malnourished	25,000

TOTAL PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:	\$ 234,000
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EXPENSES:¹

\$ 612

TOTAL EXPENSES & DISBURSEMENTS:	\$ 234,612
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<u>CARRYFORWARD TO 2009:</u>	\$ 233
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¹ Expense ratio (i.e., expenses as a percent of total funds available for 2008) is 0.26%.