



COPA news

Building caring Christian communities



The children of Bombita and La Hoya join with the staff, volunteers and committee members in sending you best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

In this issue of COPA news you can read about different ways of raising money for the continuing work of COPA in the Dominican Republic and one of them won't cost you a penny! Also read about the committee in the UK, an award winning mum, news of activities in the schools and the celebrations held to mark the 20th Anniversary of the opening of the COPA school in La Hoya.



The children have been busy making Christmas cards for their sponsors and have also had their photographs taken this term. We hope the photos will be available in time to be posted with this Newsletter but if not they will be sent to you with the next Newsletter in the spring.

Visit the COPA website: www.copa.org.uk

December 2012

The COPA UK committee

The AGM of COPA UK was held in October at Cricklade and the work of COPA over the last year was reported. The committee for the forthcoming year was also elected and we welcome three new members, Marilyn Chunn, Pam Haslam and Tony Veits, who had all travelled to the DR as members of the workgroup earlier this year. We thank the retiring members, Rachel Palmer and Verity Threlfell for the work they have done for COPA in the past. At the AGM interesting and varied presentations were given by the two workgroups who had visited the DR earlier this year showing the conditions in the two villages and the work that had been completed.



The committee members continue to work hard in the interests of the young people attending the COPA schools. Maintaining sponsorship records and communicating with individual sponsors, production and distribution of the regular Newsletter, staffing matters relating to the volunteers in the DR, budgeting, accounting, currency and banking matters, developing and maintaining data bases, monitoring and advising on the work in the schools, regular 'skype' conversations with COPA US and the Project Director in the DR, promoting the work of COPA—just some of the things the committee is responsible for. Successful talks/presentations in the past few months have been given at: Tibberton WI, Gloucestershire, Swindon Central Church – Tuesday Fellowship, Cricklade United Church – talk about the Work Group and update on the effects of the Tropical Storm Isaac, Seend, Wiltshire and Rickmansworth. If you would like to arrange a talk for your church, WI or any other groups please contact Geoff Haslam at geoff@gandphaslam.plus.com



Sadly, it is still very unreliable to send presents to the children in La Hoya and Bombita although Christmas cards, which the children treasure, do seem to arrive. Because of this, we would like to suggest that sending a donation to our Christmas Fund is still the easiest and safest way to give the children a treat this Christmas. If you would like to make a contribution, please could you send your gift to the treasurer of COPA UK, David Rush or the treasurer of the Guernsey branch, Peter Keeling. Both their addresses appear on the back page of this newsletter.

At the last meeting of the committee it was decided we would like the children in the schools to have a copy of the photograph which has been taken to send to the sponsors. The parents rarely have pictures of their children and it was thought that this would be a good way of using any spare money from the Christmas Fund and anything left after that would be used to support extra-curricular activities for the children.

**Do you shop online?
Then make sure you shop
via easyfundraising.**

**Raise money for COPA
for free!**

By shopping via easyfundraising you will be raising free donations for COPA. Just go to <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/COPA> register, and then search for your desired vendors. You'll then use their websites as usual, but be raising money for COPA. It costs you only a few moments more, nothing else. Hundreds of retailers like Argos and Amazon donate money to supporters of good causes who shop on line through this site and we could be one of them! As well as the donation itself you can Gift Aid it and donate even more money to COPA.

Plus, they're giving away £5,000 to good causes this Christmas!

Not only will COPA receive donations for every purchase you make via easyfundraising, they'll also get one entry, for every purchase you make before midnight 17th December, to win a share of £5,000! Find out more from the website www.easyfundraising.org.uk/

If you're shopping online this Christmas, think easyfundraising!

Give the best gift you can, shop via easyfundraising, and spread the Christmas cheer to COPA.

Tell all your friends, there really is no catch, its money for nothing.

Moises is settling in nicely in his role as School Director in Bombita. He has shown great initiative and passion for the work. He is taking advantage of the relationships he has built with the school staff over the years, as he has worked up from librarian, to classroom assistant, to teacher, to Director. The staff accept him as a leader and they support him in his role. He has identified some areas of weakness among the teachers, and has begun to plan workshops and other ways to address those weaknesses. He has also addressed other issues pertaining to the school, staff, and the students. He has created monthly agendas and goals for the school, which he intends to achieve each month before moving on to the next set of goals.

Take a look at day to day news from COPA in La Hoya and Bombita

<http://copa365.blogspot.com>

Trek to Machu Picchu

Fundraising can be a tough challenge for any charity, and particularly in the present economic climate. For many years I have wanted to trek the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in aid of a charity, and I wish to raise money for COPA. It was only after signing up that I realised that the trek was graded as 'tough' and a lot of training would need to be put in before the departure on Friday 13th Sept 2013 – a lot of 13s!



The training has already begun, the picture, left, is me walking the beach from Swansea to Mumbles! The trek will take place over 6six days, which will include one day to acclimatise to the altitude, as the base of the trek starts at 2,430m above sea level. The first day of the trek will start at the Lares Hot Springs, and will follow the path to the small village of Cuncani, where a night of 'wild' camping will take place! The next day will be a 6-8 hour trek to the community of Huacahausi. We will meet the local villagers and some of the wildlife, which includes the llamas and alpacas that roam freely in the village. After another night of wild camping, we embark on an 8-9 hour trek uphill through the Ranrayoc Valley, which will take us up to the highest point of 4600m. From here we will be able to see the

snowy peak of Tirijhuay Mountain. On the fourth day, the destination of Machu Picchu will be spotted through the Sun Gate, situated 3000 steps up! The reward of a comfortable bed for the night is promised, before the very early start the next morning for the exploration of the Machu Picchu site.

Machu Picchu was built by the Inca tribe at the height of the Incan Empire around 1450AD and is thought to be an estate of the Incan Emperor, Pachacuti. The site was discovered in 1911 by an American Professor called Hiram Bingham. Most of the Incan sites in the area had previously been discovered by the Spanish who ransacked, torched and decimated the buildings. It is thought that Machu Picchu was only spared because the Spanish didn't see it. Its remote location on the mountain ridge above the Urubamba Valley, in which the Urubamba river flows, was its saving grace.

The whole site of Machu Picchu is made up of more than 150 buildings including baths and sanitation. Each of the stones are thought to be more than 50 pounds in weight and it is believed that no wheels were used, but that the stones were pushed up the steep slopes of the mountain. Despite the river that flows all around the base of the mountain, it is unsure how they managed to get the water up to the settlements, short of hauling it up the side. An ingenious and unfortunate people!

The Inca trail has become a great tourist spot, which has boosted the economy of Peru. However, the environmental implications of so many people trekking the age-old paths is wearing them out. Certain measures have been put in to place the help preserve the trail. and the government has put a restriction on the number of passes they issue per day. A new body of thinkers is advising the Peruvian government, and that may mean the trail could be closed to tourists within the 5 years or so. But it is up to the government as to which course of action they will take. Hopefully they will do what is best to preserve the countryside, and an area of natural beauty.

A view of Machu Picchu



The company with which I am going is called Charity Challenge who have been organising these types of trips for many years. All of the people who work there have done some sort of challenge themselves. I am contracted to raise £2,895 for the charity of my choice, which is COPA. I am setting up a Mydonate page, which is the new donating service by BT. It is the only one that does not charge a setting up fee or take a percentage in commission. Details of the account will be available soon, and your donations would be greatly appreciated. If anyone would like to join me in raising money in this way, please do feel to get in touch! It will be an incredible experience for me, and will also raise both money and profile for COPA.

A follow up article and photos will follow the trip, and I hope that I will be able to see some of you on fundraising events! Many thanks in advance.

Helen Samways

(Helen is a supporter of COPA and daughter of our Sponsorship Secretary, Sandra Samways)

20th Anniversary Celebrations

Amanda, one of our Education Advisors in the DR writes: In September we celebrated COPA La Hoya's 20th anniversary! We formed a committee of teachers and myself to plan the activities. Each day we opened each *tanda** with a small assembly. In each assembly we had a guest speaker and a drama depicting different time periods in La Hoya. (*see page 8 for meaning of *tanda*)

Monday we heard from Sindel and Mauricio who were students in the school before COPA arrived. They also directed a drama in which we saw some of the personalities of former teachers and students, as well as some of the poor conditions of the school.



The two boys who performed the drama depicting Domingo and Sebert. Below: a class proudly wearing the sashes which they had made.

Also, former teacher Delila made a poster for each classroom describing how the class was before and how it has changed over the years. Throughout the week students were seen reading these posters.

Tuesday we heard from Domingo who was on the commission to build a new school. We also saw a drama depicting the commission seeking out Sebert, Sebert visiting La Hoya and approving the project.

Wednesday we heard from Perez and Delila, who worked on the con-



Of the COPA school in La Hoya

struction of the school. Pupils from the first grade put on a drama in which they used jumbo lego to depict the construction of the school, and the little girls pretended to bring water to wet the concrete and the throats of the men. Also, in class the students made hats, badges, and sashes.

Thursday we heard from the meritorious students from last year's graduating class, and saw a drama showcasing the excellence of the school, the teachers, and the students today. The students all wore their hats, badges and sashes all day. It made the school very festive.

On Friday we saw a drama showing the differences between the clinic before COPA and after. Friday afternoon we had the ceremony. The children had created the decorations in art class all week, we put up a sun shade, set out chairs in front of the library. We invited all past and present teachers and staff, some key members from the community, Connie, Verona, the members of the Fundacion, and more. Also in attendance were five children from each grade 3-7, and the entire 8th grade class. Patrick opened with the welcome, Connie gave a brief history of COPA, we heard from Merquelin, Pastor Pedro, and the president of the Padres and Amigos committee.

Manuel, a member of the maintenance staff for many years, with birthday badge.



Some awards of recognition were given out to many people who had left their mark on COPA. The 8th grade put on a play that went more into detail of forming the commission to ask for a school, visiting with Sebert, and the plan to build the school. Others students put on dances, and Mauricio prepared a picture slide show that was entertaining to all. Afterwards we served cheese and salami and crackers, cake, and soda. I thought it turned out beautifully, and that it truly honoured those in the community that have worked so hard for the school we see today.



The beginning of the school year

The first day of school across the country has horrible attendance and, unfortunately, our schools are no exception. Some frisbees had been donated to La

Hoya school and these were distributed to the students that attended the first day of school as a way to show appreciation of their extra efforts. As you can see from the picture, the students in Grade 5 were delighted.



During the second week of school welcoming events were held for the new students, fun activities were held during recess, and the importance of respect amongst classmates, teachers, and staff was stressed to all. Good study habits, maintaining personal hygiene, and getting lots of sleep and a balanced diet were all discussed as important factors in education.

There was also a parade through La Hoya with all the students separated into grades, each carrying a sign announcing the class. Reception and 1st grade classes carried a sign that said "we are the future in miniature!" The picture shows one of the classes carrying their poster. The children and teachers sang all through the village and it was a great way for the kids to show off a little. Some families came out of their homes to



clap and cheer for the students. A great activity to mark the beginning of the new school year.

See this newsletter in colour on our website www.copa.org.uk

Tanda*(A school session—the children in the whole of the Dominican Republic either attend school in the morning or the afternoon. See article on page 6)

Focus on Education

Stephanie and Amanda tell us about some of the activities they have been busy organising over the last couple of months:

A teacher exchange between Bombita and La Hoya has taken place. Each teacher spent a full day in their same course in the sister school, observing and chatting with the corresponding teachers. We spread it out over a four-week period so that each day, only one or two teachers were absent from their centre. All involved said they enjoyed the experience and for most it was beneficial.

Also spread out over a few weeks was taking photographs of every student in both schools. This is really fun for us because it helps to learn their names and most are so excited to have their picture taken. The youngest kids are hilarious because they don't know how to smile on command, and the oldest suddenly get very shy when the camera is aimed at them. The process can also become confusing because many students do not know their official name! (Editor's note: we hope that the photos will be available to send out to sponsors with this Newsletter. If they do not arrive in time we will forward them with the next Newsletter due in the Spring).

Christmas Cards! A lot of work has been done to ensure that the Christmas cards arrive in the US and UK in time for them to be sent to the sponsors. Amanda and the gap year girls in La Hoya, Becky and Bethany, designed the cards and sent over the templates to Bombita. Hattie and Stephanie in Bombita then worked with the teachers and children to get each card decorated.

During the term we co-led a workshop in which we discussed the importance of setting high expectations for all students. We also gave concrete strategies that will work in any classroom to help meet these high expectations. We used dramas performed by the two of us, asked the teachers to create their own dramas showcasing specific strategies, had open discussion, and asked the teachers to reflect upon their own classrooms to think of which strategies they might most like to use or which would have most impact. Many strategies were already being used: consistently or inconsistently, intentionally or unintentionally, by many teachers. Even those that were already using some strategies were happy to put a name to what they were doing and to grow upon their practices. Our information was based on a book Stephanie has, called "Teach Like a Champion". We gave the workshop twice: once in Bombita, and once in La Hoya in which the teachers and directors from the partnership schools were also in attendance. It has been encouraging to have seen many teachers trying out some of the practices, and mostly finding success.

We have a new assemblies director, Yaraidi, who has breathed a new life into our weekly assemblies. She sings fun songs, does fun dances, has great crowd control strategies, involves more students, and just does an overall great job. The students are responding very well to her new format and the teachers are enjoying themselves more too.

Inspiring Mum



Amanda, our Education Adviser in La Hoya, was recently nominated in a global search for inspiring 'moms' by her own mother and her husband Patrick, our Project Director.

Amanda and Patrick's daughter Mary was born in December 2011 and Amanda returned to La Hoya to resume her role of Education Adviser in March of this year.

Amanda was chosen by the judges to be one of the three finalists in the category 'Making a Difference'. The votes were cast on Facebook and we were delighted to find out that Amanda won.

Her prize of \$1,000 dollars was to be donated to a charity of her choice and, of course, that charity was COPA.

Well done Amanda.

Motivating staff

Since the beginning of term a meritory staff programme has been introduced in La Hoya school to motivate our staff and to show the students that even adults are constantly pursuing growth and excellence.

There is a small mural board in the office where a picture of the merit personnel is posted along with the reason they were being awarded. Each person is recognised in the first assembly of the month. Esperanza was nominated for August for her efforts in decorating her classroom, and assisting all her co-workers because they had been to week long workshops and had not had the opportunity to decorate.

September saw Joanna and Estefani being recognised. They are the teaching assistants in Kinder and Pre-School who have been covering the long term absence of the class teacher.

In October Manuel was recognised as he was the only staff member to check on the school during the tropical storm Isaac which ripped through the area in September, he was the only staff member to help prepare the buildings for flooding, and kept in consist contact with Patrick about the state of the water rising. He was especially shy in receiving this recognition as he is incredibly humble, and truly loves the COPA school. (Manuel's picture appears on page 7 of this newsletter.)

Basketball Camp



A basketball camp was held recently, hosted by a group of three people from the United States. As former university basketball players (and one who played at the international level), they had plenty of knowledge and skills to offer the youth of both La Hoya and Bombita.

Most of the youth that play sports in Bombita and La Hoya, even on organized teams and leagues, don't have any knowledge of the basics or fundamentals of the games they play, including teamwork, fair play and sportsmanship, so these became the focus points of the camp.

Two days were spent in La Hoya, two days in Bombita and a tournament was held on the 5th day in La Hoya. On the day of the tournament, the teams were mixed (as opposed to a La Hoya vs. Bombita tournament, which often turns into fights!) to put to use the teachings of teamwork.



The group also brought jerseys, shorts, basketballs, basketball nets, volleyballs, volleyball nets, and 82 pairs of shoes to be distributed among the participants and the needy of the two communities.

The camp was a great success, and they hope to return early next summer.

Who needs a ladder? Fixing the net the Dominican way.

Contact names and addresses for COPA UK:

Treasurer:

Mr David Rush
Flat 98, Block B,
The Paragon,
Boston Park Road,
BRENTFORD,
Middlesex, TW8 9RP

Sponsorship Secretary for both La Hoya and Bombita:

Mrs Sandra Samways
57 Pauls Croft
CRICKLADE
Wiltshire
SN6 6AJ

Treasurer: COPA Guernsey

Mr Peter Keeling
Les Poplairs
Rue du Felconte
ST SAVIOURS
Guernsey
GY7 9QD

Guernsey Sponsorship Secretary:

Mrs Margaret Keeling
Les Poplairs
Rue du Felconte
ST SAVIOURS
Guernsey
GY7 9QD

Registered Charity No. 1027117

An apology

Unfortunately, when the September newsletter was posted a small batch of envelopes slipped through the net and were sent out without postage stamps. We apologise to those sponsors who either did not receive their newsletter or had to pay extra postage.



Lining up to take part in the sack race during sports day

Sponsorship Letters and Cards



The address for your letters and cards is:

***Child's name and sponsorship number
Escuela de COPA (Bombita or La Hoya)
Apartado 42
BARAHONA
Dominican Republic***

Please could you write your name and address on the reverse of the envelope. This will help the volunteers when they are delivering the letters and cards to the children.