

Where in the World are we?



photo by Christine Crahan

In Los Niños Territory!

Contrary to popular belief, there is more to the border region than Mexican food and Mariachis! Just ask these participants of this year's Bi-Cultural Event. Pictured here, the group experienced first hand the harvesting of honey and beeswax from Proyecto de Abejas, a women's beehive cooperative in Mexicali that has

received small loans and technical support from Los Niños.

This year the group of women expects to harvest nearly 2,200 liters of honey that they sell locally in concert with nutrition education classes. Income from micro-enterprises like Proyecto de Abejas (Bee Project) equal better family nutrition and much needed supplemental income. This income is a primary element in affording children the opportunity to continue and ultimately complete their education.

This trip wasn't all about business and the bees however. Bi-Cultural Event participants also tasted a sampling of cultural and educational activities. These included a visit to L.A. Cetto Winery, a compelling presentation on the history and architecture of the region, mouth-watering delicacies prepared by our community outreach women, and even a trip to the beach!

Call Los Niños to book your space for the 2005 Bi-Cultural Event!

Bee Project Experience

as told by Susan Elder, Endesha Foundation

I put on a pair of someone else's dirty socks to make sure no flesh was exposed around my ankles. David helped me step into the suit, and helped me connect the mesh facemask to the jumpsuit, and snapped the coverings over the zippers.

I sat with my new friends Magdalena and Porfiria on the opened back gate of the old pick-up that crawled over the remaining part of the field to the hives. Pastel boxes were stacked up under the huge shade tree, each a treasure chest of sweet potential for these Mexican women struggling to gain self-respect and confidence, and maybe even a few pesos, with their new endeavor.

Gabriel manned the bottle with the built-in bellows, creating smoke to calm the bees. He whooshed the smoker at the bottom of the box, like an exterminator going under the kitchen cabinets. He pried off the top of the crate, exposing nine individual panels. Pulling out one at a time, the wood frames were swarms of bees that took on a liquid appearance, dripping over the sides like thick, moving masses of molasses over an air conditioning filter.

Whoosh whoosh. More smoke. Buzzing is the backdrop to chatter in Spanish. Constant buzzing, waves

of buzzing... I understand about every thirtieth word of the chatter. Bees are flying around my face, and landing on my mesh mask. Show no fear, they said. Don't swat at them, and whatever you do ... do not run.

I can't decide if we look like space walking astronauts in our suits, or nuclear scientists carrying on top-secret experiments. Or maybe we're in an old Woody Allen movie. All I know is that Porfiria, before she donned the white jumpsuit with the black mesh facemask, appeared to be barely four feet tall, seventy years old, and had one lone tooth in her smile. Now looking at her, and all of us, we look either otherworldly, or ridiculous. Or maybe like brilliant scientists extending the human race with a daring experiment. I can't decide which.

Magdalena uses a brush to knock off the dripping masses of bees, and Porfiria takes the full panels of honeycomb to the empty boxes on the truck-bed. Gabriel explains the process to the women from the neighboring village who want to learn how to use the swarms that they capture in an old can, and the proud owners of the turquoise and pink and yellow boxes assure them that, yes, anything is possible if you believe in yourself.

LOS NIÑOS

LOS NIÑOS

1. YOUR SUPPORT

In 1974 Los Niños started with your support and participation. Children are benefited every step of the way whether through nutrition and ecology classes, or through small loans and increased education for their mothers that provides the path to more family income. Engaged communities with healthy children who stay in school, are the foundation of a strong civil society.

The Bee Project story tells how the programs of Los Niños integrate in support of community initiatives that come from the people.

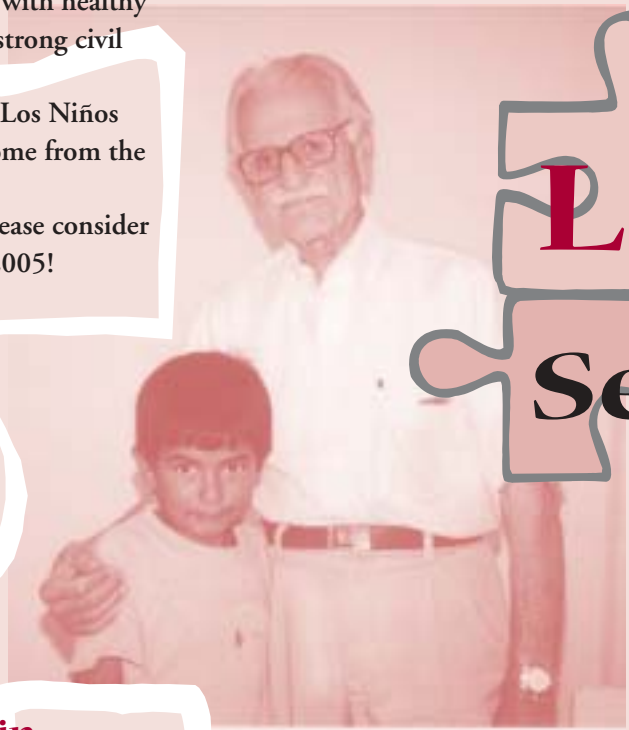
We need your help to continue and do more. Please consider a generous gift and consider a visit to Los Niños in 2005!

2. Family Health & Food Security

This program reaches over 5,000 families in the areas of health, nutrition, gardening and environmental education in low-income communities.

The women of the Bee Project (outreach workers) of Los Niños. Through their work on nutrition and ecology in their own communities, they developed recipes and looked for local products. They discovered the health advantages of honey as a sugar substitute, especially to benefit children in schools where they teach.

Los Niños Self-Reliance



6. Community Leadership Education Program

Los Niños collaborates in this program with Ibero-American University, Tijuana and Simon Fraser University, Vancouver Canada. Each participant is required to identify, research, plan, seek resources, implement and evaluate a community project. All are encouraged upon graduation to share their skills and continue to extend themselves as agents of change in their communities.

The outreach workers of Los Niños that form the Bee Project are focused on increasing their skills while sharing what they are learning with other members of the community. Members of the group alternate to attend national conferences on beekeeping and then extend their knowledge to others in the community. Currently a very poor rural community near Mexicali has three women interested to learn more about the income possibility of bee keeping.

5. Volunteerism through Community Service

Los Niños VolunTours™ works with local groups to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities that enhance cross-cultural understanding, provide complementary resources, and increase income to residents.

The Los Niños VolunTours™ was expanding with more community members to participate. It was also learned that honey is a natural life, given the conditions of health and safety. Hence, the teambuilding project was born! In March 2004 the Community Trainers CHART conducted a training session on hives. They learned about the benefits of honey, women purchased honey, and the project is being 20 additional hives for



Health and Education Program

Children and mothers providing
environmental messages in over 55

Cooperative are Promotoras
They teach community classes
own communities. As they
low-cost alternatives for fami-
lities. Advantages of using honey as a
part of the diets of children in the



Los Niños

Finance



through VolunTours™
works with corporations and academic
teambuilding and volunteering experi-
ences to promote volunteer-
resources to community-based initiatives

A team learned that the Bee Project
community residents interested to par-
ticipate that the hives have a relatively short
season in the desert area of Mexicali.
The project of Bees without Borders was
a teambuilding event to build bee-
keeping project from the community
and candles with the result
of the project!

LOS Niños

3. Family Financial Security through Micro Loans Program

*This program offers small loans to start up in-home businesses.
Residents are able to have supplemental income while caring for their
children.*

The Bee Project secured a loan from Los Niños to purchase a centrifugal extraction machine. This allows the group to manage larger quantities and assure the purity of the honey. The loan was paid back in full earlier than the terms of the loan agreement.

4. Volunteerism through Service Learning Program

*The Service Learning program hosts nearly 600 students each
year from over 30 universities and high schools. Participants work
with Mexican residents in community-driven projects.*

As the Bee Project expanded the women banded together to build an extraction facility. They secured materials and constructed a simple room large enough to house their equipment and process the harvest. The land is essentially a dirt plot. The Los Niños Service Learning team visited the site and determined to support the project with service hours and materials provided by John Carroll University. Twenty students, some bags of cement and several hours in the hot sun provided a new patio for the project, lots of fun and cultural exchange for the visiting students.

photos by Marion McLaughlin



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LOS Niños



Executive Director, Elisa Sabatini

In an election year it is all about issues.....at Los Niños we are about one issue; improving the quality of life for children and their families in the border region.

When people can make a reasonable living and educate their children they develop a commitment to their community. When children are educated and

have opportunities they do not seek employment elsewhere, preferring to stay near family and community. The issues of the border region are many; inadequate infrastructure, environmental concerns, migration to the north, economic complexities of two countries so near and yet so different.....AND there are sparks of change.

Sofia from Mexicali received a loan from Los Niños to purchase a sewing machine. She formerly worked six days a week in a factory. Now doing tailoring from her home she earns as much only working mornings. On a recent visit she shared, "we weren't sure how we would pay our bills, then I sewed two school uniforms and had enough for the utility bill and my daughter's school fees". Her twelve-year-old daughter chimed in saying "and I'm glad she works from home".

This dedication to developing human potential has been the Los Niños commitment for 30 years. This commitment is demonstrated by the many years of service from staff and board. This annual report and newsletter is in honor of those dedicated individuals.

Los Niños will continue to steward the resources that it receives to improve the quality of life in the border region. We ask for your support and we look forward to having you visit! Contact me directly at elisa@losninosinternational.org.

All the best,

Elisa

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