

Generosity from Diverse Generations



MAVIS CAIN – Ambassador to Los Ninos celebrates 84 years

Mavis Cain is again on the go, this time moving to northern California to be closer to her children.

Mavis Mahan was born in San Francisco in 1922 to parents of Irish descent. She met Ace Cain on a ski trip. They married and moved to Southern California in 1951. The Cains raised seven children. They involved themselves in many issues in their community, nationally and abroad. They supported the settlement of Vietnamese families in California, they assisted with the start up of a Habitat for Humanity chapter in their community and they reached out for many years as board members of Los Ninos.

Beginning in 1978, Mavis and Ace responded to the plight of neighbors along the Mexican border living in conditions of poverty by getting involved. They have supported Los Ninos over the years to develop programs of nutrition and ecology, education and micro credit. For twenty years Mavis participated in a fundraiser walk for Los Ninos from Santa Barbara (later from Ventura) to Tijuana.

Board chairperson, William Bramley, commented that Mavis and Ace serve as an excellent example to younger people about how

effective they can be in the nonprofit sector, especially when you can give time, treasure and talent in your later years of life to those less fortunate. Los Ninos is eternally grateful to Mavis for her numerous contributions over the past three decades, especially the extraordinary time she has invested in the organization's mission of advancing the interests of children and families in Mexico.

SHIVANI PARMAR – Celebrates 5 years!

Nearly a decade ago Beejal and Yogi Parmar came to the United States from England. Their family home is Tanzania and they are of East Indian background. Arriving in San Diego, they immediately became involved in setting up business, connecting with community and creating this as their home.

Parents of two girls, Shivani and Kushani, they have encouraged their children to think of others and be open and willing to support other children. Last year Shivani told her parents that she didn't want any birthday presents and, instead, she wanted people to help other children who have less opportunity than she has been given. So at her 5th birthday parties guests were encouraged to provide funding in support of Los Ninos

Shivani raised \$500+ for her kindness of thinking about other children. Soon we hope to arrange a trip for Shivani and her family to visit the programs that she benefited here in the border region.



LOS NINOS

Los Niños and Micro-Credit: Sustainable Economic Development on the Border

Excerpt from: "Los Niños and Micro-Credit:
Small Loans for Big Dreams"

By Los Niños volunteer Elizabeth Burpee

Single mother Maria de Jesus Rodriguez was struck with breast cancer in 1999. The disease robbed her of her governmental secretary position and threatened to push her into increasing debt. Thanks to the Los Niños micro-credit program, however, Maria began receiving small loans which she in turn invested in her weekend



Maria with one of her handmade traditional dresses.

hobby of costume making. With a larger and more varied inventory of costumes bought with this loan money, Maria was able to turn her past-time into her principal source of income. With the support of Los Niños and her own talents, Maria's income has risen exponentially and she glows with pride. She is, however, only one of the many Los Niños success stories and is an example of what it means to be a strong and self-sufficient woman here in the border region.

Including areas such as the U.S.-Mexico border, 70% of the 1.3 billion people presently living in dire poverty world-wide are women (PBS). Due to their lack of personal capital, banks refuse to loan money to many of these women, making it nearly impossible for them to invest in business ventures and supplement their measly incomes. Pained by statistics like this, Los Niños began experimenting with micro-credit lending in the early-

1990s as a way to augment its poverty eradication efforts. In the current Los Niños system, groups of 5-10 women are formed. Each woman receives her individual loan, yet is accountable to the entire group if she defaults on paying it back. The group must thus work together and encourage its individual members to succeed. Using four month loan cycles, loans range between \$250 and \$500 with a fixed 15% interest rate.

While entrusted with the loans, the group is supervised and nurtured from both the inside and out so as to reach its maximum potential. Tere Hernandez, the Los Niños micro-credit co-coordinator, attends the bi-weekly group meetings, collects the money, and gives workshops on savings and accounting. Additionally, each group democratically elects a president, secretary, and treasurer. On a more personal front, participation in the program provides a forum for friendship and self-realization. These friendships are unique in the fact that they combine financial trust with personal connections. Watching their businesses grow and prosper as a result of their own hard work and new-found professional skills also builds participants' self-esteem immensely. Achievement further translates into peace of mind here on the border when the added source of income makes U.S.-priced groceries suddenly more affordable.

The combination of this individual personal growth as well as an efficiently run system is the key to the program's success. From its modern inception in 2004 to the present day, Los Niños has financed 146 loans and takes pride in its 100% payback success rate. With new systems and past successes in mind, it is Los Niños's dream to expand its micro-credit program to hundreds more women in both Tijuana and Mexicali. Many of these participants are already waiting to form micro-credit groups and begin on the path to economic security and supplementation. As seen through its successful design and participant testimonials, however, the only thing keeping this dream from becoming a reality is access to additional capital.

**To read the full version of this article complete with pictures, visit <http://www.losninosintl.org> and click on the Fall 2006 newsletter link.*



The Incomplete Story of a Promotora: Her Self-Discovery, Trials, and Successes

*Excerpt from: "The Incomplete Story of a Promotora:
Her Self-Discovery, Trials, and Successes"
By Los Niños volunteer Elizabeth Burpee*

Starting some 20 years ago, Los Niños staff-members began educating local women on nutrition and ecology. Women born of this endeavor became educators themselves — "promotoras comunitarias" (community promoters) — and started to teach both adult and kids nutrition and ecology classes throughout surrounding



Brigida teaching a class

communities. Presently, the group of 41 Los Niños promotoras is comprised of stay-at-home mothers, business owners, entrepreneurs, single mothers, grandmothers, factory workers, and women with no more than an elementary school education. Annually the promotoras offer classes in nutrition and ecology to 3000 children and 2000 mothers.

In 2000, Los Niños, in conjunction with Simon Fraser University of Vancouver and the Ibero-Americana University of Tijuana, designed a two-year training and skill development program for this eclectic mix of promotoras as well as those from other Tijuana organizations. When finished with the program (which included a barrage of classes from sociology to business), each promotora receives government certified credentials in community development. As many had never before finished elementary or middle school, this is an immense achievement. These credentials, albeit immensely important in the realms of employment and social

respect, is in no way a demonstration of the magnitude in which many of these promotoras changed personally. Promotora Brigida of Mexicali, for example, was involved in an abusive marriage and was very timid. Having earned her degree, she has since divorced her husband and works as a program coordinator in the Mexicali office in addition to giving nutri-ecology classes. Her passion is sharing her new honed knowledge with other women around her.

While promotoras like Brigida love educating and encouraging the personal growth of their participants, they also confront many impeding problems. Be it thieves stealing class cooking materials, the poor public transportation system, or an unsupportive husband, the Los Niños promotoras have seen it all. "Así es la vida de una promotora," "This is the life of a promotora" is commonly muttered from the corners of their mouths and followed by a smile. Though no more than a phrase, this acknowledgement and acceptance of difficulties is a testament to the amazing tenacity of every one of these special women. It is precisely this tenacity and the pride of their own personal growth that propels these women to help others make a better life for themselves. Little by little, neighborhoods in Tijuana and Mexicali are changing for the better as little by little, women realize what power and luminosity they have had all along.



Children in the nutrition/ecology class

**To read the full version of this article complete with pictures, visit <http://www.losninosintl.org> and click on the Fall 2006 newsletter link.*



287 G Street
Chula Vista, CA 91910
(619) 426-9110

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
MAILED FROM
ZIP CODE 43452
PERMIT 315

LOS NiÑOS



Executive Director, Elisa Sabatini

There is never enough space to share in detail all that is happening at Los Niños! This November we will celebrate with a tri-national Symposium the graduations of two classes of promotoras (outreach workers) from the Community Leadership Development course. This two-year course was launched in partnership with the Ibero-Americana University of Tijuana and Simon Fraser University of Vancouver, Canada. The 122 graduates are securing jobs, going on to college and developing relevant community projects that create better neighborhoods, address health issues, keep children off the streets, and address environmental concerns. The financial contribution from Canada supported us to create the curriculum and outreach, we now are seeking support to continue this important training and human development program.

Our Volunteer programs run throughout the year. Currently 600 students from high schools and universities across the United States participate annually. We have now added alumni and corporate groups to our visiting volunteer programs through VolunTours™. Contact us to schedule a visit and see how you can make a difference, learn and enjoy this wonderful region of the US/Mexico border!

Please check out our website at www.losninosintl.org and enter your contact information so that we can send you future newsletters online. Do stay in touch!

All the best,

Elisa

Board of Directors

William Bramley III, President
San Diego, CA

William McLaughlin, Vice President
Buffalo, NY

Walter Ludlow, Chief Financial Officer
San Diego, CA

Mayor Tom Brown
Port Clinton, OH

Joan Bryden
Pompano Beach, FL

Fred Clark
La Jolla, CA

Dr. Phillip L. Hadley
Lynchburg, VA

Jeanette Leehr
Minneapolis, MN

Susan Pinza
Bakersfield, CA

Juan Rangel
Chicago, IL

Elena Rauen
Santa Cruz, CA

Dr. Peter Skerry
Boston, MA

Circunvalacion #71
Fracc Los Alamos
Tijuana, Baja California
Mexico

Calle 1 de mayo 170
Col. Carbajal
Mexicali, Baja California
Mexico

LOS NiÑOS

Staff

Executive Director
Elisa Sabatini

Deputy Director
Philippe Gagne

Office Administrator
Raquel Palma

**Family Health and Food
Security Program**

Director, Alonzo Lucero

**Family Financial Security/
MicroLoans Program**

Field Director, Teresa Franco

**Community Leadership
Education Program**

Director, Rigoberto Reyes

Volunteerism Programs

VolunTours™ Consulting Director,
David Clemmons
Service Learning Coordinator,
Gilberto Martinez

Ambassadors

Ralph Broetje
Mavis Cain
Joe Gotkowitz
Don & Virginia Kreuzberger
David Mooney
Edward James Olmos