

Trip Report
Sept 5-10, 2014
Anne and Randy Ruch

"Maraton"

The 4K race of course exceeded all expectations. Over 1000 people participated. The majority were young people but there was even a group of about 8 runners who came from Coban. Almost everyone stayed after the race for several hours for all of the events!

At 8PM the night before, we went to the amphitheatre where the end of the race was going to be and it was total chaos! There had been an "Independence Day" event there that day and the place with filled with empty bottle, trash, paper plates and millions of little pieces of paper that the children had been instructed to throw in the air as celebration!

Thank God that Orfe had a large team of eager of helpers who stayed late into the night getting the whole place cleaned up.

Orfe truly did an incredible amount of work for this. She solicited numerous donors who really funded the majority of the race. She had thousands of bottles of water and at the end, there were bananas and soup! Soup was provided by "LakyMen" which is an instant soup company. She had numerous large banners designed that were hung throughout San Benito. She had appeared on the radio at least twice a week over the last several weeks.

Randy and I wondered how everyone was going to know where to run but with the van in the lead, there were no problems. Walkers followed the runners. Orfe's group had made dozens of signs about cervical cancer prevention that the women carried. There was of course music at the start and finish and then the "LakyMen" served as DJ's at the end.

The winners of the race received fairly sizable prizes - from 100Q to Q700 and the prizes went to the top 7 male and female runners. I even won Q100!! (I guess that tells you that the competition wasn't too tough!). Orfe also had beautiful trophies made. Most of the top runners were from the group from Coban. They seemed delighted and said they would bring more with them next year.

Orfe gave a wonderful speech and she even became tearful as she described the experiences she has had with women dying from cervical cancer. I gave a talk about Flori and about how we needed everyone to stand up and demand that they receive quality cervical cancer prevention. Then Flori's brother, sister, mom, dad and her 2 children got up on the stage. They were presented with flowers and her mom, dad and brother got up to speak. Little William was tearful.

There was a local radio station there and they interviewed both myself and Orfe. It aired on the following day.

The President of Banrural was there. They have an insurance company where people pay 30Q a month and this entitles them to treatment for cervical dysplasia and cancer. He was very excited about our program and wants to meet to see how we can collaborate.

The only down-side to the event were the "Laky-Men". I've never actually been to an event with "entertainers" like this so it's a bit hard to describe but basically they are kind of DJ's but their real purpose is to advertise their soup! So they had girls and guys get up and act out various scenarios where the woman is preparing soup and trying to get "coochy-coochy" with her man. So they had the girls and guys making all these provocative moves and dance moves with a pole on the stage! I won't get any more elaborated. You know what I mean! Because they had financed a lot of the event, it was impossible to get them to stop and it went on for too long and really gave the wrong message but oh well, we learned and they won't be coming back next year!

The other glitch was that the night before the event, Orfe and Ismael realized that the T-shirts were advertising some company that they knew nothing about. It turned out that the "rich" woman who had donated money for the T-shirts was actually poor and she would never reveal how she got the money to do the shirts. When they arrived, there was a big advertisement for a company names "Huellas" on the back. Ismael and Orfe were afraid that it was some political group or something that we shouldn't be associated with but it was too late to do much about it. Randy and I did a bit or research and it looks like it's a company that makes a product from a fruit tree called "guacabana" that they say cures cervical cancer (among other cancers). They say that in 5 minutes your cancer is cured and you don't have to suffer the agony of surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy!! Of course, it was bad that we had our name linked with them but I think it was a minor glitch when you think of all that could have gone wrong.

Even the weather was reasonable. Although other mornings were incredibly sunny and hot, that morning was overcast and relatively cooler although still humid.

Lucky and Tita flew up with Randy and I on the TACA flight the night before. It was really so kind of them to go all the way. They stayed until the next night - Randy and I had a chance to spend a few hours with them after the race talking about the clinic, about Guatemala in general and issues regarding politics there and health care.

Medical

On Sunday morning I worked at a "clinic" that we set up in the Maya Mall! I think that Orfe was hoping there would be more women there but we saw about 18 which was fine. The movie theatre was next door so we got to do paps on all the uniformed ladies who worked there!

Randy left on Monday morning and then I worked at the clinic in Santa Ana. There were about 10 women from the last trip who had high grade dysplasia or Carcinoma in Situ and they all came for treatment which included cryo and LEEP. There were no problems with the equipment thank God. Several women came long distances including La Libertad, Sayaxche and Naranjo Frontera.

We visited the woman with the foot ulcer. That's a complicated story. She appears quite ill in general - very pale and she has obviously lost a lot of weight. Turns out

that she is actually not diabetic. She has 14 children and no husband and really lives in an awful place. The ulcer that she had has cleared up quite a bit with Carmen and Mayra cleaning it and with antibiotics. But now a whole new one is starting. She also has several scars on that foot from previous similar ulcers over the years. I have no idea what she has - more testimony that I need to attend a tropical medicine course!

I got to spend a lot of time with the children which was way more fun than doing paps! I did the math exams on about half of the children. The results were mixed and I'll meet with Roxanne and Lisa about that when I get back. The more I found out about the lives of these children, the more I realized that it is amazing that they can read or write at all. Most are really from the poorest homes. I can tell you that their relationship with Orfe, Mayra and Carmen has truly changed their lives and I believe will change their futures forever. That little clinic is a place of security, hope and love for them. I don't know if we'll ever be able to show big results academically but I can assure you that those relationships will make those children have far, far different outcomes for their future. I had them all write a little story about their dreams and goals for their lives. Listening to Orfe tell me about their lives, their little stories were so poignant and would break your heart.

Santos Home

The foundation is laid and progress is underway - should be complete by my next visit in October. There was some delay in finding the right land with the right access at the right price but now all is well. "Mom" is so very happy - her pila is installed and she has already planted some fruit trees and some pretty flowers! Her daughter can still get to the clinic school program. Cost with land will be around \$13,000. Ismael plans to help her with a hortiliza and a fish farm. Ismael and Orfe have asked the municipality if they will help with putting in some "fill" so that it will be easier to put in a ramp for the wheelchairs.

Clinic

Reviewed all the plans with Ismael. He wondered if the price that Fito quoted could possibly be for all the buildings since it seemed so very high. I don't think so but I'll check again.

Ismael spoke with some men who have worked with him in the past and he seems confident that he can get it done at a fraction of the cost. We're waiting for the corrections from Tim that we talked about at our last Board meeting.

Tita suggested that we consider a Canadian company in Guatemala City that does "pre-fab" structures. She called them for us and they spoke with Ismael but he was fairly skeptical - concern about quality and about whether the wood structures would be too hot.

Seems reasonable to think that construction should be underway fairly soon.

Staff

There don't seem to be any staff issues! Orfe, Ismael, Carmen, Hanssel and Mayra seem to work really well together. Ismael says that Carmen could be a little more

motivated but overall, she does anything asked and Mayra said she would guide Carmen a little more.

Gardens

Didn't get a chance to visit any but sounds like all is going well.

Upcoming Shipment

Ismael does not have the same access to people at the Alianza that he had before so he thinks we should see what it would take to send the shipment through Rotary which I will look into. If it's a problem, he thinks he can still do it.

The container is almost full. We're also going to add electrical supplies from Ed Matus and Randy is going to get a rototiller and weedwacker to send - Ismael and Hanssel were delighted!

If we are sending too much food, Ismael has other groups that he knows could use it in the Peten. I continue to be amazed that every time we go into the poorest of homes they tell me that it is the KAH food that is keeping them all alive. There will be 500 boxes going down on this container. We also talked about providing a KAH meal to the students in the after-school program. Many of them are hungry when they get there and this may be there only real meal.