

St. Anthony's Alliance

Celebrating 14 years of serving the global community.

www.stanthonysalliance.com

St. Anthony's Alliance



For the health of an ailing world.

From the Founder: Jim Tryon, M.D.

December 2006



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- Fighting TB in Nigeria.
- Home in Ecuador helps poorest of the poor.
- Rancho La Colorada ties continue to grow.

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With the arrival of the new year, St. Anthony's Alliance celebrates 14 years of community service -- and we're still going strong!

We have significant programs and projects in Mexico and Nicaragua, an on-going commitment in Haiti, and the prospects for initiating program support in Nigeria and Ecuador. Opportunities abound.

It's interesting to juxtapose St. Anthony's programmatic growth with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. The UN initiated an aggressive campaign in the 1990's to solve the basic problems of poverty, gender inequality, educational disparities, environmental sustainability and certain common -- but devastating diseases -- that are inextricably linked with these circumstances. Of particular interest is their plan to eradicate extreme poverty by 2025. (Please read Jeffrey Sachs's book, *The End of Poverty*, for a comprehensive explanation).

Our on-the-ground experience with these problems confirms the direction the UN is taking and we are grateful for the opportunity to be a contributor in the process. We are also fully aware of the gifts that we have as Americans. We are born into a culture of plenty, a culture that encourages individuals to pursue their dreams, and provides the tools to accomplish them. It's almost a given that people who are willing to work hard and apply themselves will have a successful outcome.

Not so with the communities we work with. The people in our programs are industrious, capable,

intelligent...but poor. Their cultures don't provide the anticipatory energy of success. They work long, hard hours to acquire the basics: drinking water, food for the day, medicine for illness, and at least a beginning education for their kids. But they live in environments that don't promise successful outcomes for hard work. And they don't have track records of overcoming life's barriers.

Americans are gifted with two assets that the rest of the world only dreams of: access to resources, and the natural assumption that we can solve problems. We can even discuss a concept like retirement, which speaks to the affluence and leisure and abundance present to us. Retirement is virtually inconceivable to most of the world.

This is your opportunity: to apply your access to resources, your native problem-solving ability and your access to economic leisure to the life problems of our global neighbors. There are many ways to do this. St. Anthony's offers the opportunity for you to participate in the global community, first with your resources; but, also perhaps with your talents and interests. And there are many other organizations that provide venues for your energy.

So that's the challenge. Choose one. Get involved. Contribute. Participate. Create a lifestyle that's so generous that simply by getting up in the morning, your personal energy and assets are benefiting other people ... that your life reflects a philosophy of sufficiency and not the fear-based, zero-sum game dictated to us by a culture of affluence. We can all make a difference. Go for it!

Battling TB in Nigeria

St. Anthony's goal is to raise \$10,000 to combat TB in Nigeria and help keep HIV patients alive to parent their children.

Sometimes an illness isn't what it seems, and sometimes there is an opportunity to make a real difference despite the presence of an illness.

Dr. Chris Isichei, a Nigerian physician practicing in Jos, Nigeria, approached St. Anthony's with a concept and a plan that only an on-the-ground practitioner could develop. In Isichei's free clinic – founded in 1996 – he and his surgeon wife treat more than 8000 HIV infected patients. Seventy percent of these patients are also infected with tuberculosis, an equally dangerous and transmissible disease.

And that's what kills many of the HIV patients before AIDS develops.

Dr. Isichei proposes that by treating these patients for their TB, he can keep them alive long enough for them to parent their children. By treating one individual infected with TB, he can *prevent* the spread of the illness to six others.

The cost: about \$150 per patient per year.

St. Anthony's is investigating ways to support Dr. Isichei. It has been our process over the years to work with innovative community leaders and support the initiatives that directly benefit their community.

St. Anthony's goal is to raise \$10,000 to help Dr. Isichei fund a TB treatment program. Your support will help us report positive results in our next newsletter.

Steve Tryon - a note of thanks

Early in 2006, Steve Tryon and his family were visiting brother Jim. During the visit, Teresa Balcomb explained her vision of establishing an alternative agricultural program in Rancho La Colorada, to help the drought-stricken area by developing an economic alternative. Steve listened without saying much, but at the end said, "I think I can help some..."

A week later, unsolicited, he sent St. Anthony's a check for \$15,000 earmarked specifically for Rancho la Colorada's lavender project.

As a result of his awesome generosity, Teresa has been able to have land designated for lavender

growth, brought two Rancho residents to the U.S. on J-1 visas to learn about lavender growing and product development, held educational programs for the village and purchased 1000 lavender plants for planting in March, 2007!

Thanks to Steve Tryon's generosity, St. Anthony's has been able to initiate a potentially revolutionary crop for Rancho. Somehow, saying "thank you" doesn't quite capture the magnitude of the impact he has had on the lives of so many people ... but Steve, "Thank you!"

(See related article on page 7.)

Healthcare Foundation Benefits Poor

St. Anthony's Alliance is proud to forge a new sponsorship with a healthcare foundation in Guayaquil, Ecuador, that serves the poorest of the poor -- patients with Hansen's disease, formerly known as leprosy.

The Fundacion Padre Damian is a non-profit home and a loving community for individuals with Hansen's disease. The home is operated by Sister Annie Credidio, an American nun who has been with the Fundacion for 18 years.

The patients -- although cured of the disease and no longer contagious— are "marked for life" by the stigma of the disease and its treatment. Many are no longer welcome in their families or their communities.

Some of the patients have lived in the community for more than 40 years. The Fundacion provides not only a home and a "family" for these individuals, but outpatient and inpatient care for countless other

patients who suffer from Hansen's disease.

Hansen's disease, explains Sr. Annie, "Is an illness of poverty, communicable only in the most abhorrent hygienic and nutritional circumstances."

St. Anthony's Board member, Dr. Elizabeth Szalay, frequently works with Sr. Annie on surgical missions to Guayaquil to care for children with orthopedic handicaps. She says Sr. Annie volunteers tirelessly during the outreach missions.

One of the highlights of the surgical team's week, says Szalay, is a visit to the Damian House to meet the patients with Hansen's disease. "These people with no earthly possessions have a joy of living and a dignity and gratitude for their blessings that puts each and every one of us to shame."

This is the legacy of the bountiful and joyful Sr. Annie, and St. Anthony's is delighted to assist her in her lifelong mission.



Sr. Annie (rt) and an American visitor are entertained by Colon, a long-time resident of Damien's House, singing a song about how beautiful life is and how grateful he is for every day.

Hansen's disease is and illness of poverty, communicable only in the most abhorrent circumstances.

About St. Anthony's Alliance

St. Anthony's Alliance is an international non-profit organization which supports life-saving and life enhancing interventions for the health and well being of people living in moderate and extreme poverty.

Begun in 1992 as a public witness to the founders' beliefs that faith and action must go hand-in-hand, the board chose critical medical intervention for the victims of Bosnia and Herzegovina as its first project.

Since then, St. Anthony's has been involved in projects around the world – like the ones detailed in this newsletter – thanks to your generous donations of time and money.

Giving is easy, just return the enclosed pledge form, or go online to www.stanthonyalliance.com and select the JustGive.org link.

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Students Build Park in Rancho La Colorada

--Janet Brody, SAA Board Member

*New friendships
forged in sweat
and stone.*

In the first trip of its kind for St. Anthony's Alliance, 10 Spanish-speaking high school students from Albuquerque's Sandia Prep School traveled to Rancho La Colorada, Mexico, to participate in a week of community service.

The goal of the trip was to help establish a park for this impoverished rural farming community. The park is an 8-year dream of a committee of ambitious young women in Rancho to establish a fun and safe place for their children to play and for the community to gather.

The Sandia Prep students worked with youth from the Rancho Community to design and create mosaic benches for the park entrance area. The benches serve as a beautiful and welcoming gathering place for the community.

The Prep students included seniors Erin Hedemann and Sky McCormack, juniors Kayla Guthrie, Philip Rothfeld, Tom Austin, and Jack Olson, and sophomores Lia Abeita Sanchez, Joey Groff, Emily Hampden-Smith, and Lindsay Reid. The trip was led by Sandia Prep Spanish teacher and soccer coach Rob Minear. SAA Board Members Janet Brody, Tes Balcomb and Cyndy Simons served as chaperones.

The art project was directed by SAA's Nicaragua site coordinator, Santiago Rivera.

Doing by design

Teams created the benches over several days as Prep students helped the Rancho youth create artistic images for their mosaics. Designs included a whimsical tiger, the ubiquitous cactus plants of the community, and expressions of faith depicted in religious symbols.

Younger children helped make abstract designs for several benches using brightly colored glass, beads and tiles. The initial shyness of the Rancho youth quickly vanished and little helping hands appeared everywhere.

A highlight of the trip was the day all the children from the local primary school walked over during recess to examine the benches. Erin described the scene: "The park was flooded with kids, chaotic and fun," as young children pushed their way through the crowd to see the artwork in progress.

The Sandia Prep students later reciprocated, visiting students in their classrooms. They also donated school supplies and sports equipment to the schools.

Cementing connections

Creating the park benches was only a small part of the overall experience. The real joy of the trip was connecting with the community's youth. Soccer played a big role as an ice-breaker. On the first day, a young girl from the community named Kata appeared from school just as the Prep students were starting a game.

As Emily recounted, "She beat all of us wearing her skirt." That episode began a connection with the village youth that developed through playful interactions.



Sandia Prep students and Rancho La Colorada youth put their hands to work making benches for the community's park.

Below, Sandia students show pride in their work.



Joey commented that the language barrier was slowly broken as they all became more engaged in establishing connections. "At first I couldn't understand them because they were talking too fast. By the end they slowed down, were laughing and repeating themselves and helping us try to express ourselves in Spanish."

Grateful expressions

A marvelous community fiesta celebrating the trip was held on the last evening. Several Rancho children sang songs, dressed in traditional clothing. The Prep students also displayed singing and dancing talents. The depth of comfort and connection created over the week was perhaps most evident by the evening's culmination in an uproarious cake fight.

On a more serious and poignant note, one of the Rancho community leaders, Aracely, spoke eloquently about how the contributions of the Sandia Prep students helped substantiate the vision of a park for the community, and create momentum towards realizing the success of a project that had so long been only a dream.

A late night knock at the door delivered two letters written by a young girl from the community, Maria Isabel. In these letters she expressed her thankfulness for all that had occurred during the week. "I'll miss you," she wrote. "Please write to me."

Many of the Rancho children echoed these sentiments, imploring the Sandia Prep students to return.



Rancho La Colorada children celebrated the week with songs at the community fiesta.

Los Ojos de los Niños

-- by Cyndy Simons, SAA Board

For the most recent St. Anthony's Alliance trip to the Rancho La Colorada, I had the desire to bring something specifically for the pre-teen children in the village -- cameras.

Rancho La Colorada teachers selected children ages 10-14 to participate in a photo workshop, using inexpensive 35mm point-and-shoot cameras donated by SAA. We taught students the basics, then turned them free to photograph their surroundings.

Colleagues in the photo community sent along donations of film, photo samples and letters of encouragement. I later processed and reviewed the pictures with the young photographers. It was an opportunity for the children to share their view of the community and to be empowered through art.

I was uncertain how I would communicate with my limited Spanish but I soon found that anything visual has a universal language. I was swept away by the children's enthusiasm to

learn. We used the next several days to photograph various assignments, ranging from self-portraits to plants and animals, interior and nighttime shots and even action shots.

We processed the film in nearby San Miguel De Allende and presented the results to participants in personalized photo albums. Intimate expressions of family life, the landscape of their village and the creativity of their self-portraits were inspiring.

"Hay mas film? More film? More film?" was their question every time we met. Their hunger to capture their lives was assured by my promise to keep working cameras, batteries and film in their hands.

Photo industry colleagues have promised to correspond with the children to offer support and encouragement. We plan to create an exhibition of their images in the future.

"Son fotograficos ahora! You are photographers now! Have confidence and pride in your expressions!" I told them as I left, promising to return soon with "Mas film!"



Above, students get their first exposure to cameras.

Below, Cyndy Simons shares photo albums.



Mulukuku Update: by Santiago Rivera

Project Manager, Nicaragua

"The Mask project allows children to express their inner spirit and examine their hopes."

I am very excited to inform you of the latest development with the Mulukuku, Nicaragua project. A 16-time Emmy-award winning production company has expressed interest in making a documentary of my little "sponges" in Mulukuku. Under the direction of Christopher Schueler, Christopher Productions is considering filming the *Mask Project*.

As you may recall, the project will involve the construction of 3-D wearable masks on which the children will paint their traumas and anguishes as a first step in the healing process. Next, they will write their hopes and dreams on the inside of the mask before painting over these thoughts, teaching them that no one can take away their inner spirit -- the core of who they are. We hope this project will result in a traveling show to inform the public of their struggles and serves to raise funds for a computer lab/library.

In November, St. Anthony's Alliance is sending me back to Nicaragua where I will participate in an intensive 2-week videography training co-sponsored by Christopher Productions and a Managua-based television station. At the conclusion of this training, I will be well equipped to participate in the documentation of St. Anthony's projects, including the *Mask Project*.

The Managua TV station is working with Christopher Productions on a large-scale documentary about the HIV/AIDS education in Nicaragua. I hope this documentary and subsequent efforts with St. Anthony's and the village of Mulukuku will help garner donations for the communication system, estimated to cost \$10,000. This system is a *critical next step* for these children's educations by allowing them a *first glimpse* of the world beyond their village.

"Art supplies are almost exhausted - any donations for Mulukuku are appreciated."

Shell Oil Corporation generously donated 44 computers recently, a gift arranged and made possible by Teresa Hetrick. Freddie Jara-Almonte, a Rio Rancho-based media and technology coordinator, has also generously volunteered to install the necessary software before St. Anthony's delivers the computers to Mulukuku.

I remain grateful for all of your financial support and hopeful that we will continue to positively impact the inhabitants of Mulukuku. Just recently, I received a communication from Victor and Karla, business owners and 20+ year residents of Mulukuku.

As you may recall, Victor and Karla organized and facilitated the art classes as well as the final art show for the community during my visit in May. Since then, the couple report that they have been conducting weekly art classes for the children. The classes have been well attended with approximately 80 students enrolled.

Karla also notes that the classes have been especially helpful in providing the children with an opportunity to process incidents of violence and abuse experienced during the week.

Finally, Victor and Karla mention that they have almost exhausted the art supplies provided by St. Anthony's during my previous visit. Any donations of cash or art supplies specifically designated for Mulukuku would be greatly appreciated at this time.

Lavender Project Blossoms: Tes Balcomb, MD

This has been an incredible year for our sustainable agricultural lavender project in Central Mexico.

With your help, St. Anthony's Alliance arranged for two Rancho La Colorada, Mexico, villagers to travel to the United States to participate in intensive study in various aspects of growing lavender and marketing its products.

Aucencio Domenzain -- husband and father of three teenagers in the village-- was selected for an internship focused on growing and harvesting lavender, and 26-year-old Elizabeth Morales was selected to learn about product development and marketing.



Aucencio Domenzain with lavender plants in Mexico. His St. Anthony's internship focused on growing and processing lavender.

Aucencio spent much of this summer interning with Al and Peggy Armstrong at Valley View Lavender Farm in the Magic Valley of South Central, Idaho. At Valley View, Aucencio learned about lavender varieties and their various uses. Working side by side with Al and Peggy in the fields, he planted, propagated, stripped and cleaned lavender buds from greenhouse to harvest. After a record harvest, he and Al distilled the lavender for its essential oil, so valuable in making most of the products from lavender.

One of the goals of the program was to introduce Aucencio and his fellow villagers to the concept of agritourism. Using the model developed so successfully in the U.S. and France, small communities can develop sustainable "destination lavender farming."

Aucencio saw first hand how a successful lavender farm can become an entertainment destination when Valley View Lavender Farm hosted its annual Lavender Festival and Tour. Thousands of people visited the farm on a sunny July weekend to pick lavender, buy products made at the farm, take pictures, make wreaths and baskets from flowers and spend time with their families.

Armstrong praised Aucencio after his internship for his take charge attitude. "This is definitely the way an intern program should work for the benefit of all. I just

can't say enough good things about Aucencio," said Armstrong. "Now that he has returned home to Mexico with his wealth of knowledge about growing lavender and has begun planning for his own lavender farm, we hope to travel to there in a couple of years to visit him and see how he has progressed."

On his return home, Aucencio stunned us all when he mailed a copy of a most extraordinarily professional compendium he had written in Spanish on how to grow and use lavender!

In his forward to *Lavanda y Espliego*, he says, "I deeply thank Dr. Tes Balcomb and all the people of St. Anthony's Alliance for their invaluable aid that made possible the preparation of this informative pamphlet, and for all the support that made possible my trip to the US to receive my training and qualifications for working with lavender."

Our second intern, Elizabeth Morales -- a very enterprising young woman -- traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico to spend four weeks with Rhetta's Soap Company, learning all of the ins and outs of making natural designer soaps, lotions, balms and creams. At the completion of her time with Rhetta, we filmed a training video of Elizabeth making a batch of designer soap. She will use the video to teach others these techniques in her home village.

Elizabeth Morales makes soap from lavender. She plans to teach others in her village the techniques she learned this summer.



She also spent a month with Armin, Penny and Matt Rembe on their working lavender farm at Los Poblanos.

Elizabeth's goal is to develop a women's cooperative devoted to making products from lavender and other local herbs when she returns home.

Elizabeth and Aucencio exemplify the spirit of their community. With the proper tools and support from people like you, these two can transform the otherwise bleak economic picture of their small village.

Your support allows us to continue these types of internships for members of the communities we serve.

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an ailing world.

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We're on the Web!

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A New Trend In Service: by Tes Balcomb, MD

“Voluntourism”, “Community Investing”, “Philanthropreneurs” ... these unusual terms were explored in the November 12th edition of *The New York Times* in a center section devoted to the topic of “Giving.” They are used to describe a new breed of individuals and families who are blurring the distinction between travel and service work, who view investing as a form of community service and are applying the benefits of capitalism in the service of charity.

Whether because of national disasters such as Katrina, or because of the far-reaching aspirations of the United Nation’s Millennium

Development Goals, more and more people are finding ways to give back through service work. The *Times* lists six organizations that offer volunteering opportunities abroad and the number is on the rise.

Organizations like *St. Anthony’s Alliance* are too small to make the pages of the *Times*, but our vision for years has included a service learning component as a major goal. Studies show that volunteering is a learned behavior. We believe that our children learn from us how to give back and by doing so enrich their own lives in ways they -- and we -- could never have predicted.

The Dream of a Computer Learning Center Comes True

Young people the world over are hungry for ways to connect outside of their communities. They know that being part of the computer generation can be a conduit for personal and community development.

We discovered this on our recent trip to Mexico when a group of young adults quietly approached us as asked if we could help them find a way to take computer classes and connect to the Internet. On a previous trip, one of our volunteers, Freddie Altamonte, traveled to Rancho La Colorada to help set up a small group of computers -- donated to St. Anthony’s -- in their community center.

We selected two young men, Israel Torres and Hector Jimenez, to provide entry level computer classes for the village’s young people in exchange for use of the computers to practice their own skills and gain access to the Internet. St. Anthony’s will provide a small stipend for these two young men so that they can continue to develop their skills by taking advanced computer classes in a nearby town. The village children will benefit from Hector and Israel’s advancement as well.

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