

# AMIGUITOS

## *“Good Friends”*

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2007 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends -

2007 has been an exiting year for AMIGUITOS. This is the year we founded AMIGUITOS as an ecumenical group interested in traveling to Veracruz, Mexico for community development projects.

Why Veracruz, Mexico? Well the story goes back to 2003 when Curtis Wait started traveling on medical projects to Guayaquil, Ecuador (a city of 2 million of which half are chronically unemployed). Over the years, his family (Anne, Alex & Dana) also took the trips and friendships developed between them and many people in Ecuador.



One of those friends is Goldi Santana Mera, who was a leader in creating community centers and schools in many of the extremely impoverished areas of Guayaquil. She is also the first woman ordained as a priest in Latin America. She has been an Episcopal Priest for over 25 years. Being a woman in leadership is not easy in Latin cultures and being a pioneer is even more difficult. Goldi's strength, perseverance and determination are an inspiration to many.



Goldi visited Colorado in December 2004 for the ordination of Curtis to the Episcopal Priesthood. In 2006, Goldi moved permanently to Veracruz,

Mexico where she has continued her community development work. Having Goldi's development work so much closer to the USA has presented the opportunity to travel there more easily. The desire to continue working together is also strong. So in May of 2007 when Healing Waters (an organization dedicated to providing clean water to poor areas) invited Curtis to southern Mexico to visit project sites, he jumped at the chance. Dana and Tom Larson founded Healing



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Waters and Curtis had worked with Dana Larson in the past at a consulting firm. Tom welcomed Goldi to join the tour of Chiapas, Mexico (south of Veracruz) where several Healing Waters projects have successfully started. Curtis took the opportunity to visit Veracruz and travel to Chiapas with Goldi. The trip was inspiring and gave Curtis and Goldi the chance to think about projects that they might do together. The hope is also to begin replicating some of the work performed in Ecuador for people in Veracruz. Both the ongoing day-to-day projects that Goldi leads and the pattern of forming work teams from the USA and the neighborhoods to provide medical clinics, construction projects and intense education experiences for the neighborhood kids.



When Curtis returned from the Chiapas and Veracruz trip he excitedly told his family all about it.

Alex had expressed a desire to pursue his university education (which starts Fall 2008) with at least one of his years studying abroad. Goldi invited him to Veracruz to experience living outside the USA and in July 2007 Alex spent a few weeks with Goldi in Veracruz. He taught English classes to the neighborhood kids and is now famous there for his daily soccer games. Some kids thought it would be great if they could slip into his suitcase to come home with him (sorry, no). Alex is now like a big brother to the all neighborhood kids.



Curtis continued meeting with people in Colorado who were interested in community development projects in Mexico. For many months, Curtis met weekly with Dr. Phyllis York, who is a friend and a person who has lived in many parts of Latin America and who has a strong background in community development. After sketching out some ideas (tentatively calling the project “Mary’s Community”) and talking to others, a group of interested people met in November 2007 at the Wait’s house.

Phyllis York, Len Wallace, Ginny Holien, Katherine Rowe, Phil Rowe, Dana Wait, Anne Wait, Curtis Wait and Kay Kinneavy all participated in our first group gathering. There

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was a strong desire to take a small number of people down to Veracruz as soon as possible to make practical plans for larger future work trips. In preparation for the planning trip, informal discussions continued to be held to determine the nature of the desired work trips (medical, construction and educational were settled on). In addition, discussions for a permanent group name continued.

Dates were set for December 2007 for part of the group to visit Veracruz, Mexico. The hope was to make practical plans based on the expressed needs of the people there. We also wanted more people to experience first hand the programs that Goldi already had up and running. Curtis, Ginny and Phil made the trip December 29, 2007 to January 8, 2008.



The planning trip went great. Goldi and Saul (from the Diocese of SouthEast Mexico) joined Curtis, Ginny and Phil in daily excursions visiting potential work sites and participating in programs with the children. We celebrated New Years (burning old man 2007) and Three Kings (the day children in Mexico receive their Christmas gifts). We had lots of activities with the kids, painted some walls of the temporary Laguna center and explored excursions for June.



We also discovered the name AMIGUITOS. Goldi has named her non-profit organization “Amiguitos de Jesus” and it seemed right to have a similar name for our USA organization. *Amiguitos* is the familiar form of *amigos* (friends). Yet the *amiguitos* form implies an intense relationship and closeness. In the few days our planning team had together in Veracruz, we experienced this closeness. We expect every work team formed will have a similar experience. We hope to see you soon in Mexico so you can experience it too.

*Curtis Wait, Executive Director - AMIGUITOS*

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