

## **Juntos Newsletter – February 2016**

This newsletter has two distinct parts, first the lightning visits of board members Xin Mei Liu and Sophie Boeckh, and second, the story of one student, her son and the role Nissan plays in Cuernavaca.

Both Xin and Sophie were here for a very short time, little over a week, and are a testament of how much can be accomplished in a short period of time. Both stayed at Amor para compartir for a few days and made valuable contributions. They made arrangements for the soccer programme to be expanded, including both the boys and the girls, organized transport for two training sessions and one game per week. With their help every game will now have a minimum of ten players and some of the younger girls will be included.

In addition, Sophie and Xin produced a spread sheet with the name of every girl at Amor para compartir with age and level of education plus notes on the ones that have potential to move to the next educational level. This is a very useful tool for JUNTOS as we want to encourage and help financially all the girls who are able to go to high school. Finally, they met with our JUNTOS teachers, reviewed the computer projects and offered excellent suggestions. They demonstrated how they work in the cloud creating and sharing information among their classmates and teachers using programs provided without charge by GOOGLE. These are excellent tools and our team will start to teach them in our learning centres. And as we say in Quebec, *"la cerise sur le gâteau"*, they will be fundraising to pay for the entire soccer programme.

Below are pictures taken of the Amor para Compartir programmes.



Back row: the girls and the boys from Amor para compartir and their trainer.

Front row: Xin, Sophie, more girls and boys from the same site.

Three Kings is an important festival in Mexico for on that day, January 6<sup>th</sup>, all children receive gifts. In the pictures are the groups of children first waiting then holding their bags of sweets distributed by the Rotary Club representatives.









On the same day our computer programme was working and as you can see, we have some very determined students.

And now to the second topic, Odilia Beatriz Orihuela Lara, Betty to everyone, is a 51 year old single mother who attends classes at Constitución after a full day at the office. She works for a government agency as a social work technician where she enters data and that is the reason she first came to the Juntos computer classes. The short biography she wrote includes the following sentence: "Computers are indispensable in my life."

Constitución has a large number of adults and they like to cook and celebrate so this year, for the second time, we were all invited to a pre-Christmas lunch, a 'comida'. It was there that I had the privilege of having a long conversation with Betty who did not want to talk about herself but about her 25 year old son, Erick Adrian Calderón Orihuela.

Erick was only five years old when he spied and requested a chess set in a store window in downtown Cuernavaca. Since he was with his grandmother, who like all grandmothers had trouble refusing, he became the proud owner of a set for game he could not even name. Quickly he became familiar with the chess pieces and learned the basic rules from other children. By the time he was seven, he requested chess classes. His mother found a local instructor, brought along her son and after one hour the instructor informed her that he could not take Erick as a student. Why, inquired Betty? Because he already knows more about chess than I do, replied the instructor. Next Betty was directed to the zócalo, the main square in

Cuernavaca where chess players congregate every weekend and found a teacher for him.

The results were very satisfactory. Erick played chess during his school years, first competing locally, then at the state level and finally nationally. At sixteen, already a grand master, he performed feats like those seen in the movies, where one player takes on an entire field, moving from board to board and of course defeats every opponent.

Betty proudly said their home has innumerable chess trophies, then skipped over his university years, only giving the name of the university he attended, Tecnológico de Zacatepec and told me he had completed his engineering degree in August 2015. In September he applied to work at Nissan as an engineer.

Two of the Juntos sites, Constitución, where Betty attends classes, and Josefa, are close to an industrial park called Civac which drives the economy of the area and is very important in the state. Civac ("**Ciudad Industrial del Valle de Cuernavaca**") is the largest industrial park in the state of Morelos, a gigantic area with a very large number of plants including Roche, Unilever, Baxter, Gemalto, Alucaps, Glaxo Smith Kline, NEC, Fibrolub Mexicana, Mycom (Mayekawa) and of course Nissan.

Just to give a scope of the size, the Mayekawa plant is the largest outside Japan, NEC make compressors for refrigeration and air conditioning equipment and Nissan's plant had 5,183 employees in 2015. Nissan Mexico opened in 1966 to build cars for the local market but already by 1972 the plant was building pick-up trucks to be exported to Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile. Today the plant builds five models and exports to thirty countries around the globe. In 1966 the plant built 70 units every eight working hours and in 2014 they produced 264,913 units, at a rate of 1,300 units a day. To accomplish this the employees at Nissan Cuernavaca work three shifts, Monday to Friday and have four production lines for both cars and trucks. In 1975, they were the first to test emission controls; they also boast an impressive training site for their employees. At present Nissan has the biggest market share in Mexico with 25.7% of vehicles sold and their Sentra model was named best compact car in the United States in 2015.

Nissan has been so successful in Mexico that they have opened a second plant, this one in Aguascalientes near the US border. In fact, if you see a Nissan on the road in Canada, it was probably built in Mexico. And when you next visit New York and get into one of their new taxis, the NV200 Taxi, remember that it was an exclusive model only for New York, built right here in Cuernavaca.

Despite the fact that everyone told Erick that you needed pull or an in to work at Nissan, he applied online. This was the company he wanted to work for. Several weeks later he was contacted and asked to come in for an entire day of testing. The examinations were wide ranging, some specific to his engineering knowledge, others more general and finally, on the same day, he had a complete physical

examination with blood tests and X-rays. After three weeks Erick was certain he had not made the cut and told Betty that he would begin to apply for jobs throughout Mexico. The fourth week, he got the email he had been waiting for. He was hired. He was to start the following Monday. As I write these lines, three months later, he has already been promoted to supervisor.

This is the story we want you to tell the next time some says Mexico is the land of drugs and illegal immigrants heading north.