

Onzole River Project

OCTOBER 2008



Dear friends and supporters,

We are doing it! Together we are making a difference in the lives and futures of the children along the Onzole River of Ecuador. My heart swells whenever I think of each one of you, pulling together to make such an impact. As I look back on the journey of these last few months, all I can say is; nothing is too hard for God!! I have been most surprised when some of you have thanked me for providing the opportunity to give your money in this way. It has been one of the things that keeps me going. We all want to be apart of something bigger than just ourselves and our world. And so, we are! The good news is that together we have already raised \$13,000. Isn't that incredible?! Can you hear the excitement in my voice?

Thank-you!!!!

God bless you all, Lisa

THE GOOD NEWS

- Together we have already raised \$13,000. Isn't that incredible?!
- The Ecuadorian Education Ministry has begun to involve themselves in the Onzole schools and will be paying some of the teacher's salaries for the remainder of this year



BACK TO SCHOOL

(Nikki Horne)

Back in August the Horst family and I piled into a canoe and splashed our way down the river for three hours until we arrived in Onzole. Kids in tattered clothing and oversized rain boots stood watching us climb up the muddy slope that leads into their community. It was such a joy to be welcomed back to this familiar place, to play with the kids on the rivers edge and catch up with friends on their front porches. In Onzole you are surrounded by natural beauty; fruit and exotic flowers spill over from trees and bushes all under the deepest blue skies.

One of our main goals of the trip was to spend time in the two schools to gain a better understanding of what our future involvement might look like. We visited San Cudo the first day, and were honoured by a special program by the staff and students. We participated in their morning class activities and had lunch together. We had a similar experience the following morning in Santo Domingo.

The challenges the school's staff face are numerous. They shared with us their desire to see kids from Onzole receive a quality education, equal to other public schools, an education that would enable the kids to compete for future jobs and opportunities. One mother said to me "I want these kids to be better than us, to be important in this world!" Apart from having minimal governmental assistance, they are ill equipped to handle the medical and physical needs of their students. Many kids have learning disabilities, ranging from problems with hearing and vision to psychological issues. Kids come to school lacking proper nutrition, so the staff members do the best they can to provide some sort of meal. They need more classrooms and more teachers. They talked openly about the struggle they face convincing parents

that an education will indeed open doors to all kinds of future possibilities. Many parents are still not convinced that sending their children to school is more advantageous than having them work farming the fields. One teacher said of the parents, "they still don't see the point of school and a school without a family's help doesn't grow".



In Santo Domingo, the school building itself is a decrepit shell held up by drab cement bricks and splintering wood planks. Wasp nests hang from the ceilings, handmade pictures adorn the walls and old wooden and rusty metal desks fill the classrooms. The building leaves little to the imagination and is in dire need of repair. Yet, every morning from Monday to Friday, 109 kids dressed in clean blue uniforms file through those doors brimming with creativity and untapped potential.

I was inspired by the collective effort of these few individuals who, without parent or government support or the guarantee of financial compensation, would join together to see that future generations would have a chance at a life they were never given. They are forging a new path so that the youth of Onzole will have choices, a chance to dream and aspire to be something great. They have shared with us their journey, their many

struggles over the past 16 years and are inviting us, you and I, to join them in this unique opportunity to bring new life to this school. They dream of a beautiful building with painted classroom walls, desks and school supplies for every child. In their minds eye they see a library filled with books, computers and more classrooms. They dream that this place, these humble little buildings that sit on muddy hills, will empower kids to go places they never will and that Onzole graduates will return one day to carry on their dream of a better education.

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If you are interested in joining an Onzole River work team...

Please contact: Jeremy Horne

Email - jeremyh@navigator.ca

Phone - 519-590-5316

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Trip #1 - Feb.12-22

Trip #2 - Feb.26-Mar.8

Cost - \$1600-\$1900

*Please contact Jeremy as soon as possible, the trip groups are filling up quickly

AN INVITATION TO JOIN US

(Dale Horst)

I am happy to report on the progress we are seeing in the schools in Onzole, and to invite your continued participation. Your timely gifts coupled together with the faith and good work of the committed teachers and parents of the Onzole schools have enabled them to begin this year. During our visit in August the Onzole communities received the good news they have been hoping for. The Ecuadorian govt will begin assisting their schools! In September most of the teachers received wages and expect to receive them throughout this school year (their school year ends in January)

In light of these developments we are redirecting some of the funds you have given. We will now support those teachers who did not receive government contracts and assist them in completing their education in order to qualify for future grants. We will also provide much needed books and school supplies and partner with the Santo Domingo parent/teacher council and Life Change Adventures in February 2009 to undertake some major reconstruction projects of the school buildings. 100% of your gifts will continue to go directly to the support of the school.

While the teacher contracts are a positive and welcome development, they are not entirely dependable. The contract is only made with the individual teachers who qualify and it will need to be renewed yearly. It is not a long-term commitment to the development of the schools and there is no funding for the structure, books or school supplies. We will need to see what 2009 brings.

I look forward to fixing up the school buildings and invite you to consider visiting Onzole yourself by joining one of the work teams in February. Doing this together with the parents and teachers, we hope it will be a real act of solidarity, of hope, love and encouragement. I believe it will.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

- A long-term commitment by the Ecuadorian government to the Onzole schools
- Sufficient funds to finish off the school year and make some much needed improvements to the school buildings
- The full participation of all the parents in the development of their school
- The 2009 work groups
- The school's staff and students as well as those of us involved in helping to make decisions for the future

