

iPresente!

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2016

POTTERS
FOR
PEACE

Message from our Nicaragua Director

Instead of the usual community-by-community report, I would like to reflect on the Potters for Peace philosophy and methodology.

Two years ago, Potters for Peace lost the lease on our office in Managua. Rather than search for another office, we built a small workshop and storage area adjacent to our house in Ticuantepe. Our fully-equipped workspace has allowed us to make the potters' wheels, worktables, and other tools and equipment our amigas need to improve their work.

Just over a year ago, we also set up a small pottery workspace with the intent of delving deeper into the unique pottery techniques practiced in Nicaragua. Immediately upon throwing a few pieces, I remembered how empowering it feels to mold a shapeless piece of clay to one's will. How many times have I seen our amigas take this sense of empowerment outside their pottery workshops into their families and communities? It is so satisfying to watch their sense of self-determination grow and flourish!

The very poor often have not

developed their planning skills simply because, as the Bible says, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Planning for tomorrow is a luxury when you are struggling for your family's survival today. However, pottery-making is a long, multi-step process. Digging and processing the clay, forming the piece, decorating, burnishing, firing, selling it: all require planning and foresight. The meditative, centering, contemplative nature of the work naturally generates a habit of focus and reflection. Entering the marketplace to sell your wares creates confidence in your ability to put a plan into action. With the constant practice of our craft, a new mindset blossoms, giving all of us the power to improve the future of our families, communities, and world.

Fortunately, our organization has inherited a unique working philosophy and methodology based upon Ron Rivera's 40 years of experience working and living in solidarity with the poor. We do not offer charity to our amigas; we offer them empowerment and control of their



Robert Pillers throws a pot at Doña Olga's workshop in Las Sabanetas.

own lives. The craft of pottery is an amazing vehicle for self-expression and self-development, but it is the method, not the goal. Clay is our vehicle, not our destination. Potters for Peace is unique in the world in harnessing the power of our craft to bring our amigas to an habitual process of focus, vision, empowerment, self-determination and action that improves not only their own lives, but those of their children and wider communities. Thank you so much for supporting this important work.

—Robert Pillers

Clay Club raises funds for our water filter project

The Bishop O'Dowd High School Clay Club of Oakland, CA, has spent the fall semester raising funds for the PFP Water Filter Project. Sundiata Ayinde, treasurer for the Clay Club, and Chris Roscoe, ceramics teacher and Clay Club moderator (pictured right) hold up a Clay Club t-shirt and a check for

\$792. Proceeds of sales of Clay Club t-shirts, sweatshirts and aprons, along with sales from the Clay Holiday Sale, all went to PFP. Clay Club will continue to fundraise with several more projects such as the "Make your Mark Clayathon" and the "Pot(try) Luck" to be held on March 4, 2016.



PfP launches “20 by ’20” Campaign

PfP has begun a new initiative to expand our ceramic water filter outreach. Our campaign—called “20 by ’20”—which we are launching this year, will push towards founding or expanding 20 factories by 2020. The ultimate goal is to see 100 factories worldwide by 2030.

Realizing these goals will require a concerted effort. We have begun by increasing our Filter Coordinator position, currently held by Kaira Wagoner, to 20 hours per week, ideally expanding to full-time later this year. Increasing Kaira’s hours will allow us to better identify and nurture groups who have the desire and capability to produce ceramic water filters and to guide existing factories to greater production levels and greater success in quality control, marketing,

outreach, and education. We have learned that many groups who inquire about a factory start-up aren’t pursuing the idea to fruition because they need more “hand-holding” than we have been able to provide.

A New Business Plan

At the same time, a generous friend of PfP has donated funds to develop a professional business plan which will serve as a precise road map for successfully starting and growing a ceramic water filter factory into a sustainable social enterprise. The Social Enterprise model breaks the mold of being a charity-based operation—totally dependent on (and limited by) donations—to that of a financially sustainable business with paying clients. Studies show that people who “buy in” to

the ceramic water filter (rather than receiving one as charity) are more likely to use it successfully and consistently.

The long-term benefits of clean water include: improved health, lower infant mortality, more days in school for kids, and more days for parents to earn income for the family. PfP does not directly start or operate ceramic water filter factories, but we are the conduit for the technology and expertise that is required.

Our new filter factory business plan will attract financial partnership from foundations, individuals, NGOs and corporate funders by illustrating a realistic process for the development of a self-sustaining business that provides local employment while helping to bring clean water to communities that need it the most.

Teacher inspires project for Africa

The following letter was printed in the *Journal-Eureka*, Anamosa, Iowa. Ike contributed \$290 to PfP.

Dear Editor: I am raising money to send to Africa. The kids there don’t have clean water and many families can’t afford it. Many kids die because of dehydration or because of water with mud and bugs in it.



I learned this information in Sunday school when we had a guest teacher, Ruth Miller. She was on a safari trip when ... she saw some of the kids. Their houses were made out of dirt and mud. Inside they had sleeping bags made out of straw. In the one-room schoolhouses they had only chalkboards and desks.

Ruth asked us, “Who’s thirsty?” She gave a person a bottle of water. Then she asked us, “Who’s really thirsty?” Then she gave a different person

another water bottle, but this one was filled with mud. She said the person with the first water bottle was like an American citizen. Not all that thirsty, but still has good, clean water. The person with the second water bottle was very thirsty and didn’t have clean water.

So I wanted to help. I decided to

try to raise money this summer to send to Africa. If you need help with chores around your house this summer, maybe I could help. You can call me or email my mom.

I hope you realize my point, and this helps you realize how lucky you are.

—Isaac Claussen-Tubbs, Age 9

FACTORY NEWS

The **Guinea Bissau** consultancy was a success: the kiln was built and fired three times using cashew prunings and hardwood shavings. They are completing their final batch tests this spring.

Nepal: We have received notice and pictures that the kiln and factory security walls are finished. Derek Chitwood from the Kunming (China) factory has sent machinery, but delivery has stalled due to the Indian embargo. Once the machines are in place, consultants will travel to Katmandu.

Representatives of the Pittsburgh (PA)

Catholic Diocese will be going to **Chimbote, Peru** in July to assess the suitability of a factory startup there.

Michelle Moffa, a student of civil/environmental engineering at Duke University, has received a scholarship to volunteer at the Filtron factory in **Nicaragua** in June and July. The nature of her project is yet to be determined, but she will work closely with Robert Pillers to make sure the project addresses the factory’s current needs.

Factory start-up is proceeding in **Osun, Nigeria**.

Spotlight on a Filter Factory: Partners in Hope, Kunming China

Derek Chitwood, now Director of Partners in Hope, was doing work in environmental engineering at UC Riverside when a friend challenged him to join in helping tribal peoples in China. At the time some 300 million lived in rural China without access to safe drinking water. In 2001, Derek, his wife Amy (who has a Master's in Public Health) and their three small children moved to Yunnan province in southwestern China.

In 2003 the family moved to a tribal village 15 miles from the Vietnamese border. The Chitwoods visited regional communities to train residents in basic health care and to help provide improved drinking water sources. They surveyed their own village's drinking water source and those of the other 11 villages in the area. Of these 12 villages, only one consistently had safe drinking water; all the rest had high levels of fecal contamination. While the local government said that no children

died from diarrhea in any village in the area, their village alone had 6 deaths of children under 5 in that first year. This anecdotal evidence, combined with Derek's own E.coli testing data, convinced him that they had to do something to help.

In 2009 PIH started the RDPI Filter Factory in Kunming, Yunnan's capital city. The factory employs seven people and produces 8000 filters per year. The early filters were large, and there were people who did not want the filters in their houses because they were too ugly! The initial flow rates were slow and people complained that they didn't produce enough water for their family. But through trial and error, and with some advice from Potters for Peace, these issues have been resolved.

Their current products are smaller and very attractive. The latest model has been designed to sit either on a tabletop or on a water cooler base. The filter lid was also improved, so



that in a house with piped water, the filter can be filled automatically from a hose attached to the faucet.

In the past 15 years, Derek has visited hundreds of villages through southwest China, finding safe drinking water in only about 10% of the villages where he tested. Unfortunately no official data is kept about child mortality rates in these areas. But local lore confirms that children are still dying from diarrhea in rural Chinese villages.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Isidro and Consuelo of the Santa Rosa community on the birth of their son, Ulisses Maudiel Zavala Blandon, on December 4, 2015.



Congrats also to Kaira Wagoner (our Filter Coordinator) and Reynaldo Diaz whose son, Maxu Sandino Diaz-Wagoner arrived on February 13, 2016.



Pottery Sales raise funds for PFP

In 2015, two pottery sales raised a considerable amount of money for PFP. Byron Adams and his team from the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Washington DC raised

\$5695 and Penny Truitt organized our first annual Santa Fe sale and raised about \$2,500. Santa Fe Clay graciously supplied the venue. Many thanks for the hard work and support!

PFP Contacts

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Follow and interact with PFP on Facebook, Twitter, and on our blog
www.pottersforpeace.org

The 2016 Brigade was fun and inspirational, plus we all got a cool pin!

This was my third brigade to Nicaragua and it seems that they just keep getting better and better. From the first day, that featured an engrossing presentation on the PFP Ceramic Water Filter Program by our fearless leader, Robert Pillers, to the last evening, which we spent trying to stuff all the pottery we had acquired into whatever bags we could find, the trip was unforgettable.

In the pottery museum in Granada we saw the pre-Columbian origins of some of the forms and decoration that we would encounter throughout our trip, and at La Paz Centro we learned how to make both tortillas and comales (the traditional clay plate that tortillas are cooked in).

At Las Sabenetas we jumped right into a pile of wet clay and horse manure that we mixed with our bare feet and then used as mortar to build a traditional kiln. In San Juan de Limay we carved sandstone at the studio of the well-known carver, Oscar Enrique Casco, and were serenaded by a neighbour who happened by. At Ducuale we had a sort of pottery painting party: the artisans there demonstrated their



unique form of slip-resist smoked decoration and then they gave us bowls, cups and plates to decorate for ourselves.

We enjoyed homestays and delicious home-cooked meals at Santa Rosa, and we hiked up the steep washed-out roadway to remote Loma Panda, to see (and buy) some of the most innovative pottery in Nicaragua.

At every *taller* (studio) we visited we got our hands dirty—wedging, throwing and handbuilding—as we learned from the artisans and they learned from us. The trip was truly inspiring, plus we got cool clay PFP pins!

—Patty Osborne



These cool new Potters for Peace pins will be available for sale at NCECA.

In Memoriam



Sue Howell, relaxing in San Juan de Oriente during the 2010 brigade.

SUE HOWELL, a much-loved member of the PFP community, passed away in early November, 2015. Sue served as the Denver Sale coordinator for 20 years, and was always enthusiastic to do outreach and contribute in other ways. Her firm and positive commitment to our mission was enduring and inspiring. One of her final acts in this life was to help with the First Annual Santa Fe sale in early October 2015.

MARITZA BLAS, master clay jewelry maker of San Juan de Oriente, passed on September 4, 2015. Her workshops with other potters were famous for her sharing of her personal story, leading to emotional “group therapy” sessions as the other women involved shared their own life experiences. Her daughters are continuing the family tradition of clay jewelry artesanía. *Descansa en paz, amiga Maritza.*

RAMIRO SEBASTIAN GUIDO GUZMAN, son of Ron’s great friend Amanda Guzman, passed on December 1, 2015, after a long and difficult struggle with cancer. Ramiro was well-known for his large decorated vases which could be found in many shops throughout Nicaragua. He is survived by his family, who will continue his pottery business, and brother Elias. *Descansa en paz, amigo Ramiro.*

WORKSHOP: Low Fire, Nicaraguan Style!

Explore colored slips, burnishing and low temperature wood firing with visiting artists from Nicaragua.

May 8-14, 2016

**Adamah Clay Studios, 4681 County Rd ZZ
Dodgeville, WI 53533**

Join Potters for Peace director, Robert Pillers, and two traditional potters from rural Nicaragua in a week-long workshop that will explore surface decoration with traditional slip and burnishing techniques. Your low-fire, slip-decorated pots will be fired in our wood kiln and ready to take home at the end of the workshop.

Along with the hands-on work there will be presentations about working as a potter in Nicaragua, about the Potters for Peace Ceramic Water Filter Project and about the model that this social justice organization follows in its work in the developing world. Fee includes up



to two bags of clay, slips, wood firing, food and lodging in the new Art Ventures Retreat Center.

Fee: \$625 (all meals and lodging in Retreat Center)

Fee: \$525 (all meals and a camp site)

Fee: \$475 (all meals/ no on-site lodging)

On-line registration and more information are here:

www.bethel-madison.org/adamah-clay-studios

email: jennifer@bethelhorizons.org

phone: 608-574-8100

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Benita Romero demonstrates how to make a large comal.

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