

# San Francisco Libre News



Reading's Twin Town in Nicaragua



Volume No. 1

March 2002

Welcome to this new publication that we intend to produce regularly to keep you up-to-date with what is going on within the Association, and in San Francisco Libre itself. Over the last twelve months the Association has been extremely busy, and has managed to expand its membership. Among the new members we have welcomed have been three fluent Spanish speakers who are keen to get involved in our activities.

## Visits to SFL

Over the last twelve months we have been extremely fortunate in being able to maintain a regular flow of visitors to San Francisco Libre from the association. In December 2000 four people visited the town carrying letters and money for continued support of the many projects both large and small, identified by Chris Baird, our representative in Nicaragua. They also recruited a regular correspondent from the town who keeps us informed of the daily lives of the people of SFL.



School children in SFL

In the Spring of 2001, Paul Starkey, Chair of the Association, visited the town accompanied by two representatives of 2-TEN FM to look at the possibilities of securing a broadcasting license and establishing a local radio station. Plans continue to be developed around installing a radio station in the newly completed Community Centre and we hope to have news by the summer.

In August, Bente Madera from RISC (Reading International Solidarity Centre) visited Nicaragua as part of a fair trade delegation. She then spent a few days in SFL again carrying messages and money.

In November, four members of the association (Lorraine, John, Pilar and Vanessa) visited Nicaragua as

International Observers for the presidential elections. They visited SFL after their official duties and met many old friends including Cruz, Glenarban, and Doña Carmen.



Lorraine, John, Pilar and Vanessa in Nicaragua

Paul Starkey plans to visit again in March 2002, and Hannah Starkey hopes to spend some days in the town in May during her travels around Central and South America. We always encourage people to visit SFL and can provide ideas and contacts for people who may be interested to do so.

## Visits from SFL

You may not be aware of this, but Reading Borough Council has declared 2002 'The year of the Twin Towns'. A whole range of activities is planned for the year starting in March with the Half Marathon. Both Dusseldorff and San Francisco Libre managed to find a willing volunteer to come over and run the 13 ½ miles on 10<sup>th</sup> March. Our runner, Milton, is the PE teacher at the local school in SFL. He trained hard for the race. His airfare was paid for by money raised by Mark Lawrie, an employee of Reading Borough Council who ran in the 2001 London Marathon. Milton ran with Toni Pujol, a member of the Association, and together they raised money for San Francisco Libre.



Milton and Toni

Our thanks go to Mark who made this visit possible and also to Safestore in Caversham who provided Milton with a pair of running shoes. Thanks are also due to Reading Borough Council for all the support they have given to the organisation of the visit. So far the two runners have managed to raise just over £1000 which is tremendous.



Milton, Mayor and RSFLA Committee

Back in the summer we hosted two artists from Masaya who were in Britain thanks to their twin town of Leicester. They were booked into the One World Tent at the WOMAD Festival and spent the weekend painting a wonderful mural that now

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hangs in the upstairs reception area at RISC. The painting was really a communal activity with passers-by persuaded to have a go. The whole project was a huge success and sparked a lot of discussion about Nicaragua and San Francisco Libre in particular.

## Peter Oakley Trust



Peter Oakley

Many of you were saddened to hear of the death of Peter Oakley last year. Peter was a great friend to the Reading San Francisco Libre Association and his advice was invaluable to us. We were very keen to ensure that although he would be sadly missed, he would not be forgotten here or in Nicaragua. The Peter Oakley Trust has therefore been set up to support children from families in San Francisco Libre to go to school and complete their education.

APREDEN (a local non-governmental organization, NGO) whose office-holders include Reyna Gomez and Graciella Scheller has already been given £500 and is in the process of identifying families most in need of support. We aim to have a report on the individual children benefiting from this scheme by the summer. The trust will assist with school fees, uniforms and transport costs for those children living in the outlying communities.

## Standing Orders

The launch of the standing order scheme has been successful and we now have a regular stream of income, which we hope will grow. We encourage all people to consider this way of contributing, particularly as we are able to claim back tax on such contributions. Forms are available from any member of the committee.

## More Support

In Spring 2001, Reading College kindly donated a laser printer to the secondary school. Although the school had a computer, it was of limited value without a means to print out work. The printer has meant that the principal can now print letters, and do the accounts electronically, saving her literally hours of work.



New laser printer for the school

Last year, money was sent to Santa Rosa, a community on the road to San Francisco Libre, to pay for the installation of a mechanical pump for their only well which had not worked for several months. This well and pump can save people from having to walk almost half a mile for water.



Pump in Santa Rosa

We've continued to give financial support via Chris Baird for the completion of the new houses and the community centre. Most houses are completed and occupied, although with the receding of the lake and the passage of time, some people in flood danger zones have decided to stay where they are. Consequently, a few new houses are unoccupied.

The Community Centre is now complete and was used as a counting station in the recent presidential elections. We are in the process of officially handing it over to APREDEN who will hopefully be able to rent out rooms and generate income for the local community.



New SFL Community Centre

Following his successful visit to Reading last year, Atilla the Stockbroker called at the Hob Goblin in March to entertain the crowds with his unique style of humour. This raised £75 for San Francisco Libre. Our thanks go to all who contributed.

## Other News

Chris Baird recently resigned as Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Representative and returned to England. He has been a great help over the years and his departure will leave a huge hole. We thank Chris for all the hours he has put in on our behalf, above the call of duty!



Chris Baird

Chris' work for the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign is being taken over by Paul Baker, and we are all looking forward to working with him.

The association will recruit a resident of SFL to assist us with liaison. We need a link person who can receive telephone calls (at the town hall). This link should be confirmed during the visit of Paul Starkey in March 2002.

## Finally

The Association would like to thank all the organisations who have shown interest in and support for San Francisco Libre over the last year. These include:

The Catholic Mothers Union  
Caversham Afternoon Club  
The Sutton Afternoon Club  
Reading Spanish Circle  
Park United Reform Church  
Maiden Erlegh School  
Alfred Sutton School  
Christ The King School  
Leighton Park School  
Reading Careers Centre.

Thanks to all – keep up the support!

**Reading San Francisco Libre Association - RSFL Trust, Registered Charity No.1006736**

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