

San Francisco Libre News



Reading's Twin Town in Nicaragua



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Reading College

In the Summer Newsletter we mentioned briefly that Jeyserd Torrez Martinez had arrived in England to begin studying carpentry for a year at Reading College. Thanks to the Principal, Fred Mcrindle, the College has very generously donated this course free of charge and has also arranged for Jeyserd to study English four mornings a week at the Hamilton Road site, thus ensuring that he gets the maximum benefit from his time here.

This is not the first time that Fred has supported San Francisco Libre, in 2001, the College donated two printers to the local school. This allowed them to use a computer donated by a local NGO that had been sitting idle for over six months, for want of a printer. The principal is now making great use of the computer, typing letters, entering the accounts etc and saving herself a great amount of time in the process.

The Association is extremely grateful to Fred for all his support.

Jeyserd Torrez Martinez

Jeyserd arrived in England at the beginning of July. We knew very little about him before he arrived, and he even less about us.

His family lives in 'San Benito' a small community about 12 kilometres outside of San Francisco Libre but during term time, he and his two younger sisters live in the house of a friend in San Francisco Libre so that they don't have to make the daily journey into school. This means that they only see their parents at weekends.

Jeyserd is 19 years old and a committed Christian. He attends the Evangelical church in SFL where his

father is the pastor. Jeyserd is an accomplished guitarist, playing music and singing during the services. He was chosen to come to England by Reading SFL's local representative Alina Briceño.

He had previously demonstrated his aptitude for carpentry while working on a project for Mujer y Comunidad installing doors and window frames to newly built houses. The committee felt that he had the interest and the aptitude to be a good ambassador for San Francisco Libre.



Jeyserd playing his guitar on stage

Within a month of being selected, Jeyserd was on a plane bound for England. It must have been a huge culture shock for him, but so far he has coped admirably, he appears extremely diligent and all who have worked with him are impressed with his determination to succeed and willingness to take on new challenges.

Support from the parish of St William of York & St James

As well as having the support of Reading College, Jeyserd is also being supported by members of the Parish of St James and St William of York. They are providing accommodation for Jeyserd throughout his stay and have adopted San Francisco Libre as their chosen charity for the year. They have been incredibly busy already fund raising and have donated over £1000 to the Association to use in supporting Jeyserd throughout his stay. Stephen Poulston cycled round every parish church in Reading in September to raise funds. In November, a barn dance held at the Irish Centre in Reading raised over £500. More events are due to take place throughout the year, keep an eye out for details listed in this Newsletter.

Peter Oakley Trust

On his recent visit to SFL, David Ruddle spent considerable time looking at the system set up under the Peter Oakley Trust to support children to attend school by paying their mothers a monthly allowance to cover a range of things including uniforms



Karen, recipient of one of RSFL education grants

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and materials etc. At the moment eight children are being supported on a trial basis. It has now been agreed that the system is working well and that we will expand the number of children in February when the new term starts. (In Nicaragua the school term ends at the end of November and does not begin again until February when the harvest is completed). Alina has already identified a number of candidates, and, all being well, more information will be available in the next Newsletter.



Paul and the Mayor of Reading, Cllr Liz Winfield-Chislett, who opened the 'Portrait of San Francisco Libre' exhibition

at the beginning of December by Vanessa Monro. These visits are incredibly useful to maintain personal contact and face to face communication. If anyone is interested in visiting San Francisco Libre either individually, or as part of a community group, then the association will do all it can to facilitate arrangements including organising being met at Managua airport and accommodation in the village. If you would like to investigate this further then contact us either by telephone or via email, contact details are at the bottom of this newsletter.

Publicity



Members of RSFL in WOMAD

As always the Association has been very busy trying to raise the awareness of our twin town.

In July we had a very successful weekend at the WOMAD Festival. On Saturday we had an hour of songs, games and talks to show what life is like in Nicaragua and on Sunday Jeyserd was asked to perform on the One World Stage singing songs typical of his country.

We were sad to say goodbye to Antoni Pujol, an enthusiastic supporter of the Association, who returned to Spain.



Toni and Jeyserd

In September, an exhibition of Paul Starkey's photographs was displayed in the Hexagon, with the theme of 'A portrait of San Francisco Libre'.

In October, we took part in the Reading International Fortnight with Eoghan and Vanessa giving an illustrated talk about life in Nicaragua twenty years on from the Sandanista Revolution. The evening was very successful with over 40 people attending. Jeyserd also played guitar and sang at the Reading Amnesty International evening held as part of the International Fortnight.

We also featured on Radio 107 FM the new local station for Reading, with John and David talking about the twinning, the reasons behind it, and encouraging new members.

In January 2003 Corridor Press will publish a new book celebrating the numerous links Reading has with other towns across the world. We have contributed several articles to this and will give more details about the book in the New Year.

More fund raising

In August Lorraine Barker completed 200 kilometres of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, raising approximately £150 on the way. This was a planned holiday, and not meant to be a sponsored walk, but when colleagues at work heard what she was doing, they began to pledge money for SFL which was a great bonus and made the loss of two toe nails and swollen tendons worthwhile.

Visits to SFL

Over the summer two members of the Association, Eoghan Clarkson and David Ruddle, managed to visit Nicaragua and another visit is planned



Jeyserd playing Nicaraguan songs in WOMAD

Spanish speakers needed

Finally, do you speak Spanish and if so, do you have time to give to support Jeyserd in his carpentry classes at Reading College? Although Jeyserd is receiving English lessons four mornings a week, he is still understandably struggling to understand everything that is being said in his carpentry classes which take place at the Kings Road site most afternoons. At the moment two volunteers are working with him. Ase Kowal goes in each Monday and on Tuesdays Vic Pepper helps out. This is a great help to Jeyserd and apparently, is quite useful to Ase and Vic who are now far more informed about the skills of a carpenter! So if you have a smattering of Spanish, time on your hands, and an interest in woodwork, this could be the ideal opportunity! If you think you may be able to help, please contact Lorraine Barker Tel 0118 9691496 who will be only too happy to talk to you about what you would need to do.