

# San Francisco Libre News



Reading's Twin Town in Nicaragua



[www.reading-sfl.org.uk](http://www.reading-sfl.org.uk)

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## RSFLA Cycle Ride

In order to raise funds for our new 'Bicycle Project', the RSFLA will be leading a bicycling exploration of the picturesque lanes and villages of South Oxfordshire on **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June**.



*A man collecting firewood on his bicycle*

Anyone may participate, and will be offered the choice of an energetic 30 mile tour, or a more leisurely 15 mile summer ride between the Rivermead Centre and the village of Checkendon.

We will invite participants to make a donation (e.g. £5) and will provide Sponsorship Forms on request. See our 'Cycle Ride' flyer for further details. Please ensure your bicycles are in good working order, as the Association cannot afford to be held liable. 30 mile route is for experienced cyclists.

## WOMAD 2004

For the third year running, the RSFLA will be participating in the WOMAD festival, which this year runs from Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> of July.

As in previous years, the RSFLA will have a stall in the One World Tent for the duration of the festival, which will be used to explain Reading's twinning with SFL, and the work carried out by the Association.

Furthermore, we have booked a slot in the Global Zone during which we plan to hold a series of children's games, and talks that illustrate what life is like in Nicaragua.

Tickets: <http://womad.org/reading/>

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Reading's Link with San Francisco Libre

September 2004 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ceremony that cemented the twin town link between Reading and San Francisco Libre.

The RSFLA is planning a series of events to mark this anniversary - the central one being an afternoon workshop to be held on **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September**. The workshop will feature talks about the development of our twinning with SFL, and the projects that Reading has funded in Nicaragua. Other twinning groups in Britain, with links to Nicaraguan towns, and the national Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, will be invited to take part in a discussion on the role of town twinning organisations.

The workshop will be open to the public, and entry will be free of charge. A Fiesta will follow the workshop, giving everyone the chance to sample Nicaraguan food, and enjoy a typical Nicaraguan game or two.

Other events due to take place in September include a photo exhibition at RISC, and a Nicaraguan film evening. Full details will be posted on our website, and in future Newsletters.

### Upcoming Events

- 6 June** RSFLA Cycle Ride in the countryside around Reading.  
10am Rivermead Centre.  
Contact David Ruddle  
0118 956 8453
- 24 July** WOMAD Nicaraguan games in the Global Zone.  
Rivermead, Reading.
- 11 Sept.** Afternoon Workshop and Fiesta. See above article.

## Two New Projects for the RSFLA

**Bicycle Project:** As reported in the last edition of this Newsletter, the mayor of SFL has launched a scheme to hire bicycles to school children, to enable them to travel between school and home more easily.

The initial trial proved very popular, and some students from outlying villages have started to cycle to and from school every day.

In order to assist the mayor's scheme, the RSFLA has donated \$1,000 to enable the purchase of 20 more bicycles, so more students can benefit.

**Cyclotaxi Project:** In the year 2000, a cyclotaxi manufacturer visited San Benito (a town on the Pan American Highway) and encouraged people there to take four cyclotaxis on hire purchase. As the four new cyclotaxi drivers earned fares, and bought their tricycles, other residents were keen to take advantage of this new job opportunity - and in early 2004, 32 cyclotaxis could be found plying the streets of the town.



*A cyclotaxi in San Benito*

Cyclotaxis have proved popular for journeys of up to 1.5 Km in small towns, and now people in SFL are keen to try them out. The RSFLA has therefore donated \$1,000 to set up a pilot scheme, consisting of four cyclotaxis, in SFL.

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## Reading Half Marathon Success!

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March, nine members of the Association, and friends, completed the 22nd Reading Half Marathon



*RSFLA runners Vicky, Linda and Martha approach the Pepper Lane turning.*

The 13.1 mile run commenced under near perfect weather conditions, as well-wishers thronged the streets, clapping and cheering the runners on their way. An hour later, the conditions took a turn for the worse, and our runners found themselves battling through rain, sleet and snow, on their way to the Madejski Stadium finishing line.

Of the 10,500 starters, a mere 7,500 runners made it to the Stadium, to collect their commemorative Half Marathon medals - and through grit, and sheer determination, all nine of our runners completed the course.

The Association congratulates Paco, Panos, Michele, Lorraine, Eoghan, Pilar, Martha, Linda and Vicky for surviving the event.

We are also grateful to everyone who sponsored Team RSFLA 2004 - early estimates put the amount of sponsorship money pledged at over £1,000, which will be invaluable for the continuation of Reading's projects in San Francisco Libre.

Photos, and further comment on the race can be found on our web site.

## RSFLA Website

Further, and more up-to-date information on the articles included in this Newsletter is available on the Association's web site, at: <http://www.reading-sfl.org.uk/>

## Jeyserd

An email we received from Jeyserd in February explained that his carpentry workshop currently has a full order book.

The workshop started production last December, staffed by Jeyserd, Gustavo Urbina (carpenter), and Heyner Martinez (apprentice carpenter) However, demand for the furniture they produced soon enabled Jeyserd to employ two more people: Juan Alberto Urbina (carpenter), and Norwing Urbina (apprentice carpenter)

The workshop is housed in four storage rooms in SFL's Town Market area, and Jeyserd has been allowed use of communally owned facilities free of charge by the mayor.



*The carpentry workshop in SFL*

Salary from the workshop is currently enabling two members of its staff to fund their way through university, and the two apprentices have been able to buy the books and other materials they require to study at the school on Saturdays.

## Julian Stutley

At the end of March, Julian (the Reading student who arrived in SFL in February) sent us a second report of his experiences there.

He explained how much he is enjoying the English classes he helps to teach at a school in SFL - and how his obsession with football has been recognised with call-ups to the SFL squad for many crunch matches against neighbouring communities.

Julian has also visited other parts of Nicaragua, including the historic city of Granada, and the black sandy beaches of PoneLOYA - and has just decided to spend another month in SFL.

## Schools Link

The RSFLA is helping Paula Marsh of Ascot's Licensed Victuallers' school set up a link between her Spanish class, and a school in San Francisco Libre.

Paula's students have already written to their counterparts in SFL, and it is hoped the link will develop with other forms of exchange.

## News from Nicaragua

The following was reported by the U.S. solidarity organisation NicaNet, which publishes a weekly news digest at: <http://www.nicanet.org/>

### Nemagon Case Goes to US Court

In the Los Angeles Superior Court, attorney Juan José Dominguez filed suit against the Dole Food Company, the Dow Chemical Company and the Avmac Chemical Corporation on behalf of the Nicaraguan banana workers affected by the deadly pesticide Nemagon.

The suit accuses these companies, and others, of manufacturing, selling and/or using the highly-toxic substance DBCP while fully aware that it causes cancer, sterility, birth defects, chronic pain, and effects that have killed over 700 Nicaraguans.

DBCP was banned from use in the USA more than 20 years ago, but the named companies continued to manufacture, sell and use it, exporting it to countries such as Nicaragua, where it was widely applied in the banana plantations of Chinandega and Leon. In the action Dominguez further accused the named transnationals of intentionally withholding information about the product's toxicity from their workers and of failing to provide them with suitable protective clothing.

Speaking to the press, Dominguez said that, by laying this case before the court, Nemagon-affected workers would at last get access to justice, and that transnationals that engage in these and similar practices would be left with no place to hide.