

Maya Childcare Trust Bulletin

A charity based in the United Kingdom which is dedicated to supporting the work of the Centro Infantil Bellota (which is the Spanish for "Acorn Childcare Centre") - a childcare centre for disadvantaged children living in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

The childcare centre in Guatemala supported by the Maya Childcare Trust (the "Centro Infantil Bellota" or "Acorn Childcare Centre") is now close to completing its second year as a legally registered non-profit association in Guatemala. There is a great deal of progress to report, and much to celebrate! In this bumper edition of the newsletter we would like to reflect back on some of the events and achievements of 2007 and to outline some of the growth and changes that the rest of the year may bring. Most importantly, we would like to express our sincere thanks for all your ongoing support. Without this, the Trust could not enable the Centre to run



There is always a great deal of activity at the Centre! There are trips out each month, celebrations, birthdays, monthly parents' meetings, staff training days, and a variety of special events, in addition to all the daily adventures of day-care. Included with this bulletin is a double-sided pull out showing just a few of the highlights from this year:



NEWS FROM THE TRUST :

Barn dances in Northern Ireland

Barn dance fever continues to grip Northern Ireland!

On Friday 16 March for the third year running, Belfast Central Mission held a barn dance in aid of the Maya Childcare Trust which raised over £700. Bill Patterson made sure everyone knew when to swing their partners and a good time was had by all. Thanks to all who came along, joined in with enthusiasm and gave so generously. Thanks also to those who organised the event and provided supper.

Our next Barn Dance was held in St Cedma's Parish Church Hall, Curran Road, Larne on Saturday 8 September 2007 Bill Patterson once again guided an assorted herd of the good, the bad and the 'shouldn't be let out' around the floor to great success. This was the fourth Barn Dance that Bill has done for us and he never charges us a penny so all the money raised on the night went to Guatemala - we really appreciate his extremely generous support. An impressive £530 was raised on the night.



AGM 17 March 2007 in Belfast.

There have been some changes at the Trust too. At the Trust's AGM on 17 March in Belfast, Peter Ker was appointed trustee. Peter works at the

Mulberry Bush School in Oxfordshire, a therapeutic community for children who have suffered severe early-years trauma. As Rachael's brother he has had a close interest in the Maya Childcare Trust and the development of the Centro infantil bellota from their start. He has been involved in several fundraising and promotional events. As a trustee Peter hopes to be able to promote the Trust further particularly in Schools and small businesses.

Christmas cards

The Trust Christmas cards were a huge success in 2006 – a big thank you to all who bought and sent them, this is great publicity for the Trust, and I'm sure you will agree that the design was fantastic. Thanks also to all those people who made donations in lieu of Christmas presents. Following this great response, we will be making cards available earlier this year and asking for orders early autumn. We've tasked our treasurer, Tom, with coming up with a new design for this year so you can think of him on his summer holidays doodling holly and Christmas trees...!



Last year's design



Several children who had been attending the Centre left to start primary school. Mothers contacted staff to say that their children missed the Centre, but were getting on well and that their new teachers were very impressed with the children's learning and abilities.

January

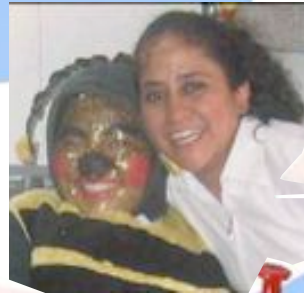
The newly expanded staff team brought great energy and creativity to daily activities, and the walls were filled with colourful art-work.



On 1 March, parents joined children and staff at the Centre to celebrate the Centre's first birthday. The children performed a special dance on stage. There was a puppet show, games for everybody to play together, balloon animals, another eagerly anticipated visit by Doris the bumblebee (the original) and, of course, birthday cake.

March

On 29 March children and their mothers shared in an Easter celebration, which drew on Easter traditions from various cultures. Mothers prepared 'Easter bonnets' with their children, and went on an Easter egg hunt together. The Easter bunny came to distribute traditional Easter bread, and everyone shared traditional local food of sweet cooked mangos, specially prepared bread, and hot chocolate.



On 14 February children and their mothers were invited to celebrate 'Dia del Cariño' (literally the "Day of Affection"). Children performed their favourite dance; puppets discussed the celebration; Doris, a life-size bumblebee, directed some games; and everyone shared in a special snack. (Events were, in fact, led by a substitute Doris. The original Doris got locked into a room when the door-handle broke and she had to pass her bumblebee costume through a small window so the show could go on... But she was released by snack-time, so all was well!) There were lots of hugs, and everybody went home smiling, paper hearts in hand.



February

The Secretaria de Bienestar Social, the government organisation responsible for overseeing children's work, made an announced visit. The Centre met all their criteria and staff were warmly congratulated on the service they provide.

In the monthly parents' meeting on 22 February, Edna Ruth, one of the Guatemalan trustees of the Centre, offered advice on matters of nutrition and provided recipes and samples. Neither parents nor

children wanted to leave that day and Rachael had to wander around for some time declaring the Centre to be officially closed for business.

On 20 February, the Centre celebrated 'Carnival'. Children had painted special masks and enjoyed dressing-up and participating in traditional activities. This essentially involved smashing eggshells filled with confetti over each other. Not surprisingly, they loved it.





On 16 May, a trip to Quetzaltenango's Multicultural Centre gave children the opportunity to see and learn about different types of Mayan dress. The Ninpot' shown below is a woven band of brightly coloured threads wound into a headdress for women, but some of the boys were very keen to try it for themselves.



June

On 13 June, children had a wonderful time at the zoo, looking at the animals, running around the park and playing in the playground. They have visited before, and they love it. (MARSA, a local transport company, provides the Centre with an excellent minibus free of charge for these monthly outings.)

July

A speech therapist came to evaluate some of the children with more extreme speech difficulties so that she could advise staff and parents on how best to support them.



On 20 April a couple of nurses from the Health Centre came to provide vaccinations against measles and rubella for the families of children and of staff.

April

On 22 April, children thoroughly enjoyed a visit to some local parkland where they used sticks to fish for pondweed in a small pool, played football, dropped balls in a river for staff to rescue, made houses, ran around lots, shared a picnic and homemade mango ice-pops and generally had a marvellous time!

The Centre finally received a long-awaited but unannounced inspection from the Ministerio de Salud (national health department). The inspectors were very impressed to find children sitting calmly round the table eating very correctly with their forks and talking pleasantly. (This was fortunate timing as lunchtimes are a happy but sometimes slightly messy affair.) They carried out a thorough inspection of the building and their positive report completed the Centre's full legalisation process.

May



A volunteer at the Centre also helped to arrange free dental care for children, some of whom have significant problems with their teeth.

August

On 22 August, children returned to visit the local sports complex, where they had a fabulous time playing in a huge sandpit. It was like a day at the beach. The weather was perfect, and it was a very pleasant and relaxed trip.





Patricia Sarat

The Centre is experiencing a time of some change. Pati, who worked with Rachael from the beginning to bring the Centre into being, stepped down as director of the Centre at the end of August. She has completed her two-year term as legal representative of the organisation, and plans to move on to help establish other social projects. Pati did a marvelous job ensuring that the many legal requirements for opening a day-care centre were fully met and has established a secure foundation for the Centre to grow and develop. She has worked hard to help ensure a smooth transition to a new director. Both the Centre and the Trust would like to express their sincere thanks for her enormous contribution to the Centre's development and to wish her well in future projects. The Centre is fully legally accredited and staff can now develop their plans for ongoing growth and development. The Centre currently has a capacity of 15 children, and a growing waiting list of children to occupy any spaces that open up. Several of the children who have been attending the Centre since it first opened are due to start school in



January. If resources permit, staff hope to continue to receive these children at the Centre in the afternoons. This should help the transition from day-care to school, which some children found difficult at the start of this year. It would mean that children could still receive a nutritious lunch, and have somebody familiar to help them with their homework and to care for them until their mothers finish work. They would have to graduate from the Centre by their seventh birthday, but should by then be much more established in school and more independent.

Maria de los Angeles Grijalva took on the role of director and legal representative of the Centre on 1 September. Her warm and caring manner has already endeared her to both staff and children. Maria de los Angeles, known as 'Marielos', is a trained psychologist and a primary school teacher, and she previously ran her own private daycare centre. She has also been well trained by her two daughters, aged 2 and 5. Marielos brings insight, experience, and great enthusiasm to the work of the Centre, and we are delighted that she is taking the project forward.



We would like to know if you have plans to raise money to support the work in Guatemala. Please contact us at info@mayachildcare.org

For more information visit our website www.mayachildcare.org



Thank you friends!

You have received this Bulletin because you are listed on our database as a supporter of the Trust. The Trustees believe that this quarterly communication is an important way of letting you know how your donations are being used. If you would prefer to be removed from our mailing list please either email us at: info@mayachildcare.org or write to our Secretary, **Mr Andrew Ker, 24 Ravensdale, Newtownabbey, Co. Antrim BT36 6FA.**