



S.H.A.R.E. News

SENDING HELP AND RESOURCES EVERYWHERE

MAY 2006

INSIDE: the link between literacy and micro-enterprise in El Salvador

www.shareagfoundation.org



ABOVE Josue (centre), a Belizean scholarship student from near San Ignacio, joined University of Guelph study tour participants at Spanish Lookout, home of SHARE sponsored dairy projects and Mennonite ice cream. LEFT Meeting this entertaining group of boys and other school children from Arenal village was a highlight for the Guelph students.

UN-BELIZEABLE!

Guelph communication students put their Reading Week to good use

BY KIM WAALDERBOS

Agricultural students from the University of Guelph added a new twist to their Reading Week break this year. Through a partnership with SHARE, they embarked on a week-long study tour to Belize. The experience was, for most, their first perspective of life in a developing country.

The group of seven students was supervised by Guelph agricultural communications instructor Owen Roberts, and led by Les Frayne, SHARE project officer. Their Belizean experience offered a look at new cultures, terrain, agricultural practices and people. Visits included a sugar cane plant, shrimp farm, meat processing facility, Mennonite communities, traditional Belizean communities, and Mayan ruins.

Throughout the week, many events left a lasting impression on the Guelph group. In particular, students were struck by the different rates of growth within Belize. Some areas were well developed with modern houses, vehicles, furnishings and technology, while other areas struggled to have the basic possessions necessary to live.

Clear differences were also found in how Belizeans communicate. In rural areas, where technology access can be limited, government and non-government workers become extension-type agents. Their role, as was seen when visiting the SHARE dairy projects, is to deliver information and resources. Belizeans also put great emphasis on personal communication. Throughout the week it was very evident the role social events play in building a sense of community and belonging.

The Belizean people are hospitable, and shared a tremendous wealth of knowledge with the Guelph group. Typically, tours stretched long past their scheduled end as guides went the extra distance to explain or demonstrate their point.

Stark differences were also apparent in the food supply. Top-notch technology was found to play a large role at the Running W slaughter house, Belize's leading meat processor. During the students' stop at the slaughter house, they realized how tightly intertwined food safety and the HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) programs were in Belize food production – much like in Canada. Yet, while some Belizeans have easy access to a top-rate food supply, others are self-reliant on their own subsistence farming enterprises.

In Arenal, a small village near the Guatemalan border, having adequate food available is not always possible. During their visit, the link between proper nutrition and a child's ability to learn and advance themselves became very apparent to the Guelph group.

SHARE has been supplying dairy cattle and goats to impoverished rural

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The ABCs are the building blocks for success

BY LAURIE WEBER

Literacy is a building block for success, no matter where you live. In El Salvador, SHARE has recognized this need, and has recently started providing literacy training to people across the country. Literacy training enables these El Salvadorians to have a better chance at life. Literacy means a chance at an entry level job nearby, or starting a little business from home. If even one person from a family is able to bring in a little cash, life changes dramatically for the better.

SHARE started working in El Salvador almost a decade ago with traditional dairy and agricultural projects. SHARE has now branched out into other ways to help the villages, specifically literacy training,

technical training, and micro-enterprise projects (aka small business loans).

Success in these micro-enterprise projects is strongly influenced by the basic literacy skills. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to read an invoice or make change without the basic skills in reading writing and arithmetic?

SHARE has a multi-component approach to projects for just that reason. SHARE provides the basic literacy skills, and then follows up with a business opportunity through micro-enterprise loans. The organization gives them the tools to build the skills and the confidence to run a business.

Agricultural projects are SHARE's base and our strength, but offering other options such as literacy training is how the organization is taking a multi-pronged

LEFT *Many families cannot afford tuition at primary schools and thus both young children and adults attend SHARE's literacy classes.* RIGHT *This family run bakery started with a micro-enterprise loan from SHARE.*

approach to break the cycle of poverty.

One family that participated in the literacy training has gone on to start a successful business with a micro-enterprise loan. Leslie's bakery or "Lesly's Panaderia" in Spanish, pictured here, borrowed \$200 to buy a used oven for baking bread. Now the family has a small business producing bread for local distribution. The kids help out after school and this family now has a better chance at life because of your help. SHARE's integrated approach is improving the standard of living in these communities tremendously.

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communities for 30 years with this in mind.

Scholarship programs, (such as the one SHARE offers), as well as the dairy projects are helping to ensure the nourishment of both mind and body in Belizean students. The Guelph group had the opportunity to spend a day travelling with one such scholarship student named Josue. They were amazed to learn how Josue was working to pay both his way,

and his sister's, through the four years of secondary school system.

Despite the many differences within Belize, and in comparing the country to Canada, similarities were also found. Walking through an evening political rally revealed to the Guelph students that at a country's core the issues can be the same anywhere in the world. The highest priorities in the Belize election campaign: health care, education and employment, are also among the top focus in Canada.

All would agree that their experiences in Belize have helped shape a different perspective on communication, agriculture, cultures and life itself. More than a Reading Week break trip, this was an opportunity to step outside traditional thinking boundaries and experience new approaches.

Kim Waalderbos, an Ontario Agricultural College student, participated in the SHARE-University of Guelph study tour of Belize.

PASS-ON PRINCIPLE WORKING WONDERS IN EL SALVADOR

BY LAURIE WEBER

The pass-on principle – that is, a farmer receiving a cow is expected to give at least one offspring of that cow in return to another needy family – is the foundation for SHARE’s successful cattle projects in El Salvador. With the sizeable base herd that SHARE now has built up, the pass-on approach is expected to double the number of cows in the next couple years.

Over the last decade, eight groups came forward with an interest in participating in a SHARE cattle project. In these villages, 115 families with over 400 children are now being helped by SHARE.

SHARE is based on the principle of a ‘hand-up’ rather than a ‘hand-out.’ To be considered for funding, a project must demonstrate sustainability. The focus is to increase a community’s capacity to care for itself. Some 135 animals were purchased, and SHARE is happy to report that the pass-on is now in full swing.

“We were impressed with the level of health and condition of the cattle in the SHARE projects compared with other cattle herds that we passed while travelling around this beautiful and diverse country,” said Paul McLellan, former dairy producer and SHARE director, who visited El Salvador in 2006.

With time and care these groups have begun to repay their debt by passing on the offspring. Four new communities have recently started cattle projects. Over 50 cows, 5 bulls, and 17 calves have been passed on to these new communities. Male animals are generally sold rather than being passed on to other communities.

Buying cattle for these new communities would have easily cost \$40,000, but with the pass-on principle, SHARE didn’t have to spend a penny. SHARE’s cattle program will continue to grow in El Salvador with little re-investment.

SHARE is helping to spread the good fortune of owning dairy cattle, and ensures through the pass-on principle that wealth is not being accumulated with just one person. SHARE actively



TOP El Salvadorian farmers with their cattle received through pass-on. The work of feeding, caring and milking the cows is shared amongst all members of the group. The schedule is posted in the shelter (background left). BOTTOM A young boy with the family’s cattle at the end of the day. Cattle spend the night in the farmer’s backyard for protection, but are taken to pasture during the day.

manages the pass-on in order to maximize the number of animals available to other needy groups. It’s amazing that with the projected number

of cattle being passed on in the next couple years, that least another six groups can start dairy projects at no cost to you, our donors.



University of Guelph agricultural students immersed themselves in Belizean agriculture and culture during their week-long study tour in Belize. Here are some photographic highlights from their adventure.

Day 2 – Check your fear of heights before ascending Xunantunich, a Mayan ruin, for a breathtaking view.

Day 3 – The students examined these breeding shrimp tanks during their tour of a large-scale aquaculture farm on the southern Belizean coast.

Day 4 – This iguana, part of a special Green Iguana Project at the San Ignacio Hotel, got up close and personal with Pat and Laura.

Day 5 – Trucks loaded with sugar cane stretched for miles down the road, and left a lasting impression on students touring Belize's only sugar cane plant.

Day 6 – Sea turtles such as this one in our guide's hand were among the many creatures and coral seen while snorkelling on the Belize barrier reef.

An interview with SHARE director Trudy Blackburn

Trudy and Harry Blackburn recently returned from a monitoring trip to Belize

Q: What was the most memorable experience on your recent monitoring trip?

A: My most memorable event was visiting the family of Maria, a high school student we met while visiting SHARE scholarship recipients in Belmopan. Maria is one of nine children in her family. Her mother and some of the children make baskets and jewellery to sell to raise the funds so that the children can go to school. Being a budding entrepreneur, she suggested that perhaps

we could stop at her house and look at the items. On meeting the family, it was obvious the parents value education greatly. The SHARE scholarship helps families such as Maria's who cannot afford the tuition. This unexpected opportunity was truly a memorable experience.

Q: Now that you've seen the projects firsthand, what's your impression on the effectiveness of SHARE's work?

A: Without SHARE's help, many bright young adults would not be able to attend high school. Education is critical for succeeding in Belize, and with SHARE's scholarship program, these students will have a better life than their parents. It's money well spent.



S.H.A.R.E. AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION COMING EVENTS 2006

May 4

**COPETOWN FUNDRAISING
DINNER**

7pm @ Copetown Community Centre

June 3

PLANT SALE

9-12pm @ Sharing Hands Ladies Group,
14409 Creditview Rd, Cheltenham

June 10

SHARE CONCERT (New Event**)**

8pm @ Grace United Church,
156 Main St N, Brampton

July 17

**SHARE 7th ANNUAL GOLF
TOURNAMENT**

9am @ Ariss Valley Golf
and Country Club

September 10

**CORN ROAST
FOR SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

3.30-8.30 pm @ Harmer Farm,
2395 No 1 Sideroad, Burlington

November 4

SHARE ANNUAL DINNER DANCE

6:30pm @ Speranza Banquet Hall

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT A DIRECTOR OR CHECK THE WEBSITE WWW.SHAREAGFOUNDATION.ORG

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