



Compañeros y compañeras,

Muchas bendiciones y Feliz Navidad.

Another year has passed, and yet another begins. Karitas continues its work in Cuernavaca, 2005 a year of even greater integration with Fundación Comunidad A.C. Together we are innovating new ways of accompanying communities in their development and new ways for the communities to be able to monitor and evaluate their own progress. The vision is multiple: 1) that the different projects will become more formal and organized in such a manner as to be able to access a wider variety of funding sources and reach a greater level of sustainability, 2) the projects will be more diligent about discerning and evaluating their missions, spirit, and activities, 3) the projects network to build off of positive experiences of others as well as the initiatives that have failed, and 4) the more plural and inclusive the better, together with Comunidad we are bringing all sectors of the state together to come up with more creative solutions, multiply the benefits, and understand each other.

But our work is more about *people* than about projects. So we foresee 2006 a year of supporting personal growth of all the participants at all levels through a process of coaching or accompaniment, as I like to call it. During this past year I participated in two human relations and personal growth seminars with an organization called PRH based on the work and study of a French humanist, Andre Rochais. We hope to host such seminars in Cuernavaca this year and expand its message in our work. There is no point to climbing the economic ladder if it is not accompanied by personal and spiritual growth that allows all the stakeholders in the projects to live a more fulfilling life. I, myself, will continue the PRH training in the hope to better embody the work of accompanying others in their growth.

The seeds we have planted are started to give new life. Thank you for your support allowing us to continue to nurture and fertilized their growth; the harvest shall be abundant.

Un Abrazo,  
Erik

## **Familiar Projects – Old and New**

*Frisan Automotive* and all its partners continue its work repairing automatic transmissions. Though their original shop had a slightly slower year in 2005, the branch they opened in the neighboring town of Yautepec has grown and is doing nicely. A new employee has been successfully managing

and operating that shop for the last eight months. The partners have also invested in business training, each of them attending different seminars in Mexico City varying from personal relations to business accounting.

The *Torque Converter Reconstruction Shop* has had a slow year, but continues. This business will take its first step to worker-ownership in January when the shop's head worker and foreman, Frank Cruz, will run the whole operation independently. I told him, "I used to pay you, now you will pay me." As a first step we will rent the business to him; if over time he feels comfortable and is successful, we will negotiate selling him the business and equipment.



The *La Estacion Breakfast Program* has grown considerably; as the school year ended last June, they regularly served about 100 meals a day, as the new school year began in September, kindergarten enrollment and meals served increased from 105 to 130. Fresvinda, who coordinates the project, has formed a partnership with some of the mothers, are now in the process of forming their own non-profit organization that will make them eligible for other funding, and will give them an infrastructure to expand their activities. They already are talking about constructing two more classrooms to accommodate the growing school attendance.



*Autonomia, Libertad en Movimiento A.C.*, our project to build tricycles for, and by, people with disabilities had a great boost this year. CBM, a German based organization that supports projects for people with disabilities has offered significant start-up funding for 2006, with the strong possibility of three more years, supporting the program through 2009. We hosted a sizeable public event in November to bring all those interested together. Using Open Space technology we had a productive initial meeting with intense interest by all those present to continue working together. The themes touched upon in the different small groups varied from technical design, specifications for the tricycles, cultural analysis of disabilities, vigorous and forthright reflection on why we decide to categorize people by their disabilities instead of their abilities. We will continue these meetings every other month throughout 2006, beginning promotion and training in January with two sessions each month, with September the target date for putting the production facility into operation.



## FUNDING STATUS OF SAPECO

Operational Costs,	4,000.00
Salaries,	18,200.00
Curriculum and training costs,	2,500.00
Seminars and Travel,	5,500.00
Partnership projects (Grupo Expresate, Corazon Viajero, Fundación Comunidad)	15,000.00
<b>TOTAL PROJECTED COSTS</b>	<b>45,200.00</b>

**RETURN FROM  
EXISTING PROJECTS**                      **8,500.00**

<b>FUNDING NEEDS FOR 2006</b>	<b>\$36,700.00</b>
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**Tax deductible contributions can be made to  
the work of SAPECO through Karitas  
Foundation**

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### KEYNOTE COMMENTS

*(An introductory reflection I offered at Fundación Comunidad's annual event, when grants are given to the projects. Representatives from the projects that work in the communities, the associates of the foundation, and several important donors and donor companies were present: A wonderful cross-section of the community).*

Why are you here? What are we doing here? I look around and I see such a diverse group. What could we possibly have in common?

Why have a foundation that supports projects, a community foundation? Is it because there is suffering and need in some sectors of society? Or is there something more that motivates us? Is there, in reality, one group that we can call *benefactor* and another *beneficiary*?

My participation in Fundación Comunidad has radically changed the way I answer these questions. First, I noticed that, while I assumed I was helping the projects and the people, I was getting more back in return. Some of these gifts I have received are easy to define: like a greater capacity to analyze the social context, a more precise critique of social and economic organization of society, and the ability to form proposals. But there was something else. I began to perceive my surrounding differently. Before, from my perspective of the world, I would see need, defects, and weakness; now I have begun to see the people and the projects from a perspective of gifts, capabilities, and opportunities. Before I collaborated with the foundation because of a feeling of responsibility and obligation; now I do it for self-interest. I am recovering my humanity. I do it to recover my humanity.

We humans are created incomplete; it is good to recognize that, and feel it. Life's project is to become *complete, whole, or perfect*. In essence these three words have the same meaning; the dictionary says that to make *whole* is to make *complete*, and to make complete is to make *perfect* or whole. There are many ways we try to do this these days. It appears the most common form is through the acquisition of things: we hope we will find value through the car we drive, that people will love us because of the cloths we wear, that we will be happy when we have a new flat screen TV, et cetera. I would like to propose that these "things" do damage to our life project because they separate us more and more from the "other" person. I risk suggesting that we become whole in the "other" that is different from us, and as we begin to get closer to "that" person, he becomes our neighbour, and in the process we recover our humanity. Let's do it to recover our humanity!

Born from this vision of humanity Comunidad has organized the *convocatoria* [this Spanish word, with no clear equivalent in English, encourages and trains those applying for grants to clearly and persuasively present their project plan]. The concept is that the foundation can become a catalyst that unites the efforts of the community, the community of Morelos. Some support with financial resources, others with human resources, and we all help with the vision of a better life. Everybody here today has planted a seed; we wait proudly for the harvest. A warm thanks to all of you for letting me take part in this celebration of life.

## Grupo Exprésate

With a name that means, “Express yourself,” this is a wonderfully animated group in a rural village about 45 minutes from Cuernavaca. Made up of mostly women, they organized to recover their natural medical traditions. They learn to treat common illnesses with medicines that they prepare themselves. The Mexican people had a very extensive knowledge of the medicinal values of many different plants; unfortunately much of this was at risk of being lost with the exaggerated promises of the technology of modern medicine. At least three problems exist, however, with modern medicine: it often fails to do treat the causes of the disease, it creates side effects, and it is too often unavailable to rural populations due to both distance and cost.

There are professors from the state university that have done an incredible job of uncovering past traditions: knowledge of plants, use of ritual, and physical therapy like message. These professors

have offered sessions specifically designed for this group..

But, above all, the most impressive work of the group is manifest in their warm and outgoing presence. Their eagerness to learn, the desire to share their new knowledge, and the pride of being able to give something back to their community is obvious and enthusiastic.

But all this requires funding. The professors who offer the course charge little more than their travel expenses, but they also need to buy some supplies, even though the plants they either collect or grow themselves. Sometimes they need to travel themselves to take courses and most impressive is that, as part of their learning process, they travel to neighboring villages to offer message and consultation. They have also attended regional conferences and festivals to share their experiences with other similar groups.



## **Corazon Viajero**

This project has the vision of training local youth from the area surrounding the historic village of Tepoztlan to be guides for eco-tourism. Co-sponsored by Camp Camomilha, with its educational program for exceptional but marginalized children, the program has the intent of channeling the graduating youth into sustainable and local employment. This has the two fold benefit of recovering their own value and traditions, and, avoiding the typical exodus of so many young people from these regions to the United States in search of work. The project also has the support and limited sponsorship of a local group of small business owners who are hopeful that eco-tourism will bring more business for everyone.

Tepoztlan is an Indian village with rich traditions, set in a valley between majestic mountain formations unique even to the surrounding areas. Many argue that the valley is one of seven “chakra” points of energy around the planet. Sacred Spiritual and healing traditions and rituals abound. Socially and economically the village has resisted modernization by those interested in building a golf course and business complex. The community has taken a decided and united decision to protect its history and lifestyle.

But maintaining tradition and wisdom requires it to be shared with others; and through sharing it we come to value it ourselves even more. The objective of the project is to have these local youths guide visitors on a walking tour through the village and the surrounding mountains where they will learn about the traditions, the religion, the surrounding nature and they will experience the “spirit” ever so present.

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### **A word from the proud parents . . .**

Dear Cuernavaca Partners,

What to call you? Most of you know Erik, and many have encouraged and supported him in his mission for a long time. Some have known him for most of his life. A few have visited Cuernavaca and seen the work first hand. There is an open invitation to you to visit, and stay in our house next to theirs. We mean it!

We think 2006 will be a year of unique opportunity, as the circle of Erik’s involvement and creative influence broadens significantly, and, more importantly, the persons and projects who are your “Cuernavaca Partners” widens too. Simply, directly put – *only the limit of funds can narrow that circle*. Stated more dramatically, if your gifts were to increase threefold in 2006 to \$100,000, we’d spend every cent of that increase in creative, effective, faithful and life-giving ways. The lives of dozens, even hundreds of people would change unimaginably.

Betsy and I have doubled our gift this year. Erik has increased his time commitment, at the same annual stipend. We invite you to join us. And, may 2006 brim with blessings for all of you.

Appreciatively,

***Howard and Betsy***



**SAPECO**  
**Wellspring/Karitas Foundation, Inc.**  
**1275 Rose Lane**  
**Berwyn, Pennsylvania 19312**  
**610.647.4142**