

## Donation Totals for Panama Service Project, 2008

Monetary donations from Friends of Nutre Hogar totaled \$13,700.

An independent donation allowed the purchase of a new industrial washer and dryer set

Additionally, we carried 30 duffel bags full of used and new children's clothing, crib sheets, disposable diapers, baby wipes, medical supplies including gauze, bandages, saline, toothpaste, toothbrushes, vitamins, baby formula both powdered and pre-mixed, liquid vitamins, baby shampoo, baby lotion, toiletries, games, stuffed animals, balls, and many other products.



## Companion Program to Nutre Hogar Offers Hope for a New Start

by Barb Stratton

I was fortunate to participate in Panama Service Project—Santiago, 2008 with two of my children. It was a heart warming, eye opening, life-changing experience.

One of the organizations at which we worked will be forever etched in my memory. Ofrece un Hogar is a small orphanage for babies and young children. I was so surprised at their meager existence. Only four children were there at the time of our visit. The entire facility is about the size of my kitchen at home. The children have no books or games; they have no televisions or computers. What they do have are great big genuine SMILES on their faces. And a small pile of broken toys to play with in an 8'x8' outdoor, fenced-in area or a couple of catalogs to look at.

When I compared their lives with those of typical North American children, I thought of them as terribly disadvantaged. But, they are so happy with so little. After returning home to our "stuff-oriented" culture, I wonder who are the disadvantaged children? Is it those with too little or those with too much?

The needs are extensive at Ofrece un Hogar and the caregivers there were grateful to know that people outside of their community care enough to donate items which make their work a little easier and the lives of the children a little more comfortable.



Panama Service Project, LLC  
Friends of Nutre Hogar  
7630 N. Boyd Way  
Fox Point, WI 53217  
[www.panamaserviceproject.com](http://www.panamaserviceproject.com)  
[www.friendsofnutrehogar.org](http://www.friendsofnutrehogar.org)

Jenny Morse, Editor

## Future Projects

The facility of Nutre Hogar—Santiago is in disrepair. In 2006 they asked an engineer to evaluate necessary repairs and three contractors to provide estimates as to the cost of each project. These are their figures for renovations:

Classrooms and nursery . . .	\$3,010
Playroom . . . . .	\$1,200
Laundry room . . . . .	\$8,200
Offices . . . . .	\$14,000
Hallways and ceiling . . . . .	\$2,970
Kitchen . . . . .	\$4,400
Electric repairs . . . . .	\$1,570
Plumbing repairs . . . . .	\$1,290
Roof and gutters . . . . .	\$18,830

Additionally, Panama Service Project aims to work more intimately with the villages where these children originate in an effort to develop sustainable solutions. Reaching these villages requires four wheel drive vehicles, which we hope to purchase for the center's use. Furthermore, we hope to provide the center with a small bus to help them transport larger groups throughout the region. An advantage to us would be having these vehicles available to our programs during our trips.

Finally, the cribs in the center need to be replaced by rust-proof ones.

# Newsletter

Friends of Nutre Hogar & Panama Service Project, LLC



## Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of Nutre Hogar,

I wish that each and every one of you had been able to accompany us to Panama this year! Because of your generosity, we made dreams come true for some needy people there. Included in this newsletter are detailed articles about our contributions this year and our hopes and dreams for the future. Know how very much we appreciate your generous donations and allow us to educate and inspire you through the voices of the people who were part of our 2008 team.

54 of us with 30 bags of donations left for Panama City on July 13th. Our group consisted of 37 high school students, five high school Spanish teachers, seven adults, a family of three, a few young adult chaperones, and two very small children with their mom. It was the perfect blend of generous spirits and hearty souls! We arrived at Nutre Hogar with much anticipation for how we might connect with these underprivileged children and left with our eyes opened to a world of need and our hearts changed forever. In the words of one student, "I will never forget this event in my life and the kids at Nutre Hogar will forever be inscribed in my heart." For me, the hard work of preparing this goodwill mission is worth it when the experience evokes reflections like these: "I have seen suffering in a way that should not exist and now I can base service that I do off a very successful model—Nutre Hogar." "I believe that this experience has been a gift for all of us and it is my responsibility to share my experience with others in an attempt to open others' eyes as my eyes have been opened." "This was a very educational trip in both scholastic and social terms. We were placed in a situation that demanded that we speak Spanish to survive and at the same time we were able to help with one of the problems in the world. It is only one, but you have to start somewhere." "This trip makes me step away from my life and realize what is important in this world: to give of yourself and help others."

Please consider joining us in our work with Panamanians to save their children from the devastating and often irreversible affects of malnutrition. Help us educate their communities and teach them to provide for themselves in sustainable ways. It is easy to push the cause out of your mind when you don't know the dying children. Once they make their way into your heart, it is impossible. None of us can explain the arbitrary reality of our own good fortune. All we can do is share it!

Holly Morse, Program Director



## Nutre Hogar—A History

The institution of Nutre Hogar was founded in 1988 by Monsignor Rómulo Emiliani in an effort to combat malnutrition among Panamanian children. Seven centers around the country care for approximately 285 children when at capacity.

The organization's goals are to provide balanced meals, physical activity, and attention and affection to suffering children until they completely recover. Most of the children in the center come from underdeveloped and rural areas, specifically small villages in the mountains. These tiny villages are rarely linked by more than paths, which neighbors must walk for hours in order to visit each other.

To reach this population, Nutre Hogar has community centers in the larger mountainous communities, like El Bale, where they provide medical attention and education to surrounding inhabitants. Children with severe malnutrition are identified at those centers and collected three or four times a year for treatment in one of the main centers. More frequent collections are difficult due to limitations with vehicles and roads, which are often impassable during the rainy season.

Operating costs for one Nutre Hogar center come to more than \$6000 a month. Donations, the majority of which are from Panamanian organizations and citizens, account for over half of the yearly budget. These donations allow the center to continue providing basic food and shelter to the children they care for, but maintenance of the facilities is out of reach and improvements are inconceivable without further assistance.

## Panama Service Project Goes to Penonomé, 2008

by Alyssa Koniar

The Panama Service Project—Penonomé experienced huge success this year. Despite our smaller group (Penonomé typically has 10-15 participants), our project came out with a bang, raising a grand total of \$2,000 through school and church activities. This money was directly donated to Nutre Hogar—Coclé. Other generous donations to our program included \$1500 from Friends of Nutre Hogar and \$450 from Panama Service Project.

Along with these monetary donations, we brought a plethora of products such as food, health supplies, clothing, diapers, sheets and other items that Penonomé always needs. Our group proudly presented these gifts to Gloria Álvarez, President of Nutre Hogar—Coclé, who is currently serving her second year of a two-year presidency.

As a two-time participant, I think this trip is absolutely extraordinary. Nutre Hogar—Coclé has a capacity for 15 children and they were definitely full this year. Being with these children at Nutre Hogar and watching them learn and grow, even in the very short time we are there, is tear jerking. It made it an exceptional trip and I can not wait to return again next year!



## A Visit to El Bale

by Alice Read

Sixteen of us from PSP 2008 crammed into several trucks and rode three hours north of Santiago over flooded roadways and up steep hills to visit the mountainous area of Cañazas. Many of the children at Nutre Hogar—Santiago come from the 40 villages surrounding Cañazas and are identified through the church and community center located in the village. Father Roberto Gonzales and his mission, Centro Misionero Nuestra Señora De Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission Center), have done wonderful work to improve the lives of the families in the small villages the mission serves.

Upon our arrival, Father Roberto threw on his white cassock and took the pulpit at the small mission church he and the villagers built from stone to lead 100 quietly awaiting school children and our group in mass. The mass was moving in its simplicity and in the beauty of the children's voices.

Father Roberto then proudly led us on a tour of the mission: its four room modern hospital, the small factory where they bottle honey, the craft room where village women crochet baby clothing to sell, the fields where they raise goats, chickens and corn and the dormitory for the students at the Catholic school. We also saw the new home the mission had just completed for a family of seven whose father was disabled. The accomplishments of Father Roberto and the three sisters who work with him are impressive.

On our return to Santiago we stopped at a one room mud home a mother and her son share. They showed us their cilantro fields where they had spent six months growing cilantro, harvested it by hand, and then sold in Santiago for \$60—money that supported the four families who worked the fields. As we left the mother gave us a bag of lemons. We treasured her kind gesture and warm smile.



## Building Strong Bonds

by Sue Weber

Fundraising has become an integral part of participation in Panama Service Project for students at Palos Verdes High School. The activities benefit both Nutre Hogar by contributing funds and the group attending PSP's summer program by bonding them in their service. Over the past three years, PV High's fundraising efforts have been the success of student-generated ideas, organization and execution.

For our first trip in 2006, students prepared a fundraising dinner at a local restaurant, Ruby's Diner, donating 20% of the proceeds to "Friends of Nutre Hogar." The event garnered \$1,475, of which they spent \$100 on toys and another \$100 on medical supplies. Additionally, students conducted a clothing drive. Pride abounded as the students delivered 11 bags of donations to Nutre Hogar.

Our second year, the students continued the previous events and expanded advertisement by writing and taping a commercial for "Ruby's Night" on the school's video news broadcast. The group raised \$4,200, nearly tripling the first year's contributions.

This year's 18 students determined to outdo their predecessors by initiating two new events. The first, an on-campus lunch, sold 500 tacos and 500 burritos from another local hangout, "El Burrito Junior," for \$1 a piece above cost. The effort yielded \$1,075 in less than 10 minutes! The students were ecstatic!

The second, and most successful event to date, was "Project Runway." Kate Waxler and Kelly Knickerbocker started a campus club to raise money for Nutre Hogar by putting on a spring fashion show. The girls, in conjunction with the 18 students attending PSP 2008 and nearly 20 other student participants, managed every detail from advertising to choreography. They solicited clothing donations from local boutiques and secured contributions for hairstyling, make-up, the runway itself, and printing costs. They also negotiated a discount from a popular disc jockey for music and lighting. The first annual "Project Runway" extravaganza took place on May 19 and was a tremendous success. The hour-long event netted \$3,200! (Total PV High donations this year equaled \$6,700.)

These young entrepreneurs launched not only a fabulous show, but also created strong bonds of friendship along the way. This year's students call themselves the "Panamanians" and vow to stay connected through monthly reunions and the orchestration of a second "Project Runway" in the coming school year. The power of young minds working together for a common cause is inspirational!



## A Series of Fortunate Unfortunate Events

by Angie Andera

Juntos: the single word that became the unofficial motto of Catholic Memorial's Panama service group. Meaning together in Spanish, the word juntos describes how our group came together and turned a series of unfortunate events into two fortunate and unforgettable weeks.

**Unfortunate Event 1:** Flight from Milwaukee to Atlanta delayed. Arrival leaves just enough time to catch our connecting flight to Panama City, thanks to an embarrassing sprint through the airport.

**Unfortunate Event 2:** Safety in Panama City, baggage claim fails to present luggage, which had missed the flight. Too bad suitcases can't sprint. "¡Juntos!," we trudge off to hotel.

**Unfortunate Event 3:** Visiting indigenous village and swimming in the river (fully dressed, suits still in delayed luggage), one senior injured jumping off the rocks.

**Unfortunate Event 4:** Soaked from swimming with clothes on, on the canoe ride back from the village a storm starts. Drenched from head to toe, shiver entire air-conditioned ride back to hotel.

Days later, settled with our host families in Santiago and comfortably working at Nutre Hogar, I realized our "unfortunate events" were easy in comparison with the burdens others bear. The most challenging part of volunteering at Nutre Hogar was seeing the suffering the young children experience. From starvation, to skin rashes, to parasites, to slow brain development, the Panamanian children face hardships far worse than missing luggage. One cannot help but care for them.

Our unfortunate events turned out to be blessings in disguise. As a result of our experiences at Nutre Hogar, we began to appreciate our own lives more. This trip taught me that one can never be reminded enough of the blessings in one's life. All too often, moments of thankfulness are forgotten the next day. To prevent forgetfulness, I remind myself about the children of Nutre Hogar. I must remember how, despite their sufferings, they always laughed and played with us, no matter how poor our Spanish. Although we are miles apart, the children of Nutre Hogar will always be in my heart. Forever juntos.



## A Talk with Nutre Hogar's Medical Team

During our trip this year, we had the opportunity to meet several medical professionals who donate their time to Nutre Hogar. A doctor explained the problems malnutrition creates for these children, specifically underdevelopment that affects both their bodies and minds, vitamin deficiencies, parasite infestations, and tooth decay. Many of these problems can be overcome through proper nutrition. We also heard from a physical therapist who moves the children through the developmental stages from crawling to walking. Many of the children are listless and inactive from poor nutrition. Finally, we heard from a social worker who educates parents and children about nutrition. Problematically, many of the women only speak indigenous languages, so information must be passed through the men, who are not the primary caretakers. Even with the many obstacles, progress continues to be made.

Nutre Hogar can always benefit from donations of vitamins, formula, and protein powders, all of which help the children achieve a balanced diet. Toys that keep them active are encouraged as donations as well in order to help the children develop mobility and dexterity.