

We are also beginning to plan what we hope will be a series of workshops in conjunction with the Concord Police Department and local business leaders with a focus on “cultural proficiency.” The goal of the workshops will be to critically examine how we -- people of varied cultural backgrounds who live and work in, or visit, Concord -- interact with each other in a variety of settings. We are in the early planning stages of this project, but are excited about its potential.

In addition to the above activities, the Council has been involved in working with local residents about rights violations, hate crimes and issues of discrimination. We are not professional mediators, but act as a resource for the community in finding mediators, sensitivity training, legal advice, etc. We are in close touch with the Police Department, the schools, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and do not hesitate to call in experts when we receive complaints from the public. We take no action without thoughtful consideration and discussion with those victimized, as well as the advice of police or other concerned groups.

We can be reached by email through our website cchumanrights.org, the Police Dept, or the Town House.

CONCORD-SAN MARCOS -- SISTER CITY COMMITTEE

Steven B. Bloomfield, Chair
Shirley Andrews, Secretary
Fiona Nauseda, Secretary
Nancy Kerr, Treasurer

Steering Committee: Andrew Della Volpe, Lisa Gutwillig, Seamus Vahey, Kevin Wholihan, Ed Wholihan.

Advisers: Sam Alexander, Al Armenti (former chair and co-founder), Debbie Barr, Cynthia Laflamme, Erin Lynch, Lal Minton, Karin Segal, Bryan Wholihan

Mission

The Concord-San Marcos Sister Cities Committee encourages peace and mutual understanding and socio-economic development in Nicaragua, through programs of cultural exchange and economic assistance carried out in a spirit of cooperation by the people of Concord and the city of San Marcos, Nicaragua. Concord Town Meeting established the Sister Cities Committee in 1986. Town Meeting reaffirmed the value of the Committee’s work by a second vote in 1987. The Commit-

tee works under the auspices of the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council. Voluntary membership of Concord citizens and voluntary support by means of financial donations and the contributions of goods and services from citizens in and around Concord sustain the Committee’s work.

Projects in 2011

Committee Chair Steven Bloomfield traveled to San Marcos to, among other matters, assess the functioning of the well whose construction the Committee had supported over the past two years in El Uval, a village of 400 inhabitants within the municipality of San Marcos. Meeting with cooperating citizens of San Marcos and some of the benefiting residents of El Uval, Bloomfield deemed the project an impressive success that was bringing potable water and its accompanying health benefits to all of the households of a community never before blessed with such an essential amenity.



Freddy Mercado, an essential partner to the Concord San Marcos Sister Cities relationship, enjoying fresh El Uval water.

While in San Marcos, Bloomfield also donated a used computer, offered by the Concord Public Schools, to the computer laboratory of the Colegio Juan XXIII, San Marcos’ secondary school, to enable the initiation of Skype transmissions between the high school classrooms of Concord and San Marcos. During the rest of 2011, communications went back and forth between teachers, with the expectation of establishing formal curricular opportunities and informal student-to-student

contact in the year (and years) ahead. It is expected that more computer donations and enhanced communication will be features of some years to come.

Bloomfield found some problems, as well, that he addressed directly with Concord's Sister Cities counterparts:

- A lack of sufficient organization and follow through in San Marcos to enable the continuation of a scholarship program that had provided nearly 50 elementary school students at the Escuela San Marcos with the means to pay for some of their school-supply and transportation costs over the last four years.
- Weak oversight of a long-operating micro-bank in San Marcos, FECONDESAM, that the Concord Committee has funded in cooperation with a small San Marcos-based board of directors since 1996, that now has a financial base of over \$25,000. Bloomfield asked that Concord's San Marcos counterparts call back all of the loans over an 18-month period in order to reassess and then renew, beginning in 2013, the still promising yet now lamentably ill-administered loan program.
- A long-promised yet still unrealized institutionalization of a true foundation board, fashioned in name as FUNDISMAR, that would have the legal status in Nicaragua to receive funds, raise funds, and take on projects of even greater scale in the future than in the past with Concord partners, and with perhaps other partners as well, for the benefit of the citizens of San Marcos.

The Concord Committee was cheered, by year's end, that promises made with regard to both the restructuring of FECONDESAM and the constitution of FUNDISMAR were being kept, and that in the new year the committee might foresee growth and newly invigorated enterprises of mutual invention and exciting possibility.

Sources of Funding

Donations from Concord citizens, as well as contributions of goods and services from Concord institutions such as the Concord Public Schools and Emerson Hospital continue to sustain the work of the Committee. In 2011, owing to concerns the Committee had with regard to the viability of its partnership, formal fundraising did not occur. The Committee expects to reinstate its hopes for mutual progress and, therefore, the reinvigoration of fundraising opportunities, in the coming year.

Future Directions

Apart from a renewal of projects that respond to the 2011 Annual Report

economic-development needs of San Marcos as expressed and defined by Concord's San Marcos partners, in 2012 the Committee plans to re-launch youth trips emphasizing cultural immersion and community service.

In years past, summer youth trips have become fixtures of the Sister Cities Committee's profile in the Town. The committee expects to cooperate ever more closely with Concord Carlisle High School teachers, especially Spanish teacher Erin Lynch, to expand the influence of experiential learning for Concord youths in San Marcos in ways that will be mutually created and mutually beneficial. The Committee continues to see great benefit in the ongoing experience of community-to-community conversation and communion spurred by the Sister Cities relationship.

The Committee website resides as: [http://www.concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_BComm/San Marcos](http://www.concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_BComm/San_Marcos).

CONCORD NANAE NETWORK

Tom Curtin, Chair
Judy Terry, Vice-Chair

You did not have to wait for the Town's Annual Report to learn what was happening in Nanae this past year. All you had to do was go to concordnanae.com, the website Coordinator of International Relations (CIR), Ben Mirin, created in 2010 just prior to his departure for Nanae. Ben has been a prolific producer of videos and articles about Nanae, all of which are available on the site for those who are not regular visitors. Learn about Hokkaido birds, sustainability practices, local holidays, or Halloween in Nanae. His footage of post-tsunami Hakodate went viral on the Internet. In addition, the site has links to the [concordnanae](http://concordnanae.com) Flickr, Youtube, Twitter, and Facebook sites.

Members of the Concord-Nanae Network, CCHS students and families, and other Concord and Carlisle citizens raised \$14,857 for the Japan Relief Fund Boston to assist the survivors of the March earthquake and tsunami in Japan. The money was raised through the CCHS Bands and Orchestra Concert, the CCHS Sci Fi Club bake sales, the Thoreau School Cake Walk, and the Interact Club Talent Show. While Nanae was not directly impacted by the disaster, many Nanae families lost friends and family. The Board of Selectmen and CCHS expressed their concern for Japan to Nanae's