



Acción Ministries

# **A Slice of the Action**

**November 2009  
Issue 6**

**People to people.  
Person to person.  
Relationships, not just a program.**

## Letter from the Director

*Oscar R. Dorantes, Acción Director*

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Dear Friends,

As we continue working for “the least and the poor”, we’re always witnessing the hand of the Lord in all we do.

Before the summer kicked-off, we were very concerned and prepared, as a ministry, for all the happenings around the world. For us it felt like “the perfect storm”. Here are some examples: the first world economy hanging at an unexpected precarious level; then, the US media were showing that all of México was at war with the drug cartels, and then, recently, Human Influenza appeared. We were wondering what else could go wrong!

We had five groups this summer, when usually we have more than ten. We worked in different villages located in the state of Yucatán. We helped build fourteen houses, of which nine have been completed, in a poor village called Huechenbalam, Yucatan. We helped build a multipurpose court in the village Yaxachen, the walls of class-rooms for a beginning church in Kitilkum, and we put a roof in three classrooms and built a concrete patio in the church of Pisté. The programs that we maintain year-round, such as the Children’s Mayan Village (Villa Infantil Maya–VIM), and our Students House (Shelter) continue to



*Oscar R. and Patty Dorantes*

grow strong, and steadily. At VIM, last school-year we had 18 children; this year we are going to have around 25 boys and girls going from elementary school thru high school. Isaac and Juanita Ricárdez continue to be our resident directors and have established a good rapport with the villages around La Villa.

We would also like to communicate to you that this past April, and after two years of talks, the ministry known as Living Water is going to install a water purifying plant. This will provide purified water for the Children’s village and, in the future, we want to initiate a cottage industry producing bottled water, as one more activity so that we can start becoming self-sufficient.

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At the Students House (Shelter), we have continued working in the remodeling process. Last year we had 13 students, and this school-year we think we should complete the number to 15 students. This past year we helped 2 students graduate: one of them as a Civil Engineer, and another one as a Computer Systems Engineer. All of these young men come from small villages and they will be the first generation to get a college degree.

All of this could not have been possible without your prayers and donations. Here at Acción we continue honoring our commitment with the Mayan people in



*One of the new houses Acción helped build in Huechenbalam*

the Yucatán Peninsula in the name of our Lord and His church as we keep on building His Kingdom.

Vaya con Dios,  
Oscar R. Dorantes

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## Friends of Accion and its Board of Directors

*Rich Neidinger, Friends of Accion President*

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. I thank God for you because of your partnership in the gospel, being confident that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion* (Phil. 1:2-6 condensed). Let's consider how the good work of Acción is facilitated by Friends of Accion and its Board of Directors and how we would like to involve more people in this effort.

The Board of Directors of Friends of Accion, Inc., coordinates all American support for the mission of Acción. We send

funds to Mexico to enable all the ministries and we receive requests and reports from Mexico including detailed financial reports of all expenditures. Please, spread the word that our most critical need continues to be funds to support the growing operation of the Mayan Children's Village (VIM).

While regular business is mostly by email, there are about four Board meetings per year, held in Charlotte with telephone participants. With the very recent addition of Ken Skodiak from Arizona,

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current Directors are members or leaders in Presbyterian churches in Charlotte NC, Vienna VA, Ocean Springs MS, and Tucson AZ, and a Lutheran church in Fargo, ND. Officers are elected annually, although terms of Directors have not been specified.

We know that many other individuals and churches support Acción, including Bible and Congregational churches, and the Board is discussing how to get more people involved in and informed about the work of Friends of Accion. Ideas include giving Directors term limits (with re-election possible) and starting a new Board of Advisors. Advisors could be representatives from a church to Friends of Accion, who would be invited to Board of Directors meetings, receive information, and be responsible for sharing it with home churches. Interested advisors could help in the work of Friends of Accion. In fact, two big jobs are currently

done by individuals who are not Directors, specifically Abby Gwaltney as Work Team Coordinator and former Director Louise Ripple as Development Coordinator. Please, contact me at [rineidinger@davidson.edu](mailto:rineidinger@davidson.edu) for more information or to give us input about these ideas for getting more people involved.

Since incorporation in 2003, there has been successful growth in the scope of Friends of Accion, from small specific support to all of Acción's ministries. The leadership of Acción in Mexico has also very successfully changed to Oscar R. Dorantes with the help of Roger Aviles. VIM has opened and grown steadily. It is a good time to look at our original by-laws in light of these changes and our desires for the future. Please, pray for Acción and Friends of Accion and pray about your role in God's work through these groups. May God bless this good work.



## Upcoming Mission Trip Opportunity

First Presbyterian Church Charlotte is sponsoring a work team trip to Huechenbalam, Yucatan, **February 27– March 6, 2010**. The team will be working on homes in the village, leading Bible School for the local church, as well as visiting VIM. The team will include several members of Friends of Accion Board and would welcome other interested adults. There will be at least two churches from Charlotte represented, and the trip would be an excellent opportunity for a future "new" team leader to learn more about the teams working in the Yucatan. Anyone interested should contact Elise Barksdale ([brielise@bellsouth.net](mailto:brielise@bellsouth.net)) or the Rev. Katie Crowe ([kcrowe@firstpre-charlotte.org](mailto:kcrowe@firstpre-charlotte.org)).

# The Gift of Daily Life

Katie Van Valkenburg, Falls Church Presbyterian Church (Falls Church, VA)

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115 Mayan villagers, 30 young Americans and a rat named Arnold. What could possibly be the connection? The village of Huechenbalam in the heart of the Mexican jungle.

When we first arrived at the village in the dead of night, it was hard to imagine what to anticipate. The power had just been cut off due to a storm and there were wild animals roaming the streets. But it did not take long for us to realize the importance of our presence in the town; in fact it began the very next morning when we woke to the sounds of small children outside of our humble abodes.

The day would start with an early breakfast made by our fellow mission-trippers. We would then receive our jobs for the day and shove off to work. After work we would all come back together to eat lunch where everyday Bruce would award the dirtiest person with a glow stick. The group would then split up for a well needed siesta. The siesta was often cut short because it seemed that the village children had an

internal clock set for when Bible study was to start, except that clock was set an hour early.

It was at this time that the kids got to learn about the American culture and how we live. The girls loved to poke through our backpacks and see what exciting goodies we had.



FCPC team members in their host's home

Their favorite item was the makeup and they would come and ask for us to paint their lips with lip gloss, and they would throw their arms in the air for us to put deodorant on them. These occasions were truly eye opening for me because even though these girls had so little, they were

the happiest people I have ever come across.

Then we would all walk back to the village square for a Spanish Bible study and craft. At Bible study you could see

*We were all 'transformed by the renewal of our minds'*

the effects of our work simply by looking

at the children's faces. Their little faces would light up as if we had given them a

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million dollars instead of letting them make paper flowers.

But the time the children valued the most was after Bible study where our youth group would just play. The simplest of games entertained them for hours, especially a rousing game of Red Rover.

After dark would settle the kids would gradually return to their homes and the youth would receive a short lesson from Maggie at our [team's] daily worship service.

Then, completely spent, we all went back



*Everyone lined up for Red Rover*

to our huts and climbed carefully into our hammocks for some well deserved sleep.

While we did encounter a few speed bumps, like how the older girls got the pleasure to live with a rascally rat named Arnold, this trip truly held a heavy significance.

Beyond simply building houses, we gave and received the gift of friendship with each villager. And while the villagers were able to benefit from our work and the word of the Lord, we were all 'transformed by the renewal of our minds' in seeing a different way of

life where one has so little yet still has everything because they have their family and God's love.

## Christmas Giving

If you would like to make a Christmas donation to Acción in honor of a friend/friends, we would be happy to send an acknowledgement to them for you for a suggested amount of \$15.00 per friend/acknowledgement. Please send names and addresses along with your donation by Dec., 15th to:

**Friends of Accion**  
c/o Covenant Presbyterian Church  
1000 E. Morehead St., Charlotte , NC 28204.





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## Getting Back to the Basics

*Christy Ghiorso, Peninsula Bible Church (Cupertino, CA)*

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In July of 2009, I participated in a trip to the Yucatan with 25 peers from my church in California.

Having several previous experiences as a short term missionary, I felt I was mentally and physically prepared for the journey, but somewhat novice regarding my place on the team and my first trip to this area.

I had a wonderful experience with my team, being particularly stretched by the Lord in areas I was not expecting. This was my greatest joy - to be strong serving the Lord in areas where I have no strength. (Example: Leading worship via guitar, in Spanish, to a group of women!)

This was definitely an example in my life of taking a giant vulnerable leap of faith

to praise and glorify God in song together.

I was heavily involved in a ministry to adult women in the church which gave my sub-team a chance to connect with some wonderful women. As a bonus, we got to do craft projects with them! The women were extremely creative and even served us by teaching us some of their skills.

Additionally, it was a great experience seeing other team members acting in service to each other and our Yucatan community. What a great opportunity to put aside the technology and stress of our lives in the US to get back to the basics - pouring concrete, making tortillas by hand, and playing soccer, all in the name of the Lord.



*Women from Peninsula Bible Church make new friends through arts and crafts.*

## Impressions from Huechenbalam

*Members of the Mission Team from Northminster Presbyterian Church (Tucson, AZ)*

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“A mission team that prayed together, sang together, worked together and sweated together . . . all for the glory of God.”

- *Charissa Kamps*

“What a great thing to work alongside some amazing people in our group and to feel and see the love of the people of the village towards us in so many ways.”

- *Mike Constant*

“I reconnected with God, myself and others on this trip as we overcame some difficult situations and encouraged each other to reach the goal God has given us.”

- *Christina Walter*

“Seeing that people were glad we had come —what a gift from God they were.”

- *Jaymie Smoot*

“I felt like we made a real difference to

the people we had come to served and in the process we learned how to work as a team and together in Christ.”

- *Danielle Kamps*

“We left behind a 'concrete' example of what it means to live out the love of Christ in our lives and I came to better understand how God calls us to live out justice in our world.”

- *Heather Rosenbach*



*Northminster Team Members with villagers*

“Together as we grew closer as a team we accomplished much more for God's Kingdom than we could have individually.”

- *Brianna Maxwell*

“God showed me how important it is to foster relationships with others, whether it is right here in Tucson or in a small village in the Yucatan.”

- *Hailey Gibbons*

“I can think of few accomplishments that I can look back on in my life that are able to top what God did through us in Huechenbalam.”

- *Alex Bobbs*

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“From building roofs to playing baseball with the local Mayan team . . . what a great trip in every respect.”

- *Jacob Thoman*

“One of the little girls in the village made it a point to memorize all our names . . . just one of the ways I saw God working everyday in this community.”

- *Kaylee Ross*



*Northminster team members building a home in Huechenbalam*

## Serving Mexico from Back Home in America

*Abby Gwaltney, Acción Ministries Work Team Coordinator (Springfield, VA)*

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Although the title of this article applies to what I do, I'm actually writing about you... Each year Acción hosts hundreds of American missionaries who are touched by their experiences in Mexico. Most return home fired up and looking forward to their next Mexico mission trip. But your work with Acción doesn't have to stop between trips.

I encourage you to consider what you can do to serve Acción right now right where you are.

Please consider the following ways you could serve Acción with your home church, Bible study, or youth group:

- ◆ Sponsor a student at the Mayan Children's Village or the Students House (full scholarship is \$120/month)

- ◆ Adopt an Acción program or student to pray for regularly
- ◆ Hold a fundraising event for Acción such as:
  - ◇ Bake sale
  - ◇ “Mexican Market” where people can ‘buy’ school supplies for our boarding students
  - ◇ Battle of the Bands Competition
  - ◇ Walk-a-thon

These are just a few ideas to get you thinking and praying. God may have all kinds of exciting ways to use your gifts and talents for Acción. I welcome any and all of your suggestions—please contact me anytime (contact information is on the back page). And THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO ALREADY!

## Connecting with Acción Staff in Piste

*Members of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Work Team (Charlotte, NC)*

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When I signed up to go to the Yucatan this year I thought of my first trip to the Yucatan two years ago and the people who had impacted me most. I thought about Luiz who I had gotten to know. He was really passionate about his work [with Acción], and somehow he always managed to put a smile on my face. Well when we arrived in Piste the first night of this trip, I noticed a man who looked a lot like Luiz. I learned his name was Quipo and he had a brother who used to work for Acción. Quipo's brother was Luiz. Quipo was so similar to Luiz. They have the exact same smile, they are both hard workers and they always find a way to make those around them laugh. It was great spending time with Quipo and not only getting to know him, but being able to see how Luiz was doing. It's funny how God finds a way to connect people. On this trip I was reconnected with Luiz through Quipo and connected to Quipo who also really impacted my life. In each of them, I could see God. I feel privileged to have known Quipo and Luiz. The brothers that have dedicated their lives to helping people in need by working with Acción will always have a special place in my heart.

- *Mary Grace Gibson*

Roger and his family stick out in my mind's eye. He has to get a second job to

support his family, and yet he promised me if I came back he'd still be there.

Even though there are so many groups with so many volunteers Roger still remembers my sister, even two years later. It's devotion like that that calls me back and keeps me believing the work we do matters. This trip is a time for me to get away and remember what the real world is.

- *Rosie Strawn*

As I wrote the list of all the things that I experienced this past week, I began to realize how blessed I am to have had this opportunity. I can't believe that all of this could happen in just one week.

1. Making a potholder at women's crafts.
2. Riding in the back of a pick up with Anna on a Mexican toll road.
3. Buying groceries with my teammates and Roger at Super She (a Mexican Wal-Mart).
4. Cooking Charro Beans Mayan Style with Roger and our kitchen crew (Roger's Recipe).
5. Joking with Roger all week—the other big guy.
6. Helping with bible school (first time ever).
7. Enjoying a home cooked Mayan meal prepared by our Mayan brothers.

- *Richard Balentine*

## 2009 Work Team Round-Up

*Abby Gwaltney, Acci3n Ministries Work Team Coordinator (Springfield, VA)*

We had only 6 teams come down in 2009, but one of those was brand new to Acci3n Ministries from Falls Church, VA. worked in Huechenbalam on a new project building homes.

However small the numbers were, our 151 missionary volunteers accomplished great things in Mexico. Teams worked in 4 different villages. Many of our teams



*missionaries at work*



*Vienna Presbyterian Church and play in the village*

Acci3n became aware of the need in Huechenbalam through our contact with a pastor in Holca, Yucatan. We found out that the government program called FONDEM, whose main purpose is to build concrete houses for families in villages to use as safe houses when the hurricanes hit, did not reach the entire community.

Oscar and Roger gathered all the leaders and looked for the families that did not receive the help of the government program. We have started 14 houses, and we have completed 9 of the houses. Two work teams coming this winter will help us to finish all the houses.

Team	Hometown	# People	Village	Project
First Lutheran Church	Fargo, ND	34	Huechenbalam, Yucatan	Building homes for families
Northminster Presbyterian Church	Tucson, AZ	18	Huechenbalam, Yucatan	Building homes for families
Vienna Presbyterian Church	Vienna, VA	10	Kitilkum, Yucatan; Huechenbalam, Yucatan	Building church classroom walls; building homes for families
Peninsula Bible Church	Cupertino, CA	26	Yaxhachen, Yucatan	Building a basketball court
Falls Church Presbyterian Church	Falls Church, VA	29	Huechenbalam, Yucatan	Building homes for families
Covenant Presbyterian Church	Charlotte, NC	34	Piste, Yucatan	Roofing classrooms and building a patio for the church

# Let's hear it!

## Oscar and Patty Dorantes

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(011-52) 9999-23-33-84 (Home)  
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## Jason and Abby Gwaltney

(703) 978-0145 (Jason's cell)  
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(703) 932-0812 (Abby's cell)  
abby.gwaltney@gmail.com

### Mail and FedEx Packages:

Oscar R. Dorantes  
Accion A.C.  
Calle 66 (Por 67 Y 69) 551C  
Merida Centro  
Merida, Yucatan C.P. 97000  
Mexico

Donations to support this ministry may be sent to...

**Friends of Accion**  
c/o Covenant Presbyterian Church  
1000 E Morehead St.  
Charlotte, NC 28204  
FriendsofAccion@carolina.rr.com

**[www.friendsofaccion.org](http://www.friendsofaccion.org)**

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