

Village Updates September 2010



Saturation Points

Saturation point: *noun* Definition: (1) The point at which the greatest possible amount of a substance has been absorbed. (2) The limit beyond which something cannot be continued, endured, etc.

We have endured numerous saturation points in Honduras the past few months - the latest and most devastating being the night before we left Honduras in August. In a matter of hours, torrential rains left 1000 people homeless and four dead in Danli (our base of operations for the work in Linaca and Jamastran).

Driving home from a dinner appointment that evening, our road had morphed into a swift-moving river - in less time than it took to eat. A bridge we used every day, collapsed. Franklin and Nidia's house, several blocks from ours, was on the verge of flooding. But there was no way to get out of the neighborhood. Thankfully, only their garage and cistern filled with mud. It has continued to rain most days since we left.

As you know from our past two newsletters, our teens and their parents reached their saturation point with the malicious tactics of a bus company hired to transport our scholarshiped teens to High School. You can find the background information to this story at www.wrgnews.com under Newsletters.

While we pursued every legal avenue open to us to address this dangerous and abusive treatment of minors, it wasn't until the parents and teens took to the streets with their grievances that the trial hit the fast track. The parents and teens were interviewed by the office of the District Attorney and their complaints validated.

The bus company driver was charged with child abuse and arrested. Released on his own recognizance, he was ordered not to go anywhere near our children.

The trial date was set for mid July. The lawyer we hired and our team went to work coaching the teens about the tactics that would be used to discredit their testimonies. All of the parents and

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teens stood strong in the face of the danger they faced at the hands of this bus company (and its band of thugs) that had a vested interest in dismantling our team and our case.

As the day of the trial approached we asked the teens if they were nervous about testifying. Expecting them to be uncomfortable and skittish about the courtroom drama, instead the teens were emboldened by the opportunity to present their case and obtain justice. Each testimony was written down with specific incidents, times and dates. All were well-prepped for the witness stand.

Entering the courtroom, the judge's first concern was that the teens would feel threatened with their accused abuser staring them down as they gave testimony. Quite the contrary, they stated courageously. They wanted the bus driver right

there to hear every word they spoke.

It was then decided by the judge that only one teen would give testimony. Our lawyer chose Maria, one of our boldest young women, one who was assaulted after being thrown off the bus and who had a very strong case against the driver.

From the beginning Maria was harangued by the defense attorney. But she stood her ground and not only stated her case, with dates and specific incidents, but continued on recounting the time, place, and grievances of all 19 students who had complaints against the driver!

When all testimony was finished, the judge found the bus driver guilty of 19 individual counts of child abuse. The driver may not approach any of our children and if he so much as looks at them menacingly, he will be arrested.

This victory we count as a tsunami of good Saturation Points! For years, many have tried, but no one has managed to get a judgment against this bus company for their many evil deeds. However, our 19 brave teens went in armed with the truth and prevailed!

While the victory was sweet and the teens thoroughly savored the victory, we still did not have our long awaited bus... The kids were forced to continue their long trek each day to high school, hitchhiking, biking, and even walking hours to Danli.

As the days following the trial turned into weeks with no bus in sight, the teens and their parents were becoming quite dispirited.

The bus we were purchasing was now two months behind delivery. To add insult to injury, the other two buses we thought were coming in August ended up being too old to bring in the country under Honduran law... Another major disappointment.

Hondurans have become so accustomed to broken promises, that our kids and parents were



entertaining the idea that perhaps we too would be breaking our promise to them.

So where was the bus? We had no answers. The people procuring the bus were making, what seemed to us, excuse after excuse. While promising the bus would arrive manana, which in Honduran Spanish does not mean tomorrow, it simply means not today. Their explanations made little sense to us.

Just as we thought we would have to start the search anew, the elusive bus surfaced. In Texas. It turned out that the person responsible for driving the bus disappeared without a trace. Rumor had it he went off on a bender, abandoning the bus somewhere in the middle of the state.

It took a very long time to locate the bus, still more time to get a new driver in place, before the long overdue bus would be on the road again slinking toward Linaca.

On August 11th we held a meeting for the teens and the parents to assess where they were emotionally and physically. All were very close to the end of their ropes. Some parents were so worried about the physical and emotional strain on their children they were considering pulling them from school.

Having finally learned the truth about its whereabouts, we explained what had happened with the bus. And while it was not here, we assured them that the bus was indeed coming.

At the meeting we asked our mentor team and teens and parents to share thoughts, frustrations, hopes, dreams and ways to cope while waiting for the bus. It turned into a very lively and spiritedly honest exchange.

In the end, our youngest mentor, Milagro, a born and bred Linacan, got up in front of the group to speak a word of encouragement. Eloquently she spoke about faith being the substance of things hoped for - the evidence of things unseen. Just as she finished her thought, a honking horn announced the arrival of their big fat yellow American school bus!

Thus began our second tsunami of a good saturation point - pandemonium of uncontrolled joy!

Knowing the bus was coming any minute, I

trained my eyes on the faces of those closest to the window to get their reaction. Hearing the rumbling of a bus at an unexpected hour, one of the teens looked out the window.

Astounded, his eyes widened in disbelief. He grabbed the bars on the windows and stared, mouth agape, for a very long time before erupting in a very loud cry. By then others were jumping to the window to see what was there. The whole room exploded in cheers and tears and hugs.

Resembling a stampede of kangaroos, the kids virtually bounced out the door in a most hilarious dash of joy.

Arriving at the bus first, the boys could not brook another second's delay in going the extra few yards to enter through the front of the bus. Flinging open the back door, they crushed each other clambering inside.

By the time I reached the road a few of the boys had hoisted themselves out the emergency exit on the roof and were jumping on top of the bus, pumping fists in the air and screaming like Honduras won the World Cup.

One father, who a few minutes before had spoken of the strong temptation to pull his son from school, dissolved in tears. The celebration was one of the most jubilant events we ever witnessed.

Everyone crowded into the bus, teens, parents, mentors, as well as babies and brothers and sisters for a spin around Linaca.

Soon the boys had their shirts off and were waving them around over their heads. The ear-splitting whistling and screaming and chanting did not stop for the entire ride. We adults were quite deafened by the experience, but it was well worth it.

At one point we passed the public bus owned by the company that abused our kids.

For a moment everyone fell silent as we had to

pass on a very narrow section of muddy road.

To our astonishment, the other bus stopped and let us pass! The teens rang out with a chorus of "The Center Has A Bus!" All through Linaca people came out of their houses to cheer the victory the kids were celebrating.

Reflecting on that memorable day one teen said it was the happiest day of his life. Another echoed that sentiment but with the added detail that, *August 11, 2010 at 5:40 PM* was the happiest day of his life.

Several said it was the best present they ever received. One said upon seeing that bus all he could think was he no longer had to endure the dreadful 4 a.m. alarm!

One girl said she felt like she had accomplished something very significant by being a part of the center, winning the law suit, and now having safe transportation - not only that she might get to high school, but all those who would come after her will also have a safe way to get ahead in life.

These kids paid a tremendous price. Their efforts and sacrifice won the day, not only for themselves, but for all of those who are following fast in their footsteps.

The saturation point of the land brought floods and devastation to our area. In just the opposite manner, we are working to saturate Honduras with young men and women who will bring in a tsunami of hope and restoration.

