

FLASH

Two new links on our website!

APLV is now registered with the Amazon Smile program. Amazon will donate 0.5% of purchases made through the smile.amazon.com site to APLV on qualified purchases. Their contribution may be small, but Amazon is very big. Check out the link on our website, www.aplv.org/donate. *Every little bit helps.*

Guidestar.com, a clearing house for transparent evaluation of non-profits, has given APLV a GOLD rating. For those interested, Guidestar presents an easy way to see our status. which includes balance sheets and assets.



Agua Para La Vida
2311 Webster Street
Berkeley, CA 94705

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Phone _____ Email _____

- ☐ I would like to receive this newsletter via email (please provide your email above)
- ☐ I would like to support APLV in bringing clean drinking water to the people of Nicaragua.
Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of:
 - ☐ \$50 – material cost for drinking water for one person
 - ☐ \$100 – material cost for 500 seedlings for reforestation
 - ☐ \$200 – material cost for a latrine for one family
 - ☐ \$250 – sponsorship for one APLV technical student for one month
 - ☐ \$500 – material cost for drinking water for one family
 - ☐ \$1000 – cost of drinking water, latrine, and health education for one family

Agua Para La Vida is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible. Make checks payable to Agua Para La Vida (APLV). Donations can also be made online at: www.aplv.org/donate

get involved



December 2014
Board of Directors:
Gilles Corcos
Charlie Huizenga
Anne Corcos
Bill McQueeney
Debbie Parducci
Bruce Britton
Tom Cunningham

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF
Agua Para La Vida

then and now

"We believe strongly that the development of drinking water in Nicaragua cannot forever depend on the sustained availability and interest of foreign technicians. Our objective is not merely to assist the communities build their water systems but also to help the region develop the human resources it needs to become self-sufficient in this undertaking." ~ Gilles Corcos, 1996



"At the beginning of next year, APLV-Nicaragua will become autonomous. Like any child leaving home, it will be watched by its parents with some anxiety and a good deal of hope. And like many of our children, it will still require our help. Don't let it down." ~ Gilles Corcos, 2014



We have taken pride in informing our friends and donors whose continued interest and support have helped fulfill our mission: to provide access to safe drinking water for some of the poorest rural communities of Nicaragua by teaming with them to construct gravity flow water systems.

In 1987, Gilles Corcos, Prof. of Engineering at UC Berkeley and a former graduate student, Charlie Huizenga, traveled to a poor village in rural central Nicaragua to join them in a communal enterprise constructing a gravity flow water system. They succeeded. Back home in California APLV was established. The rest is history.

In 2011 we celebrated our 25th year and since then we have reported the creation of APLV-Nicaragua, introduced you to their governing boards and to some of the remarkable graduates of ETAP, our technical school in Rio Blanco of which we are very proud. By accepting the challenge of helping the Nicaraguan Board find its way to responsible leadership, we are adding to our mission. We hope to guide other NGOs, even beyond those focused on water, by sharing the ways in which we have succeeded in establishing a sustainable model. Here is how Charlie Huizenga described our work:

"APLV has created a development center that integrates water, sanitation, health education, watershed conservation and technical training at a regional scale. Our model center has successfully trained young, local men and women with nominal previous schooling to be professional water technicians capable of designing and implementing projects. Our teaching material and state-of-the-art design tools are available at no cost for others to use. Both new technicians and new tools are meant to facilitate the replication of our model by others."

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then and now *(continued from page 1)*

Success takes time and commitment. It requires learning a culture and sometimes a new language which helps earn the trust and respect of the communities where one works. It takes courage to admit one's errors and correct them. As we teach others we must be willing to learn from the wisdom of tradition even while challenging some traditional ways that are an impediment to one's goals. Trust must go both ways. In a region where corruption is regrettably endemic, it is essential that all those who handle the donors' monies, be held accountable. This requires toughness and sensitivity.

We hope our experience will light the way for others with similar dreams of improving the human condition of those who struggle just to stay alive.

this year's projects

This year four projects will be completed bringing our total to 85 — no small feat. They are:

- El Quebracho, financed by two Colorado Rotary clubs.
- Valle de la Casa (municipality of San Dionisio and not far from our very first project in 1987), financed primarily by Rural Water Ventures.
- La Ceiba Dudu, in the northern part of the Atlantic region but still close to the center of the country
- San Francisco Kuskawas (municipality of Rancho Grande).



We have started not only systematically building new and more durable latrines for new projects but also replacing older ones by new ones in former projects with funds provided by the Laird Norton Family Foundation.

As far as the transition is concerned our donors should know that the funds they contribute are just as or even more necessary than before. Though they will be managed in Nicaragua, we will maintain clear reporting and accountability in carrying out the same good work we have been doing for over 25 years.

According to Gilles, the most valuable asset we have is the rather exceptional Rio Blanco team of 12 staff members, most of whom have been with us for between 10 and 20 years and are remarkably motivated and bonded as a real community.



For the school ETAP, the most interesting development is that our Nicaraguan professor -to-be, the young **Francisco Romero**, is both helping significantly Alberto de Diego Gomez, our present professor as his assistant, and doing brilliantly in his second year in a civil engineering school in Managua. The plan to provide a Nicaraguan teacher for our school on a long term basis is thus far on track.

Gilles' reflections

Gilles Corcos is Executive and Technical Director of Agua Para La Vida.

The geopolitical and climate contexts of the future water scarcity problem are a global issue, often in the news and debated at international meetings. But that is not the stuff of APLV's concerns. What we are about is trying to SHARE that resource. This problem has been with us and will continue to be with us, perpetuating a cruel injustice toward those whose access to drinking water is prevented not by scarcity but by lack of public service.

From our inception in 1987, we had no ambition to grow into a large NGO. Rather we wanted to grope, step by step, for a workable model of development that could both experiment and help other organizations engaged in the same endeavor.

Twenty-seven years after my start in Nicaragua at age 61, as I prepare to hand over to others the task of executor of APLV policies, I tend to assess APLV's efforts, successes and weaknesses, as follows:

- Technically, I think we have shown the way. Our methods have been innovative, advanced, and successful.

- On the other hand our fundraising ability has never fully matched our needs. Focused on what we viewed as the point of view of individual donors—systematically using 100% of their contributions for expenses of field work, we all operated as volunteers (or as some would say, amateurs). Other more financially successful organizations spent money to raise money. Institutional giving (which is where the real money is) fully accepts this practice.

- While we think we have been responsive to the wishes of the villagers who solicited our help, we have felt that what was needed was not only material, technical and administrative help for the building of our 85 odd completed projects but also the systematic transmission of technical knowledge to a body of local practitioners who could then take our place. This has been what I believe to be the very successful role of our technical school, ETAP—and a real innovation in Nicaragua.

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