



Holden Newsletter - May 2017

We hope the following **highlights** will help you **find and read** what interests you!

MAIN TOPICS **MAIN POINTS**
PRAYER REQUESTS / PRAISES



Dear Friend, Encourager, Partner-in-Mission,

YARD SALE EXPERTS

In May, I attended my first 'yard sale' in Ecuador. Darrell prefers to stay at home just as he does in the U.S. To my knowledge there are about three re-sale shops in this capital city of more than 2.5 million people and I've only seen a handful of yard or garage sales in almost three years. The notion of having items useful enough to re-sell to another person is a strange concept to Ecuadorians in that most people here pass useful items on to extended family members and/or use them until they are completely worn out. Nor do they seem to accumulate things like we North Americans do. We have seen some storage units but those too are few and far between.

I am an avid re-sale item shopper. I roll up my sleeves, grab a tote bag or shopping cart, and often spend hours looking for deals. I'm also often the early bird and the late bird shopper at garage and yard sales - eager to be the first to get the best items and last to get the close-out deals. **But never have I had an experience as when I attended a yard sale at the Pan de Vida ministry here in Quito!** Carmen, Verito, and I arrived about 10 minutes after the sale started despite trying to get there by bus before they opened. The small grassy area was jam-packed with almost 100 people! Although there was no pushing and shoving, the Ecuadorians do have a way of quickly moving past you and stationing their bodies firmly when they don't want you to get around them. Often, the smallest little old ladies are the most aggressive and slip through the crowd unnoticed because of their small stature. They also did not hesitate at all when making their purchases. Within the first hour more than 50% of the hundreds of items were sold.

Fortunately, I am much taller than most Ecuadorians and was able to reach over the top of them to select a few items for ourselves. I also purchased some hand-crafted items, which support the women involved in the Pan de Vida micro-business. We gave them as gifts to our 'daughter' Wendy on her 20th birthday.

WHO'S THE GUEST OF HONOR?

Patricia, Wendy's mother, had told me that she wanted our help in throwing a surprise fiesta for Wendy's 20th birthday (she does not have money of her own to do this.) The original agreement was to have her immediate family (5 to 7 people) at our house and we would provide 'bocaditos' (finger snacks), beverages and a cake. But as weeks passed, the extended relatives found out and invited themselves (common in this culture) now totaling more than 35 guests. So the location of the fiesta was moved to Wendy's uncle's house high up the mountain in the village of Roldos where they were now preparing a full meal in addition to the things we were providing. We had no idea how to find her uncle's house, so Patricia asked Wendy to accompany us. Wendy was not suspicious for her mother had told Wendy that she wasn't feeling well (she has breast cancer) and that she wanted us to visit her.

We, Wendy and her son, Jhoan, rode the bus to uncle Pepe's house where we were met with big smiles and strong embraces - the extended family had never met Wendy's former sponsor family (us).

In typical Ecuadorian style hospitality, they made us as much the center of attention at the fiesta as the birthday girl. We were placed at the table on either side of her, served first along with Wendy, and we were the center of numerous group photos - seems everybody wanted their photo taken with the 'gringos' !



Sondra-Wendy-Patricia-David-Darrell



Us-Kids-Jhoan Gabriel (front center)

Upon leaving the 5-hour fiesta, full of food and tired from dancing, we were embraced with warm good-byes and invitations to come visit uncle Pepe and the extended family sometime again in the near future. Praising God for our friendships here, our hearts are once again warmed by the graciousness of the Ecuadorian people.

SEEING QUITO FROM A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

We've had the great pleasure of meeting 30 of Reach Beyond's board members and their wives when they visited Quito in early May. Our new president, Steve Harling, had encouraged the board to meet our Quito and Shell missionaries and see what the Lord has been doing through our ministry work. The members engaged in official board meetings but also **enjoyed an Ecuadorian style meal with all the missionaries, and their wives enjoyed a bus tour of Quito with some of the missionary women.**



Although I've seen a good share of what there is to see in Quito, I had never before seen it from a bird's-eye view of a double-decker bus.



The tour lasted two hours and included a delicious meal at a restaurant located on the mountainside high above Quito. All expenses of the day were provided by our mission. **We're so blessed by Reach Beyond and how it cares for its staff and missionaries !**



HUMILITY AND THE ART OF RECEIVING

Earlier this year we decided to apply for a spot at a 'free' retreat for missionaries being held in southern Ecuador.

A church in Tennessee and another U.S. Christian organization plan, finance, and host the event. It is their heart ministry to serve international missionaries around the world showing them their gratitude for their devotion and service. It had never before been held in Ecuador and being that it is held in a different country every year, we jumped at the opportunity. Then as God would have it, someone offered to pay for tickets for a 50-minute airplane ride so we would not have to travel 10 hours one-way on a bus at night. (View from plane) - - >



We spent three amazing days in a 5-star hotel in Guayaquil - Ecuador's largest port city. The hotel and church volunteers treated all 200+ missionaries like royalty, providing us with two large buffet meals per day, an open-air swimming pool on the roof, a jacuzzi, hand and foot massages, chiropractic adjustments, medical services, counseling and prayer sessions, plus a room filled with new and used items for the missionaries to take for their personal use. We were also blessed with surprise letters from supporters, friends, and family from our home countries plus an amazing time of evening worship with an



encouraging message from the pastor. Each evening, we could see the burdens, weariness, tiredness, and stress melt from the faces of those who serve the Lord day-in and day-out in cultures in which they've had to learn to speak another language and adapt to live.



Reach Beyond Missionary with 53 years of service

Here, we could be 'ourselves' and just relax and play without anyone needing our time and attention. Each day we had the freedom to 'do whatever we wanted' so that we could just enjoy each other, and learn to allow others to bless us and minister to us.

Darrell and I came away completely rejuvenated with a new and fresh perspective, a rested soul, and a new desire to 'continue on' after a very busy past six months.

We praise God for the wonderful people who made this event possible and pray that more churches will look to how they too can bless their own missionaries.



Darrell & Sondra - 3 yrs of service

THE HEARTBREAK OF COMPASSION - TAYRA'S STORY

We love our ministry work here in Ecuador. We are encouraged to see both large and small blessings in the lives of those we serve. But sometimes, more often than we desire, we become disheartened. We offer up our service, our compassion and resources for those God loves and has called us to serve. Still things happen that are completely out of our control.

Last year we introduced you to Tayra. We had described her as one of the not-so-clean children who attend the Quito Family Resource Center's after-school program . Most days she has an odor that stands out above all of the 36 children. She is also the the most cuddly of all the Zambiza children in that she cannot give nor receive enough hugs! - - - Needless to say, I shower immediately upon returning home from spending my day with these not-so-clean and yet beautiful children.



Tayra is one of the younger students that I, Sondra, help with homework. The program director, Robbie, had noticed how much she struggles with even simple tasks such as writing and following instructions. **Often, Tayra seems to be "in a daze"** and trying to communicate with her and keep her attention has been a challenge. Last year we discovered that one of the reasons she has had difficulties is because her mother, Maria, was too embarrassed to ask for help with obtaining school supplies for her daughter. **This little girl had been struggling to learn in class for five months without any paper, pencils, etc. to help her. We immediately purchased the items she needed and sent them home with her and her teary-eyed mother. Also, Maria had not shown much interest in keeping track of how Tayra was doing in school. But after some serious prayer, her mother began to take interest .** When I recently asked Tayra if her mother was helping her a little now with her homework she said, "No - - she's helping me a lot!" We are encouraged by Maria's interest in Tayra's learning. Yet we are aware that although she can read and write some, she never finished school herself, limiting her ability to help Tayra.

Since then, despite her mother's interest and the help we provide for her daughter, Tayra is still going to fail this school year. Then a few weeks ago, in discouragement, (and because of the embarrassment and shame that is so common in this culture), **Tayra's mother pulled her out of school.** We were devastated! Robbie asked her mom to come in to talk with him hoping he could convince her otherwise. Days passed and no word from Maria. **I began again to pray with tears, pleading with God to change Maria's heart. Several more days passed and then one day - there was Maria, ready to put Tayra back in our after-school program and back in school.**

There is yet another reason Tyra's struggles are so hard for her (and us) to bear - her 'mom and dad' are not married to each other, and her father is a drug addict who regularly abuses her mother and uses drugs in front of them. Although now separated, he still shows up at their home, threatening Maria, recently breaking their window. Tayra and her sister are caught in the middle. **We have come to the conclusion that Tayra's concentration problems probably are due to the trauma and/or exposure to the drugs.**

Each one of these Zambiza children have their own disheartening story. Sometimes a compassionate heart feels like it's going to break. Ours is - for her and the many children of Zambiza. **As we come to know more and more about their lives, we realize how powerless we are without the power of prayer and your financial support. Not only these children, but also their parents, need the life-changing power of prayer and the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit in their lives. PLEASE pray for Maria, Tayra, her sister, and her father.**



PAINFUL CONTRASTS

In every culture there are differences in social classes, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Sometimes it's easy to become numb to the differences. For us, this has not been the case. We were recently invited to the wedding of one of Reach Beyond's Canadian missionaries and his Ecuadorian bride. While the day was filled with flowers, rich food, beautiful music, elegance, and we thoroughly enjoyed the day, **our hearts simply could not help but notice the contrasts within the culture.** In the midst of enjoying a fancy meal prepared by a chef, **our minds wandered to the families who work 50 hrs. per week in the local garbage dump,** making 50 cents per hour, struggling to feed their families, living in dirt floor homes

**IF OUR HEARTS BREAK BECAUSE OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES,
HOW MUCH MORE BROKEN IS THE HEART OF GOD? - THIS IS WHY WE ARE HERE.**

**THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US WITH YOUR FINANCIAL GIFTS AND PRAYERS
-WITHOUT IT WE CAN DO NOTHING.**

Darrell and Sondra Holden

Missionaries of -

RIPE for Harvest
WORLD OUTREACH



Partnering with -

reach beyond
The Voice and Heart of Jesus.
Together.

in Ecuador, South America

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