

Rancho Mastatal Updates

September 2004

Saludos from Vestal, New York. We hope that all of you out there are doing super well. Even though we're writing this from the States, we do have some interesting news to report from Mastatal. We just received word from the Ranch crew that the Villanova University visit went super well, the roads have been holding up and that all else is fine in our beautiful community. We'll be looking forward to see everyone in Mastatal again at the end of November and will be bearing lots of goodies upon returning including new hammocks, a pair of Levi's for Vindas, fresh RM t-shirts, a food processor, and new soccer boots. The weather here has been splendid; the leaves peaking and the air crisp.

One recent highlight, a small get together outside of Montpelier, VT at SKIP and LIZABETH's incredible self-built timberframe home in the woods, attracted CR Yestermorrow grads DANIEL and DAVID along with the all-star duo of GUS and ROGER. During our stay, we succeeded in launching 50 pounds of Idaho potatoes deep into the forest. My relationship with Aqua-Net is forever changed. This same weekend also featured a visit to friends and past RM visitors RENNY and JEN who recently opened up an amazing new restaurant in Bennington, VT named Izabella's Eatery and featuring local organic produce, first class coffee, and a wonderful environment in which to eat and socialize. Stop in and say hello the next time you find yourself in Southern VT. November 1 marks our 3-year anniversary! It's mind-blowing how much has happened in this relatively short period of time. We're keyed up for the upcoming season. It promises to be the busiest and most rewarding year yet. Thanks for continued interest and support.



A view from inside Leo's House

photo by Darrel DeBoer

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RM Program News: Mastate Charitable Foundation

MCF—the Mastate Charitable Foundation* based in Seattle, Washington, was founded in September of 2004 to advance benevolent, educational and scientific efforts in rural and wild areas in the country of Costa Rica, most notably in and around the small community of Mastatal and the La Cangreja National Park.

MCF will promote opportunities in the areas of education, research, community development, natural

building, sustainable living and conservation as they relate to the local environment. MCF seeks to raise funds and apply for grants in order to further its objectives. The organization is run by a group of dedicated and experienced volunteer professionals with an intimate familiarity in rural Latin America.

The funds that MCF generates during its first year will go towards at least one of three ventures:

1. To design and construct a community library in Mastatal using natural building techniques and local labor,
2. To fund educational field trips to sites in Costa Rica whereby local community members will learn about and bring back innovative ideas to implement in future community projects, and
3. To build composting toilets in areas with limited wastewater treatment facilities.

The library is a long-term project that will take approximately two years to complete. Future donations will go towards stocking the library and paying for a part-time local librarian. With regards to educational field trips, MCF hopes to sponsor these on a yearly basis. The composting toilet projects will be joint ventures between local residents and student volunteers who are participating in a spring quarter class sponsored by the University of Washington.

Forthcoming projects may include but will not be limited to:

- * Providing English classes to members of the regional rural communities.
- * Supporting and organizing talks and conferences on sustainable agriculture.
- * Sponsoring and hosting workshops on the use of alternative energy such as microhydro and solar.
- * Helping to educate local community members to become responsible guides and researchers in the national park.
- * Constructing a local medical clinic, using natural, local and sustainable building materials.

For more information about MCF's projects and goals, please contact us directly.

To help us advance the efforts of MCF and its volunteers, please send donations to:

Mastate Charitable Foundation 411-25th Avenue East Seattle, WA 98112-4717

Or click on the PayPal Donate button on the Mastate Foundation page and make a secure donation with your credit card.

MCF has applied for status as a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Your donation may be tax deductible. However, until MCF receives its official tax-exempt status, donors are advised to consult their own tax advisor regarding the tax deductibility of any donation. In the interim, you may rest assured that your donation will only be used for the charitable purposes outlined above. Once MCF has attained 501(c) (3) status, it will notify all donors.

Conservation Update: Social Values

When speaking of conservation, we're not necessarily referring to our forest or animals. The importance of conserving social values is also a hot topic of discussion at times at the Ranch. Social values are sets of ideals and beliefs to which people individually and collectively aspire and which they desire to uphold. With the relatively new influx of foreign visitors to Mastatal and the surrounding communities, there is sometimes concern that the social values of local people are being compromised. The adoption and modification of values via new experiences, outside inputs and other processes can be viewed as positive, negative, or somewhere in between. The values of rural Costa Ricans will change with time, as do the morals of most every group in the world that is exposed to outside influences. As the largest "importer" of "outsiders", this presents us with an interesting challenge. How do we assure that the change taking place as a result of bringing visitors to our region is positive? The answer, as usual, is not cut and dry. Our aim is too attract

intelligent, constructive and helpful people to Mastatal while promoting productive community development. Every one of you out there that has visited the Ranch has seen firsthand how we "operate" within our community. Many of you contributed to the well-being of the community by picking up garbage, building a bus stop, teaching English to a local community member, staying with a local family, or shoring up one of the soccer teams on Sunday. On the back of positive change sometimes piggybacks a bit of unintentional unconstructiveness. It's hard to argue that change can be all good. It's easier to argue that some change can be mostly bad. Based on our ethics and upbringing, we do our best to make sure that our influences on the community are positive. Thanks for helping us determine how we can best inspire helpful change in Mastatal.

Building Report: New Classroom in Design Stage

Our next large building project, to be started soon after the completion of the Hooch, will be a classroom space to be used by our visiting educational groups. Classes in the past have been held either outdoors or on the recently completed back porch of the main house. We've recognized the need for a separate classroom space soon after receiving our first high school group in December of 2001. With other more urgent additions coming in higher on the priority list, it has taken us this long to get to the point where we can begin seriously considering breaking ground on what will be one of our most important structures. The building, as most at the Ranch, will be multi-purpose. Not only will it be a quiet space for professors and instructors to conduct their classes, it will also be home to a number of sleeping spaces for either volunteers and/or students. Moreover, it will have space to store all of the infamous action packers that have to date provided the storage for all of our scientific and educational materials (while taking up valuable space on the back porch of Jeanne's house). We'll be working hard to complete this structure before the end of September, 2005.

Volunteer/Guest Gossip: Volunteer Program Evolving

Volunteers have always been an integral part of everything that takes place at Rancho Mastatal. Without the effort of this core crew of dedicated individuals, the Ranch's activities would come to a standstill. We wanted to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all of those that contributed their time and energy towards the projects and magic taking place in Mastatal. We are moving to make some small changes to our volunteer program. We are working to encourage longer-term stays so that visiting volunteers can fully immerse themselves in both our projects and in the community. We have talked about the possibility of moving towards a direct work exchange program whereby volunteers commit at least 3 months of their time and energy in exchange for accommodations, food, and an unforgettable experience in Mastatal. Volunteers staying between 2 weeks and 3 months would continue to pay our normal volunteer rate while those staying less than 2 weeks would pay an elevated rate. Thanks to all of you out there who have dedicated their sweat, energy and time to all of our wonderful projects. If there are any volunteers out there interested in writing a short piece for next month's newsletter, please send it to us between now and November 20.

Community Facts/Stories: Boulder Musicians to Hold Free Concert in Mastatal

This month's community news deserves a second take. A group of Boulder, CO musicians, including my cousin and past visitor BONNIE DRAIN, recently contacted us to express their interest in holding a free concert in Mastatal at the end of the year. The group of approximately 8 performers will play primarily classical music and will feature the guitar, a soprano and several small chamber ensembles (clarinet, horn, and violin). Their material may also include some folk music and Christmas carols. We will also be working to convince some local musicians to perform on the same day. The group from Boulder has also been in contact with the University of Costa Rica and the National Theater in hopes of setting dates for a second free concert in San Jose. This could be an epic day. We're hoping to hold the concert in the camping area overlooking Cerro Cangreja. We hope to see some of you there. Please contact us for more information.

Comida Corner: Señor Westgate's Cold Tonic

This week's recipe has more to do with "bebida" than "comida". With winter and the flu and cold season fast approaching, we wanted to share with you a magic tonic to help you when you're not feeling up to par. This

is a recipe that we have been using at the Ranch since it was introduced to us by a wonderful volunteer named AARON WESTGATE.

Hot water The juice of one lemon Honey One shot of whiskey (you choose the brand) Aloe (fresh cut/leaf from a plant, if you don't have one, go out and get one!)

This tonic has helped many at the Ranch who had the beginnings of a cold! Be well and drink your tonic!

Inspirational Impressions: The Soul of Capitalism

"The idea of reinventing American capitalism sounds far-fetched, I know....

"I can report, nevertheless, that many Americans are already at work on the idea in various scattered ways....

"They are experimenting in localized settings – tinkering with the ways in which the system operates – and are convinced that alternatives are possible, not utopian schemes but self-interested and practical changes that can serve broader purposes.

"This approach seems quite remote from the current preoccupations of big politics and big business, but this is where the society's deepest reforms usually have originated in the American past.

"The future may begin among ordinary people, far distant from established power, who are brave enough to see themselves as pioneers."

William Greider, *The Soul of Capitalism*, 2003

Congrats to all of you Red Sox fans out there. The next big series awaits us on November 2. I have a feeling that we'll be seeing some of you in Costa Rica, perhaps on a more permanent basis, if G43 gets his way. Abrazos,

Tim and Robin

