

SERFAM NEWS

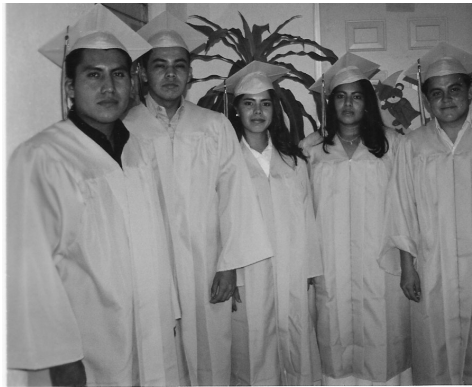
April-June
July-Sept.
2004

GRADUATION—JULY 2004

First Senior Class

July 9 marked a milestone in the development of Centro Educativo Blas Pascal. After three years of hard work on the part of everyone involved... students, teachers, parents and administration, we graduated our first Sr. Class as well as our first Jr. High group to begin in Seventh Grade and finish Ninth.

This year, we celebrated the Graduation at Shalom Presbyterian Church in order to accommodate the number of parents and family members of our graduating classes. As you might imagine, it was an exciting and emotional night for everyone involved.



Sr. Class—2004



9th Grade Class—2004

Although the number of students that were graduating was great to see (we graduated 6 Sr. Class students and 18 Jr. High students), the ceremony also included the participation of our Seventh and Eighth grade classes and a special surprise that had been planned by the Ninth Grade students.

Graduation was initiated by the usual "Pomp and Circumstance" as our graduates and staff entered the sanctuary. This was then followed by our Seventh Grade Honor Guard and a

salute to the Flag. During the course of the ceremony, our Eighth grade Bell Choir performed a couple of special numbers that they had been working on in their music class and just before the giving of the Diplomas, our Ninth graders honored our staff by presenting each of the teachers with a rose. All told, it was a very special ceremony to mark this important step in the growth of the school.



Graduation Ceremony 2004
Shalom Presbyterian Church

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SERFAM
A.C.
Mérida, Yucatán

CENTRO EDUCATIVO "BLAS PASCAL"

Teaching Teachers — COBAY & San Pablo Seminary

The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps (Prov. 16.9).

When we began thinking about starting the school, one of the things that we hoped to achieve was to have an impact on the academic community here in Mérida. My idea was that we would eventually start a College and that this would serve as a way to fulfill this vision. In my mind and according to my plan, it would take at least 10 years to reach this goal... *then the Lord did something totally unexpected.*

Earlier this year, we sent Lupita and Ayve (our Director and Assistant Director) to a conference for school administrators. During the conference they attended a workshop that had to do with the Educational Reforms that will be introduced in the 2005-06 school year. One of the main concerns, and the focus of this particular Workshop, was *Constructivism*, the educational methodology that will become the national model when the Reforms take effect.

When the speaker began the Workshop, he asked if any schools were currently using the constructivist model... Lupita and Ayve were the only ones to respond. During the course of the Workshop Lupita was given the opportunity to discuss some of the challenges our staff and students have faced as we have been working to apply this model throughout our curriculum.

After the Workshop, the Staff Development Coordinator from one of the major Public School Systems (COBAY) spoke with Lupita and Ayve about her specific concerns. It turned out that the COBAY offices at the Fed-

eral level have mandated that all of their teachers must take a Continuing Education course on Constructivism and that she would be organizing the training course. Her problem was *finding someone to teach her teachers!* As you may have already guessed, she asked Lupita if our school would be willing to offer a Continuing Ed. Course for her teachers and paid for by their administration.

After this discussion, Lupita submitted a proposal for a course that would cover 4 modules and would include 5 of our teachers to provide the instruction. After a bit of negotiation, our plan was accepted and is currently being offered on a trial basis to 125 teachers... if the trial goes well, there are an additional 700 or so teachers in the state that will also need

to take our course! In addition to beginning to have the impact on the local Academic Community, this has been a great economic windfall for the school and for our teachers. In addition to getting paid to teach these courses, we hope that a percentage of the profit can be used to fund a Continuing Educa-

tion program for our teachers to pursue post-graduate degrees and to continue in their professional development.

Another important development has been in our relationship with the San Pablo Seminary, a Seminary of the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. As Lupita was putting together the outline for the COBAY teachers, Wilbur Madera, the Rector of the Seminary, asked her if she would be willing to do an introductory module with the Seminary Professors. (Continued on Page 7)



Lupita and the troops pray to get ready for the first day's class at COBAY. Pictured: Alejandra, Josué, Lupita, Josefa & Ayve (Background).

THINKING MAPS UPDATE

If you have been keeping track of some of the things that have been going on here, you might remember that Leslie Fortier, a member of Woodland Pres. Church in Hattiesburg, MS and English teacher at Jones County Junior College, has been working with our staff to help them to use “Thinking Maps”. The maps are an invaluable tool for helping students to learn how to organize, categorize and present information. There are 8 different maps that are used for different types of cognitive functions varying from brainstorming information to showing analogous relationships. Since the original workshop in November 2003, our teachers and students have been using the maps in their regular classroom instruction. Following is a note from Les regarding her last visit here in May:

Maps, Maps, and More Maps!!!

The purpose of my May visit to Blas Pascal was two-fold. First of all, I wanted to observe in all the classes where the teachers had been using Thinking Maps to make sure they were being used as designed, to observe teachers using them as they instructed their classes, to see examples of student-created maps for assignments, and to make copies of samples to share with the folks back in the states. Secondly, I wanted to work with the English teachers to help them coordinate their curriculum in the most effective way possible. I was delighted with progress in both of these areas.

A tool is effective only if it is used in the way it was designed to be used and if it is used often enough to become a natural, even automatic, part of a process. The class is 11th grade literature. The teacher and students construct a detailed bubble map on the board describing the Medieval Period.

Next the teacher writes an assignment on the board for the students to complete for homework; it includes three maps: another bubble map, a multi-flow map, and a tree map. The teacher shows me notebooks of students that display many maps used over the course of the semester. The 11th grade English teacher uses a tree map to categorize adjectives that demonstrate a connotation of good, bad, or neutral and another tree map to categorize –ed and –ing adjectives. The 9th grade math teacher uses a circle map and two brace maps to organize facts of geometry. The biology teacher uses circle maps and brace maps to help students gain an understanding of sexual organs in humans and animals. A tree map categorizes spelling patterns for 8th graders. A double bubble map compares and contrasts radio and television communication systems. 7th graders illustrate children’s stories they have written in a three dimensional flow map. And the list goes on. All of these maps and more were used as I observed classes and talked to teachers and students during the week of May 24-28 when I returned to Mérida for the fourth time. (Continued on Page 7)



Les with Staff in the November Workshop

AUGUSTA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL Senior Class Trip to Mérida - May 2004

May was a busy month here, especially from the 13th to the 18th... *but it almost wasn't!*

Some of you might remember that our daughter, Sara, graduated last year from Augusta Christian School. While Sara was going to school in Augusta, we began a relationship with the school that has allowed us the privilege of hosting their Senior Class Trip for 4 of the last 5 Senior Class groups. This year we hosted a group of 67 students and teachers, but as I mentioned before; it almost didn't happen.



This isn't a picture of the students waiting in Atlanta... this was part of the VBS project in a *very* small church in downtown Mérida.

We began working with ACS at the end of last summer to coordinate this year's trip. Because the group was so large, we put together the Hotel reservations, rented buses to move everyone around, organized the meals and set up VBS ministries in 2 small local churches with a couple of months advance notice. Although everything was ready to go on our end when May 13th rolled around, the flight out of Atlanta was not. An extremely severe weather system that had produced heavy hailstorms and some tornadoes had moved into the Houston area and forced the airport to close down incoming and outgoing flights. When the group arrived in Atlanta and received news that it was highly probable that no flights would be going into Houston that day, they began waiting *and praying*... we

received news about the delay late that afternoon and we began notifying the hotel, buses *and praying*.

To make a long story short, they finally left Atlanta at 7:30 PM, about 15 minutes after they were supposed to be leaving Houston to come to Mérida. Arriving in Houston, they touched ground long enough to pick up the passengers awaiting the Houston flight and finally arrived here about 2:00 AM.

We adjusted the schedule to allow them to have a few extra hours sleep and then began activities that included a trip to the ruins at Uxmal, an excursion to Cuzamá to swim in some beautiful Cenotes (sinkholes), some time at the beach and a 2 night Vacation Bible School project in two different churches. In spite of a rough start, it was a great trip for the students... both relaxing and educational.

One exciting aspect of hosting the ACS group was that 8 students from Byron's advanced English classes in CEPB worked along with them as translators during the VBS activities. It was great to see some friendships develop between both groups and we hope that some of these turn into lasting relationships. We also had the opportunity to talk with Carolyn Giddens, the High School Principal, about future interchange activities with both teachers and students.



Overall, we are very grateful for the privilege of hosting the trip that almost wasn't... we were proud to see how well the students behaved and their love for the Lord manifested in their enthusiasm in working with the children from the churches.

VISION 21: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Christian Education and Church Growth

After over 100 years of existence in Mexico, the Evangelical Church is still marginalized within the society. To remedy this situation, the church needs Leadership that:

1. Perceives God as sovereign over all aspects of life.
2. Desires to minister effectively to the believer within his given social context.
3. Is able to communicate the Gospel to the unbeliever in terms that he can understand and appreciate.

This kind of leadership requires a biblical worldview that understands the Gospel as adequate for this purpose and for this kind of leadership to develop, Christian Education is essential.

When Noreen and I began working with our Mexican friends to start the Blas Pascal Educational Center (CEBP), our personal goal was to get the school up and running, establish a local funding base with solid accounting practices and to staff the school with academically qualified and spiritually mature Mexican leadership. In this, our fourth year of operations, we are now at 80% local funding for our operating budget (salaries, supplies, maintenance, ect.) and have been able to achieve our staffing goals. Our current enrollment is 120 students and due to increased interest in the school, this year we opened a second 7th Grade group in order to meet the demand... we expect to have to do the same for the 2005-06 school year. Next year, if we meet our projected enrollment goals, our operations budget will be met 100% locally. Clearly, the Lord has been working in this project.

Beside the success we have enjoyed with regard to the internal development of the school, you can see from the "Teaching Teachers" article that we have also received the unexpected blessing of beginning to impact the local academic community. Also, in the short time we have been in existence, our SEP (the State accrediting Agency) supervisor has stated many times that CEBP has become a model school for their system and our Director is frequently invited to share how our school is structured and how to implement our educational model.

As we observe how the Lord has blessed to date, we are also aware that "from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more" (Luke 12.48). For this reason, we have organized a group of Pastors, Educators and other interested men and women in order to develop a long term plan for growth and local funding. We are calling this group "Vision 21", as we will be looking at the educational needs for the 21st Century. This group met for the first time on Wednesday, October 20 and decided that, as soon as we are able, to expand CEBP in order to provide education for elementary and graduate levels.

Over the next several months we will be organizing into committees in order to develop:

1. A written outline of our Philosophy of Education with a plan for the identification and development of new teachers and staff to accommodate future growth.
2. A plan for the growth of our Physical Facilities. This will include the acquirement of new property and a building plan for a new campus.
3. A plan for the development of local resources in order to help finance future growth. This plan would also require outside support in the form of "Matching Funds".

Please pray for us as we begin this exciting phase in the life and growth of CEBP. Pray especially that the "Vision 21" leaders will be able to effectively mobilize local resources and that they will not grow weary in this endeavor.

BUILDING FOR THE (NEAR) FUTURE

Construction - 2004



Due to the growth in our student body and the need for more office as well as classroom space, this year we are trying to complete the construction of a new Library and Computer Lab building. Although we will soon be in need of additional classroom space, these facilities are considered a priority because they are a strong complement to our teaching methodology and emphasize our insistence on "student based" learning. The new facilities will also include boys and girls bathrooms with wheelchair access, a city requirement.

Initial construction began with the destruction of what used to be a set of bleachers. This was accomplished by a group of families from 2nd Pres. Memphis that visited here in March. Although our students and teachers shared a strong sentimental attachment to our "Pyramid", we needed to take an objective view and put the needs of the school first.

In June we hired a team of Masons to begin the preliminary work of getting in the footers and getting the walls up (top Left). This allowed us to take advantage of youth teams from 2nd Pres. Memphis and Mitchell Road Pres. (Greenville, SC) when they arrived in July. These groups poured the floor, columns and the first floor roof as well as painting our classrooms and Admin Building. Although we still have a long way to go, these groups went a long way in helping to get our mission accomplished.



(Teaching Teachers, Continued from Page 2)

Since its inception 20 or so years ago, the constant concern of the Seminary Professors has been that the students don't know how to think critically. Although the Professors are aware of this problem, the methodology that has been used at the Seminary has not been able to provide a solution.

There is a lot of history behind this situation. Until recently most of the Professors have been Pastors rather than educators. Although it's a good idea to have Pastors involved in the training of new Pastors, most of the Professors come from an educational model that gave priority to rote memory, limited reading and a lack of thoughtful integration. In short, they learned what they were told rather than learning how to learn for themselves.

Because of the lack of a different model, this methodology has been perpetuated in the Seminary and in the Presbyterian Church as a whole. We are hopeful that this generation of Professors and students will be impacted by the model we are using in Blas Pascal and that the Seminary will be able to better equip their students for the hard work of contextualizing the Gospel in their respective churches and in their ability to integrate biblical principles in their ministry in a given community.

It has been very gratifying to see how anxious the Professors are to learn a different methodology... one based on teaching the student to learn for himself. The Professors finished their first module in the Spring and are now taking the second module (currently we offer 8 modules). We will also be offering them a workshop on the "Thinking Maps" when Les is here during the Thanksgiving Holidays.

All this is to say how much fun it is to work for a God like ours. I am constantly surprised by his activity on behalf of the school and at the different ways that he does things according to his timeline rather than mine. Please be in prayer for wisdom for our teachers as they continue working with the teachers from COBAY and that they will have individual opportunities to discuss not only our methodology but also to share their faith. Pray also for the continued development of our relationship with the San Pablo Seminary. We hope that at some future time we will be able to assist the Seminary in the development of a Christian Education track to complement their existing curriculum.

(Thinking Maps, Continued from Page 3)

It's one thing for the teachers to use the maps in their instruction; it's quite another for students to demonstrate their understanding by including maps in reports and projects they have done throughout the semester. I saw maps used to organize essays, to explore the causes and effects of environmental problems, to compare and contrast present day culture and ancient Mayan culture, all done by students. How gratified I have been to see the way these teachers and students have begun to incorporate the maps into their curriculum as a viable and vital tool in the learning process. I've conducted training in the use of the maps for several schools in the states. The spirit and effectiveness with which the maps are being used at Blas Pascal tops them all!!!

Thanks for your help too Les!

Note: In July of this summer, Woodland Pres. Church in Hattiesburg, MS provided funding for airfare and then housed three of our teachers so that they could participate in a "Thinking Maps" Teacher Training Conference. In the future, our "Trainers" will be supported by Les as they offer the training locally. In November, we are scheduled to offer a "Thinking Maps" Workshop to the Seminary Professors of the San Pablo Seminary. We are currently in dialogue with the US company that markets the Maps in order to determine how to develop a training and marketing program here.

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2004-05**

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**Project Development
2004-2005**

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Second Pres. Church, Memphis TN
Trinity Pres. Church, Charlottesville VA
Woodland Pres. Church, Hattiesburg MS

**In Our Next Issue
(Tentatively)**

CEBP Update
Teaching Teachers
Update
Vision Group Report
Other Stuff

PRESBYTERIAN EVANGELISTIC FELLOWSHIP

PEF, the Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship, is a nonprofit faith mission whose purpose is to practice, train and equip God's people to do Biblical Evangelism, anywhere, anytime with anyone. The PEF Center in Bristol, VA houses our administrative team. The US team is spread across many states, and the International team labors in twenty-five nations and two regions beyond our domestic borders. For more information about PEF Ministries or short-term ministry opportunities, please call the PEF office at (800) 225-5733 and speak to Joe Blake.



SERFAM, A.C.

SERFAM, A.C., is a satellite ministry of PEF in Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico and is directed by Bryce King - General Director, Manuel Glory – Treasurer, and Wilbur Madera – Secretary. As a non-profit organization, SERFAM, A.C. offers family services through the development of educational, recreational and community projects. Our primary goals are to evangelize, promote biblical values and minister to family and community needs while at the same time providing leadership training for Mexican men and women.

**PROJECT UPDATE
How You Can Help**

If you have been following the our “SERFAM Updates”, you may have noticed that we missed an issue in June. This was due to the changes that have occurred in the PEF Home Office. If you don't already know, the PEF Office is now in Bristol, TN. Although our June issue was posted on our Web Site, this issue did not get printed and mailed due to the chaos associated with this transition. We decided to expand this edition in order to cover some of the events that have transpired over the last 6 months.

As we have been watching the Lord work over the last couple of months, we have seen a need to organize a group of Christian Leaders to focus on future educational needs and to help us establish priorities and promote this vision locally (see Page 5).

If you would like to help support this project financially, are interested in organizing a missions trip or would simply like to visit Mérida to learn more about how you can be involved, please contact us directly at:

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Hey! Check out our Updated (finally!) Website
www.geocities.com/pefmerida