



MAY 2003

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PORTLAND CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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### President's Message

Right now there are eight regular members on the Portland Chapter Board of AMIGOS. It's impressive to realize that *half* were Amigos volunteers themselves: Brent, Ann, Max and Shawn. And Whit – who, sadly, moved recently to S. California – is an AMIGOS vet, too. The message is obvious: the AMIGOS experience is profound and inspires ongoing commitment to the ideals of the program and to the young people who want to take part. It's great to have multiple generations of AMIGOS in our Portland program!

--D. Pribnow

**Mission Statement:** Amigos de las Américas builds partnerships to empower young leaders, advance community development and strengthen multi-cultural understanding in the Américas.

## VOLUNTEERS LEARN PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS ...and teach their parents en Español

That Saturday back in March was a big day, orchestrated by Max Campos, one of our capable Training Co-directors. The twenty-four 2003 Portland Chapter volunteers found out for the first time where in Latin America they would be going to work for the summer. They also tried out their Spanish and body language skills in front of an exuberant audience.

Early in the day, Max and Emily Stebbins (a Cleveland HS student and 2002 DR veteran) did an example *charla*—an interactive talk, now being called a *taller*—using an activity to show how pesticides introduced at the level of insects then manage to travel up through the food chain to

humans. Right afterwards the volunteers brainstormed, coming up with good ways to teach (songs, skits, games, for example) and important

things to keep in mind to connect with the audience (eye contact, enthusiasm, etc.). Then it was time for their own *tallers*. In groups of three, using their handbooks and sample activity guides, the volunteers made up ten-minute presentations completely in Spanish. The show went on before a challenging audience. (continued page 2)

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## PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS con't

Oral communication wasn't enough--the vols had to effectively convey their material in other ways, as well. Why? The "audience" was mostly their own parents who spoke little or no Spanish—and there was no translator. The volunteers had to use their ingenuity to communicate with body actions, songs, illustration, etc. One trio showed how a single impact could effect the environment more globally, as has occurred after local deforestation. They had the parents do a circular kneel (sit on the knees of the person behind you) so that pulling one link out of the circle caused the full circle to collapse; but quick replacement with another person kept the circle intact and standing. Another group showed how they would teach English (though here they taught Spanish) by having parents act out words while other audience members guessed the words. Other *taller* topics focused on watersheds and erosion and on making murals with Latin American kids.

A good time was had by all! The parents gained a better understanding of the types of activities than Amigos volunteers will undertake in the field, while volunteers gained experience in planning health activities and overcoming fears of getting in front of an audience that speaks another language.

Project announcements were the major highlight of the afternoon. Max located written project descriptions around the room, each with a special number next to it. Then every volunteer was given an obscure (but answerable) question whose answer was a number. (Examples: How many years has AMIGOS worked in Paraguay? How many Portland board members were themselves AMIGOS volunteers?) A correct answer could be found on one of the project descriptions—the volunteer's destination!

Lots of smiles ensued as the volunteers—and their parents, too—finally discovered their summer assignments. As anticipated, they had *many* excited questions. Veteran volunteers (Max, Ann Griego, Co-Training Director, Lindsey Chapman, and Laura Fortenberry) were available to at least *start* giving answers. Max noted that he is available to take more questions by email; also, he can connect volunteers with veterans who worked in their assigned countries.

And as the AMIGOS events wrapped up for the day, a group of the volunteers headed downtown to take part in the big pre-invasion anti-war protest. (Mcampos & DPribnow)



Amigos veterans: Jacy, Laura, Rachel, Jennelle, Emily & Kiera at a recent training retreat

## Meet Brent Chalmers ex-Amigo and current board member

The Portland chapter of AMIGOS has an eclectic group of Board members. Over time we wish to share "snapshots" of these committed folks who help our volunteers realize their desire to live in and work with communities in Latin America.

Brent has been a board member since 2001. He currently is chairman of the Training Committee and is the Board Liaison to parent group. He is the parent of Caroline, AMIGOS volunteer in Brazil, 2001.

Brent's first international experience began even before landing -- the plane made two passes before setting down -- the first was to chase the cows off the runway. Now three decades later, Dr. Brent Chalmers, Ophthalmologist, returns to Latin America every year to deliver health care in Mexico. While there he performs corrective surgery on children as a member of the Portland-based Northwest Medical Team.

(continued page 4)

## 2003 Summer Programs

### Healthy Households

Creating healthy homes through modifying the household environment. Activities may include: construction of latrines, fuel-efficient stoves, grain storage sheds, water storage tanks, and other home improvements. Additional activities include child-focused health education and collaborative community improvement projects with local groups.

- Honduras (Intibucá, Valle)
- Paraguay
- Nicaragua (Leon/Chinandega)

### Life Skills Extra-Curricular Program with Children & Young People

Building life skills and leadership of children through interactive workshops and group-led community improvement initiatives. *Utilizing a project-specific program guide, volunteers will plan and coordinate experiential activities with children in a school, community center or other community venue*

- Nicaragua
- Brazil (Rio Grande do Norte)
- Costa Rica (Puntarenas)
- Dominican Republic (Dajabón, Azua)
- Honduras (La Paz)
- Mexico (Guanajuato, Oaxaca)
- Paraguay

### Tools for Cultural Understanding: English as a Second Language & Promotion of Indigenous Culture in Costa Rica

*Promoting Costa Rican indigenous culture and local products by building English skills with indigenous communities. Concurrent activities may include hydroponic gardening and community-identified improvement projects.*

- Costa Rica (Puntarenas)

2003 Amigos volunteers and trainers (in photo)

## 2003 Amigos

*We are excited to have twenty-four Amigos this year. Below are the names of the 2003 summer volunteers, the country they will be going to and the high school they attend.*

- Lucas Marks- Nicaragua- Lincoln
- Jade Lilienthal- Paraguay- Central Cath.
- Sydney Boling- Nicaragua- Central Cath
- Daniel Newman- Dom. Rep- Cleveland
- Emily Kunen- Dom. Rep- Cleveland
- Jennifer McKenzie- Dom. Rep- Cleveland
- Robert Edwardsen- Honduras- Grant
- Caitlyn Demars- Mexico- Jesuit
- Chelsea Boyte- Mexico- Jesuit
- Sarah Fausel- Honduras- Jesuit
- Kathleen Condon- Hond.- Lake Oswego
- Alexis Thompson- Dom. Rep- Lincoln
- Erin Strahm- Nicaragua- Lincoln
- Gwendolen Weil- Nicaragua- Lincoln
- Jennelle Milam- Brazil- Lincoln
- Laura Nitti- Paraguay- Lincoln
- Lillian Hungerford- Hon- Lincoln
- Mary Sullivan- Honduras- Lincoln
- Whitney Holt- Honduras- Lincoln
- Aileah Dorn- Honduras- Mt. Holyoke Coll
- Laura Taylor- Dom. Rep- St. Mary's
- Madison Kaplan- Nicaragua- Catlin Gabel
- Whitney Walter- Paraguay- St. Mary's
- Eran Schweitzer- Costa Rica- Wilson



## Brent Chalmers con't

In 1971, Brent started his medical career vaccinating for rabies in Honduras as an Amigos' volunteer. Dr. Chalmers credits his Amigos' experience as opening the door to his medical career and his continuing commitment to public health internationally. The organizer of the California Amigos' de las Americas Chapter that sponsored Brent in 1971, was also an ophthalmologist.

Brent now serves as a Board member of the Portland chapter "to help others get moving on an international public health experience."

When asked his biggest surprise, he says it's how warmly he and his team are received. "They (the people in Latin America) do such open things that are so surprisingly generous." One woman invited the entire team of 20 to her small house for dinner and another gave each member a copy of her self-published cookbook. Recipes include preparation and cooking for Armadillo and Iguana. (Gail Parker)



Brent in Oaxaca with a patient



Brent the Amigo in Honduras 1971

### Community Service Anyone?

Would you be willing or interested in an "Amigos Day of Service"? The Portland Board has discussed the possibility of a one day community service project open to past Amigos, parents of Amigos, board members, friends and current volunteers. Please pass on your ideas for service projects to:

[Lesly.Sanocki@attbi.com](mailto:Lesly.Sanocki@attbi.com)

## Adios, Donna Kipp...for *now* anyway

“That trip to Bolivia was the *best!*” related Donna Kipp, a past President of the Portland Chapter whose term on the board ended recently. Donna said that the 2001 Field Trip to one of our Bolivia projects dramatically enhanced her view of “AMIGOS in action in the field” and invigorated her efforts as Recruitment Coordinator for our group. (That’s the whole idea behind the Field Trips, organized annually by the International Office to send chapter leaders or training directors to observe projects in progress in Latin America.) Donna said that it was important and fulfilling for her to make that direct connection with the volunteers living and working in their host community.



**Donna Kipp (left) in Bolivia**



**Donna (front right) with the group in Bolivia**

How did Donna first get involved with AMIGOS? Now *here’s* a familiar story: “It was when my son Adam came home from school one day and said he wanted to be an AMIGOS volunteer,” she began. He heard about AMIGOS in a Spanish class at Madison HS when a vet and his father gave a recruitment presentation. That presentation hooked Adam...and so it “hooked *me*, too” (as most AMIGOS parents will surely appreciate). Donna quickly warmed to the whole AMIGOS concept and, putting her engaging personality and managerial skills to work, assumed the role of Parent Group Chairperson when the new volunteers and their parents first came together at Orientation. That was autumn, 1998. Donna’s skills had been honed by lots of prior volunteer work—“I’ve always done *some* kind of community service since I was about twenty”—and by her role as a team leader where Donna continues working as a Community Health Lead Nurse for Multnomah County. The Chapter clearly got the extra benefit of Donna’s experience with health issues when it came to addressing volunteers’ and parents’ concerns

## Donna Kipp continued

about disease exposure and prevention in Latin America. We also benefited from her intrepid nature: Donna rather courageously took on the Presidency of the Board only a few months after becoming a regular board member in mid-year, 1999. She proceeded to do a great job as Chapter President, leading our Board through its recruiting and training and fundraising hoops, while strengthening our relationship with the International Office in Houston and at the same time being ever-present to help shepherd the parent group through its many challenges. Donna put in lots of hours to all of our advantage during her 3-year tenure. All the while, Donna's favorite aspect of her AMIGOS work was frequent interaction with the "fun and interesting people involved with the Chapter."

We all—Portland AMIGOS board members, volunteers, and parents alike—thank Donna for her dedicated hours of enthusiastic, capable and ever-good-humored work to upgrade the chapter and, *most* importantly she would say, to foster and support as good an AMIGOS experience as possible for our "terrific young volunteers."

We will see if we can't still get Donna interested in a chapter project from time to time. How could she resist? "Well, Dave—I'm starting classes at Marylhurst this Spring on top of being extremely busy at work and...." Yes, Donna will soon begin her studies towards a Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on Organizational Communication. This will also enable Donna to further pursue her fascination with human spirituality. Okay—maybe we can recruit good-spirited Donna to a *little* chapter project sometime!  
(DPribnow)

Would you like to work with the volunteer Board of the Portland Chapter?

We are always looking for interested and experienced individuals. For more information, contact Portland Chapter President, David Pribnow:

[Pribnowd@aol.com](mailto:Pribnowd@aol.com),

503-771-5152,

or visit our website:

[www.portlandamigos.org](http://www.portlandamigos.org).

## PDX Board Members

Max Campos

Brent Chalmers

Mark Cooksey

Ann Griego

Shawn Miller

Gail Parker

Dave Pribnow

Lesly Sanocki

## FOR MORE INFORMATION—

If you are interested in learning more about Amigos de las Américas please contact the chapter president by phone or email.

Portland Chapter President, David Pribnow:

[Pribnowd@aol.com](mailto:Pribnowd@aol.com)

503-771-5152

Visit these websites for much more detailed information:

[www.amigoslink.org](http://www.amigoslink.org)

[www.portlandamigos.org](http://www.portlandamigos.org)