



**La Casita**



Centro de Aprendizaje de San Antonio Palopó  
¡La educación hace el cambio!

Innovative Communities.org

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# Report from San Antonio

Issue 2

We've had quite an exciting Spring. Two members of the **La Casita** Team, Kathy Coster and Penny Pattison, were able to visit San Antonio Palopo and see first hand the amazing improvements since we were last there in 2019. The number of children using **La Casita** programs has grown to about 75 per day. There is often several activities at the same time and it was difficult to keep the noise level down. So, we launched our expansion project and the additional classrooms are busy and full. The following is a Report from the field by Penny and Kathy.

## La Casita Programs & Classes

### Learning Centre

- Library
- Tutorial Time
- Computer Literacy
- Entrepreneurial classes
- Parent Consultation
- English Classes
- Special Events
- Vacation School

### Ancianas

- Lunch
- Social time

### Scholarship Students

- Computer and Library research
- Volunteer time

### Kathy and Penny's Quick visit to San Antonio Palopo

In mid-May, Kathy and Penny headed to Guatemala for a short visit. We were only in San Antonio Palopo for just over a week, and it was jam packed with activity!

La Casita is even more wonderful in real life. The extra building has meant that things can be spread out a bit, and feel organized and welcoming. On the second floor of the new building, there are computers and sewing machines, as well as a large space for classes.



Ana Olivia, our very competent coordinator, has things structured and running smoothly. With her social work degree, she has a wealth of skills to draw on in La Casita and the community. Lidya, our teacher, is confident and caring as she helps the youngsters with their remedial classes. We were there when Antonio, one of our scholarship students and part time teachers, led a boisterous class of

kids in their computer class. And Alma, another scholarship student and part time teacher, rounds out the energetic teaching staff. We are thrilled that all of our staff have been through our scholarship program and live in San Antonio Palopo – creating good jobs locally.

We spent a lunch time with the ancianas, participating in a sewing project with them, and then joining them for lunch. What augs and gratitude they showed. We were especially moved to near how important the socialization is, and how difficult the solation was during the COVID lockdown. Martina, our cook, produced delicious meals!



#### Events:

A full assembly of Grade 1 – 6 youngsters in their best clothes was held at the new public school, in honour of ICO's contributions to the school after it was built. Initially we provided teacher desks, shelving, filing cabinets, a stove and improved water and electrical systems. The final funds were used for security and new computers for the computer room. Speeches and presentations were



followed by time in the new secure computer room with some of the kids.

We had a meeting with the new principal of the Panul Elementary School. Children are being referred from there now, which is a new occurrence. He was interested in what La Casita offers, and particularly in the community activities offered at La Casita, such as adult computer classes led by Antonio in the evenings.



The 6 staff, plus Candelaria and Gregorio and the two of us had a wonderful dinner together at the hotel where we always stay.

Great conversation, ideas for the future and a clear demonstration of the cohesive team we have.



The 12 scholarship students organized a lunch for us on the Sunday before we left. An emotional gathering with every one of them speaking about their studies, plans and appreciation for the opportunity they have been given. Tears and hugs! And a delicious meal of tilapia, purchased from the fish farm in front of La Casita, which was started by some young men as an entrepreneurial idea through La Casita. This lovely group of students is being integrated into the other scholarship student program that Candelaria and Gregorio administer through their NGO FORMA, which is further enhancing their experience.

The village is more or less returning to normal after COVID, although there are still far fewer tourists, both Guatemalans and foreigners. We met many of Kathy's friends as we spent time on the streets – 'Katy Katy' being called out on almost every block!

It was a heartwarming brief visit. We are all warmly encouraged to return soon.