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Mission of the Comedor de Ninos Etta Turner

To improve the quality of life for the most impoverished of the Floresta neighborhood of Montero Bolivia by providing for the basic needs of approximately fifty families—education regarding nutrition; budgeting; health and sanitation; training regarding relevant job skills; income generating opportunities; balanced meals for the children; and day care. The hope is to change the face of the community's future by providing to its poorest the tools for healthier and more economically viable homes.

Etta Projects Board Members

Janice Bougher
Pennye Nixon-West
Fatima Paz
Jaime Paz
Bill Turner
James Turner
Sue Wallace
Guy West



The Etta Projects logo was designed by Tamara Hanks. Her time and creative talents were graciously donated. Thank you, Tamara. It is perfect.

The Etta Projects Story

Etta Projects is a nonprofit 501(3)(c) organization created to honor the life of Etta Turner.

Etta died November 25th 2002 at the age of 16. She was a Rotary International exchange student in Montero, Bolivia. She was traveling with friends on a bus when the driver fell asleep and drove off a cliff. Etta and six Bolivians died.

Several months after this amazing young girl's death, the Rotary Club of Montero Bolivia and the Salesian Catholic Church in Montero, where Etta went to school, asked to name a nutrition center for impoverished children after Etta. The nutrition center had long been a dream for many in Montero. As it became a reality, the sorrow of Etta's death and the joy of feeding many children combined to create the nutrition center called Comedor de Ninos Etta Turner. Etta Projects was a result of her family, friends and the Rotary Clubs here in the states desire to honor Etta. Etta Projects hopes to give ongoing support to this lovely center and if funding allows, to help with others projects like it, wherever they may be needed. Etta Projects is Etta's legacy: to give to the world in her death as she did in her life.

At present the Comedor de Ninos Etta Turner feeds 100 children per day and provides education and support to their mothers. It is a joint project run by the Salesians of Montero, the Rotary Club of Montero, and Etta Projects. Etta Projects provides the operating expenses with our major donors being Rotary Clubs from the Puget Sound region in the state of Washington and Rotary Club Montero as well as friends and family of Etta. The Salesian Catholic Church is raising money to purchase the present property. The Damas, the female lay volunteers of the Salesian community, lovingly provide the administration and daily operation of the Comedor on a volunteer basis.

There is much, much more about Etta, Etta Projects, many newspaper articles (English and Spanish), photos, friends' comments, and Etta's Comedor on the web site. Etta's step dad, Guy West, created this web site. Comments are always welcome. The site address is www.ettaprojects.org. We hope you enjoy it and find some inspiration.

A new dining hall and kitchen are planned after the purchase of the property and the existing buildings will be used for education and daycare. Please see the existing building prior to renovation, now, and the floor plans for the future dining hall on the web site, www.ettaprojects.org.



The Etta Turner Most Inspirational Award

Last June, just before school was out, we were invited to attend a presentation at Etta's Junior High School, Cedar Heights. Etta was honored by the creation of an award to be given annually in her name to one outstanding student. We are very proud of Etta and most honored by the gesture of remembrance and tribute to her. Thank you to all who loved and saw the spirit of her-our Etta.

Penny

From Cedar Heights....

The best part of Cedar Heights are the flashes of brilliance that grace our humble hallways, the people who encourage us all to do better to be better people. These few do more than motivate us; they inspire us.

From 1998 to 2001, no student inspired her peers (and more than a few of her teachers) like Mary Etta Turner. Etta, as she was known to all, challenged her teachers, encouraged her peers, and adored her friends.

Everyone felt protected and happy around her. She was a truly special person forever linked to Cedar Heights.

Tragically, Etta is no longer with us, but her legacy at Cedar stays strong. We at Cedar now honor the student who is voted most inspirational by their peers with this:

the **ETTA TURNER MOST INSPIRATIONAL AWARD**.

It goes to the student that best resembles everything Etta stood for: respect, support, individuality, and humor.

Kindness

Before you know what kindness really is you must lose things, feel the future dissolve in a moment like salt in a weakened broth. What you held in your hand, what you counted and carefully saved, all this must go so you know how desolate the landscape can be between the regions of kindness. How you ride and ride thinking the bus will never stop, the passengers eating maize and chicken will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness, you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho lies dead by the side of the road. You must see how this could be you, how he too was someone who journeyed through the night with plans and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside, you must know sorrow at the other deepest thing. You must wake up with sorrow. You must speak to it till your voice catches the thread of all sorrows and you see the size of the cloth.

Then it is only kindness that makes sense any more only kindness that ties your shoes and sends you out into the day to mail letters and purchase bread, only kindness that raises its head from the crowd of the world to say It is I you have been looking for, and then goes with you everywhere like a shadow or a friend.

Naomi Shihab Nye

A day in the life of the Comedor...

At dawn the guard locks the outer gate to go home. Jenni, the cook, and Marlene, the kitchen helper, arrive early to begin preparing to feed 100 hungry children. Several milk farmers who have donated milk to Etta's Comedor have delivered it the day before in large 20 liter containers and transferred it into the big pots and pitchers that Jenni and Marlene shift here and there to do all their chores. In the mornings at the Comedor, the Salesian Damas provide a program where small children come for milk each day. I am sure Jenni and Marlene are always happy when the little kids have had their morning milk so that there is room to store the rest in our two refrigerators. I might let everyone know that these are regular size refrigerators. No large ones that might be in a cafeteria in America. Believe me the milk moves a lot throughout the day to get to other things or to store what may be being prepared for lunch.

As the Damas work to get the young children their milk, the meat for the day may have arrived and has been put into a big pot to stew. Jenni and Marlene and usually one or two of the volunteer mothers have also washed the tablecloths and hung them out to dry. Someone has also watered the flowerbeds that we put in while we were there as well as Etta's avocado tree. They sweep the porches and wash the floors of the office and dining hall and clean the bathrooms. Jenni may have put together some yummy bread of corn or soy and is baking it on large metal trays in the outdoor oven. Once the young children are finished and gone, a big pot of chicha may have been started on the outdoor stove. Chicha is a very nourishing milk like drink made of soy or corn with yeast and other things that one day Jenni tried to describe to me but the language barrier got in the way.

Meanwhile, while all this is going on, Glory, who is the volunteer Administrator/coordinator, may have arrived. She keeps records on each child, interviews each family for need, supervises the kitchen and dining hall, and helps set up educational workshops for the moms. Someone else who soon shows up is Vera, also a volunteer. Vera is our economic miracle person. She does all the shopping, pays all the bills, and even makes the menus. She does all this on a very miniscule budget and does a marvelous job. Then we have Teresa and Nanci, believe it or not also volunteers, who work with the mothers and set up all the workshops and training. The mothers have responded well to these two caring individuals. They recognize the desire to help and the true compassion in these women. Nanci also keeps us updated with photos of the children, the Comedor, and the many people involved on her frequently updated photo site <http://es.fl.pg.photos.yahoo.com/nancirazera>. Check it out and you will really get a feel for the Comedor. Finally the other person who is always

around is Maria. She goes into each home to assess the needs of each family. Having been with her on several of these visits, I totally admire the respect and affection she has for each mom and child. Closer to lunch time other volunteers of the Salesian Damas show up to help herd the children, help serve, say prayers and help cleanup. All of these lovely people volunteer all their time to Etta's Comedor not because they knew Etta but because they believe in a better life for the people of this neighborhood who are served by Etta's Comedor. Meanwhile back in the kitchen, Jenni, Marlene and their volunteer moms are shelling fresh peas, cutting carrots, scraping yucca, making fresh yogurt with the milk not used by the babies, squeezing oranges for fresh orange juice or lemons for fresh lemonade or grapefruits (sometimes these are donated by Etta's host parents in huge burlap sack).

There are never any canned items and the only packaged foods bought are big bags of rice and noodles. To get a clear picture of this you have to understand that the kitchen is only about 12 feet long and 9 feet wide with two sinks that take up the far wall, cabinets up top only on one wall, counter space only across one wall some shelves down below covered with cloth drapes and this counter space is broken up by a stove top. There are also two refrigerators in this space, enough place settings for 100+ people, as well as all the silverware and many of the pots and pans and cookware needed. Now add 5-6 people. It is hot and crowded with little space to work but it smells great and everyone seems happy to be there. I know they will be happy when we can build the new kitchen and dining hall. Maybe we should post the plans on the ceiling of the kitchen so in their hot toil they can look up and have something to look forward to. I'll suggest this.

The work continues until the children begin arriving around 11:00 am. Some come straight from school, some go to school after their meal and some do not go to school at all. A few bring smaller children with them, as it is their responsibility to take care of their siblings. They share their lunch when this happens. Crayons donated by Burley Glenwood (Etta's elementary school) and pictures are brought out to pass the time until all arrive. Sometimes, especially when Etta's little sister was there, a rousing game of tag or duck duck goose was played. Finally all 100 children arrive, they wash their hands and then are seated in a small dining room of about 12 by 20 feet. They do not always fit and sometimes flow out onto the porches. The children are incredible, they wait patiently until everyone has a plate of food. There is happy talk of what they are eating today and whispers of how good it looks. Someone, sometimes a child, sometimes a Dama, says a prayer of thanks. After the "Gracias" everyone eats. It is a happy sound.

Jenni and Marlene are responsible for cleanup, which again is no easy task. The Damas finish their day. Some may have a class for the mothers and daycare for the younger children late in the afternoon but eventually everyone goes home and Etta's Comedor is quiet. It has been a busy day for all the employees and the many volunteers. I think Etta must smile and ponder each day at this point and I know her—she is pleased and happy with the work done in this nutrition center that carries her name. At dark the guard arrives to protect this blessed place.

Your tax-deductible donations can be sent to:

ETTA PROJECTS

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