

Super Hero Takes New Position as Projects Director

By Penny Nixon-West, Executive Director

Our former administrator in Bolivia moves back to the U.S., but continues her work with Etta Projects.

I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO KATIE CHANDLER. Katie first worked with us at Etta II back in 2006. She returned to us in 2009, and has served as Projects Director in Bolivia for the past two years. She was willing to go to a third world country with her one-



Katie Chandler and her daughter, Koah.

Katie has a Master's degree in International Nonprofit Management with a concentration in Sustainable Development. She has supervised health and education projects in So. America for 5 years.

year-old daughter and take on the transition of our projects from the Comedors, or dining halls, to rural health and sanitation issues.

Over the past two years, she has built a small but deeply dedicated staff to implement our projects. She has accomplished this despite many challenges — trudging through mud for miles when our vehicles have broken

down, dealing with a rat infestation in her house, contracting dengue fever when she was 3 months pregnant, both her and her child's bodies being colonized by every sort of parasite imaginable (some too gross to discuss),

being robbed at gunpoint with her mom, and contracting strange illnesses that made her face swell and look like really bad plastic surgery pictures from *The National Enquirer*. There is not much Katie has not had to live through while working for us. It is because of her hard work that Etta Projects has had so many successes and because of her dedication that we are still out there implementing projects while many other small NGOs have had to close their doors.

Believe it or not, Katie was silly enough to accept a position with us in the U.S. as projects director. She and Koah returned to the States in April, and she will continue to work for Etta Projects, supervising our Bolivian staff. This will allow me a little more time with you folks, the other reason we still are doing incredible things.

Lucky us, lucky you, lucky world ... Katie Chandler is Etta Projects' (and my) hero! We are considering buying her a cape or maybe a sword. We're taking suggestions.



And the Legacy Lives On...

Etta Projects is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization, created to honor the life and legacy of Etta Turner. Although Etta Turner's young life ended tragically in November 2002, her legacy of loving and caring continues to inspire Etta Projects' humanitarian work with some of the poorest people on Earth.

Every day we ask ourselves, "What would Etta do?" She would most assuredly harness resources and collaborative partners to engage vulnerable and remote village residents to find sustainable solutions to their health, education and economic challenges.

To continue this important work we need project specific and operating funds. Please join us in our journey to create sustainable solutions to poverty in communities in Bolivia.

Incredible New Projects for 2011

By Penny Nixon-West, Executive Director

For a year, we help them find solutions to the problems that create poor health, malnourishment and illness in their villages.

Our newly created programs will take us to 10 rural villages, offering action-oriented projects specific for each village's demographics.

It is hard to believe that 2011 is half over, and I have not filled you in on all that is happening with Etta Projects. It is an exciting year for us as we are using all that we have learned, putting that knowledge into play in our projects. If you get my occasional updates by e-mail, you will have seen that 13 schools received health, hygiene and sanitation programs as a part of their curriculum last year and that eight of those schools now have gardens. We are building on that this year and have created a project, "Communities in Action," with Rotary International. In this project, we are in 10 rural villages creating programs that offer specific action oriented projects for all demographics of the villages. We believe a key to improving communities is help them learn to define their goals and help themselves. We do this by teaching six people in each village to be leaders. We work intensely with each group, helping them define their problems as a community, prioritize solutions and then providing the tools to make the changes they have defined. For a year, we help

them find solutions to the problems that create poor health, malnourishment and illness in their villages. We encourage and expect them to stop waiting for an NGO to help them and learn to help themselves. They learn what their rights are in their local and federal governments. They learn how to petition for those rights and how to organize their villages into positive community action groups that don't just lament their problems but rather act toward solutions.

We then teach a group of school children these same skills. Both the adult and the children's groups have the opportunity throughout the year to put into play one big project of their own design with our support. Also, the teachers will receive curriculum on hygiene and sanitation like in our earlier project, but with the addition of values and self-esteem. Animal and garden projects will create sustainable systems for all these schools.

Finally, the basic health issues in these villages will be addressed by training two people in each village in basic first aid. This will include some maternal child-care so that fewer women might die during childbirth complications.

We worked hard on all these things in 2010 to become proficient in our pilot projects and now we can put them into play on a more intense level.

OK, Now Let's Talk Poop

The second chapter of this year: As you may recall, we have worked for a couple of years in creating clean water in many communities. This year



A Village health promoter shares information on latrine maintenance with a woman from her village. A partially constructed latrine is behind them.

Communities in Action helps communities define, prioritize and make their goals.



School children learn the skills needed to be good leaders.



The typical latrine is a crudely put-together hole in the ground with very little privacy.

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we continue with health and sanitation through education. But thanks to Rotary International, we are able to open a new door to resolve these issues. Human waste disposal contaminates water systems and environments around homes. There is the danger of doing your business in sugar cane fields and getting snake bites while doing so. Or when using a pit latrine, the wood you stand on breaks, falling through with you in tow. Or creatures that live in pit latrines coming out while you use it. We are grateful to get the opportunity to develop another step toward health and sanitary living conditions for the poor.

We are working in three communities (two peri urban and one rural) to build, in conjunction with the families, 75 to 85 Ecological Composting Latrines. This is hard work and we are running into road blocks that include the price of cement and

steel rising wildly and restrictions on the number of bags of cement we can purchase. There have been some incredible victories, too, such as designing a new toilet insert that is lighter and easier to clean. In other models, they are made of concrete and are very heavy so they cannot be cleaned properly. A wonderful local metal worker worked with us to design what we hope will be a solution to improve cleanliness and sustainability. Whew! Yep, we are good scientists at times, too, even if it is poop science .

We are grateful to Rotary Clubs and Rotary International that support our ideas and work, and are instrumental in helping us with these life changing projects. You can follow all these projects on our website. Pick your favorite project and watch for updates.

Also, join our Facebook page where you will get a little more intimate look at pieces of our work.



The new ecological composting latrines resolve issues of waste contamination related to health and the environment, as well as providing privacy.

Woman Gains Courage to Lead

By Tiffany Thomas

Before being nominated as group representative of her neighborhood's Water Project, Betty had never considered herself a leader. Like most Bolivian women,



Betty, left, a new village leader, shares her knowledge with other women from her village.

she was hesitant to express her views or advocate for change. When her neighborhood chose her to be their representative, she didn't

know if she wanted to accept the position. She had a nervous and almost embarrassed expression on her face when she whispered to the group that she didn't think she was smart enough to be their leader. In the end, Betty hesitantly accepted the new role.

The Water Project created local neighbor-

hood groups, and each group is led by a democratically elected group representative. The representatives are responsible for facilitating community meetings, making routine house visits to monitor the water system and, most importantly, continually motivating the participating families to practice safe hygiene habits. Throughout the project, the representatives from the various neighborhoods met monthly for training regarding hygiene and sanitation as well as to explore issues such as self-esteem, community service and grassroots change.

Surprisingly, Betty was one of our most active participants. She always brought an honest, thoughtful perspective to the workshops. She frequently shared per-

sonal stories and reflected on her own experiences as a representative. Other members were drawn to Betty for her warm personality and loud, playful laugh. Betty discovered something special during these trainings: the courage to be a leader.

"Looking back, I realize that I never had the courage to be a leader. I don't think I was a very strong leader in my family, and I never dreamed of being a leader in my community. Now I have a voice (in fact, my husband says I won't shut up). Today, I set goals and work for change. I am proud to support my family and my community, and help them to be healthier."

'Looking back, I realize that I never had the courage to be a leader ... Now I have a voice.'

Etta Projects almost always finds that its projects have unexpected outcomes. When we set out to do the water project, our goal was to bring potable water to Bolivian families. In our efforts, friendships were made ... support networks were formed ... and leaders were born.

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Be a Catalyst for Change

A NOTE FROM PENNYE

We have a great staff in Bolivia, and now we need to grow our staff here in the U.S. We need your help to do that. You can help by, after reading this newsletter, contributing. There are many ways to do that. You might consider including Etta Projects in your estate planning; making a monthly donation; donating that piece of property or that boat or vehicle you don't know what to do with; and we'll even take stocks! However you choose to contribute, remember that all donations are tax deductible, as Etta Projects is a 501c(3) organization.

Suggested ways to give:

- \$250 toward a school vegetable garden
- \$120 for a village first aid kit
- _____ for use where most needed



ETTA PROJECTS
partners with Bolivian communities to identify, prioritize, and implement sustainable solutions to the health, education, and economic challenges of poverty.