

REPORT TO CONTRIBUTORS TO 2011 ARMONIA U.S. CHRISTMAS GIFT FUND

Friends of Armonia:

I am writing to report back, as promised, on the results of the Armonia U.S. Christmas Gift Fund solicitation. I am delighted to report that total cash gifts exceeded \$4,000, in addition to contributions of specific items, including USB flash drives, knitted hats for children and adults, sweatshirts, etc.

You will recall that the requests for Christmas gifts included, in my view, some of the worst requests ever – Algebra books, shoes, etc. I was determined that the Christmas gifts which would be delivered to the AIMS students both in Oaxaca and Mexico City would be a bit more festive than Algebra books. That said, every specific request for a gift from the AIMS students was fulfilled. Additionally, the funds contributed provided the ability to obtain numerous additional small gifts, such as socks, gloves, hats, jackets, and stuffed animals (which were, by the way, wildly popular, as Saul had promised they would be).

Additionally, the funds were used to enhance the Oaxaca to Mexico trip for the higher performing AIMS students (which included all but seven of the students resident in Oaxaca). In traveling with a group of forty plus students, even something as simple as stopping for a snack or lunch can turn into a relatively expensive proposition.

Your generosity allowed these students, in the view of Saul and Pilar, and consistent with my personal observation, the time of their lives. They were able to visit Africam, which is a lion country safari like experience in Puebla, enjoy hot chocolate and churros in the Puebla city square, visit the carnival near the Zocalo in Mexico City, and experience several other very enjoyable events. Each student was at one point given 100 Pesos (about \$7.40 at today's exchange rate) to spend as they chose. As Saul confirmed, for many of these students, it was the first time they had had their own money for doing what they chose.

Additionally, gifts were obtained for the Oaxaca and Mexico City student residences, which were small heaters to take the chill off the unheated (and unairconditioned) buildings in which the students live, and for Oaxaca, for outdoor heaters to allow them to use the open spaces of the student residence (also unheated and unairconditioned) with greater frequency.

In summary, the collection of funds and delivery of gifts was an overwhelming success. I am particularly appreciative of the generosity shown by each of you in this effort, and feel that the greatest gift of all was the gift given to me of being your

representative to our Armonia friends. I emphasized on numerous occasions that I was but a vehicle for delivery of these gifts, and they were not from me, but from their many friends and supporters in the U.S. While I believe that was ultimately understood, I was the one who got all the thanks, all the smiles, and all the hugs. Please know that your thoughtfulness and generosity were greatly appreciated, and that our students feel more supported and loved than ever.

I also reminded the students on several occasions that not only were we pleased to bring them Christmas gifts, but that we were committed to praying for their success and continued good health. Their affection and gratitude were almost overwhelming, and something I will never forget.

Thanks again for being a part of this most worthwhile effort. I am hopeful that in coming years others will be able to accompany me on this trip. It is truly an experience of a lifetime.

With much gratitude,

Jim Seay