



COPA news

Building caring Christian communities



The **AGM of COPA UK** will be held at Cricklade United Church on **Saturday, 21st September 2013**. Full details and invitation enclosed. In the evening a Barn Dance in aid of COPA's work in the DR will be held (see page 11 of Newsletter).

Programme for the day:

- 4.00pm Welcome & opening devotions
- 4.10pm AGM Business
- 4.45pm Presentation by Bob Hampton – the new COPA Project Director designate
- 5.30pm Afternoon tea & refreshments
- 7.00pm Doors open at Cricklade Town Hall for Barn Dance
- 7.30pm Band (The Bees Knees) starts to play

We would also like to invite you to a **COPA service on Sunday, 22nd September, 10.30am**, at Cricklade United Church which will include the commissioning of Bob and Alison Hampton .



Helen Samways is nearing the end of her twelve months of training before her trek of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, Peru to raise money for COPA. Helen leaves for Peru on Friday, 13th September . We wish Helen well with her expedition and look forward to reading about her experiences in the next edition of the COPA newsletter.

Visit the COPA website: www.copa.org.uk

September 2013

Making a difference

A short anecdote from Connie Di Leo, our Interim Project Director.

One day I was visiting with some of my neighbours in La Hoya and they began to talk about memories concerning COPA and the different work groups who have come to help over the years. Mello, pictured here with his son and wife, spoke about how he was 10 years old when he was in the first grade. He said that it is hard for him to believe that his son who is 11 is now in 5th grade and he is so appreciative to the opportunities that COPA has brought to his son!



The start of the new school year—Connie writes:

This year has been the best opening of school I have seen here since I came in 2002. It started with the directors of the schools attending a week long orientation with their respective districts. Here they were introduced to a new curriculum and given instructions on how to introduce the new curriculum to their staffs. August 5th saw all the teachers in attendance in our schools. The training was then given to our teachers both by the heads and a selected few who helped with the training. The training lasted until about 4 pm each day for about 9 days. The rest of the second week was spent preparing their classrooms for the opening of school.

School opened on Monday, August 19th. In La Hoya there was about 50 % attendance in the morning and I believe even more in the afternoon. The morning students paraded through the village announcing that school had begun and encouraged all to come! They were allowed to come even if they did not yet have their uniforms. Bombita had decided to celebrate the beginning of school by announcing a week of colors. This means they are allowed to come in their colorful clothes and don't have to have school uniforms. This really worked as there was about 95% attendance in the morning and about 85-90% in the afternoon. Again the district sent people to each school to verify that school was in session.

The education system in their training of the head teachers, gave suggestions to make the first week a week of celebrations and each day had different activities planned. All very good ideas I believe. It has been so encouraging to see the new enthusiasm and professionalism on the district level. I was at the assemblies in La Hoya and was very pleased in how the new year was opened! Each classroom was very colourful and inviting as the teachers did a great job preparing their classes.

Summer in the schools

It is July, school is out and the students are on holiday in the Dominican Republic. However, COPA continues its commitment to provide assistance to those in need. The Summer Reading programme, which was started by former COPA volunteer, Amanda, and continued by local and Project Trust volunteers, has just recently ended, a month-long session.



The 4th grade students from the neighbouring villages, Hato Viejo and Habanero, participated in the summer program to help them with their transition into 5th grade and above in La Hoya school. The schools at these villages only goes up to 4th grade and, unfortunately, most of the students are a little behind when they enter the upper grade. The Summer Reading Program assists them with reading and writing. It also gives the students from both villages to get to know each other.



At the end of the programme, COPA held a small party for students from both villages as a 'thank-you' for their commitment to education. The volunteers prepare games and serve them food. As they await for the next school year, they will be ready to learn.

❖ Gracie Koester ❖

The students play 'Do you know your neighbour?' led by Project Trust volunteer Bethany Garry from Scotland

Meet Yosi

By: Gracie Koester

In the 20 years of COPA's existence in the Dominican Republic, a good number of past students have become part of COPA's family over the years. In a new series of COPA alumni stories, past students who have decided to give back to their communities and the school that provided them assistance, we shine a spotlight on Yosi, our second alumni who became a teacher at COPA Bombita. Yosi lives in Bombita and is the English teacher for 4th-8th grade, alongside gap-year English teacher volunteer, which is my pleasure to be this year! Also, Yosi spends his weekends in La Hoya at Interim Director Connie DiLeo's evangelical church as one of the worship leaders.



Interview:

Q: Tell me about yourself, Yosi, so others can get to know you. What are your likes and dislikes?

A: I like to play guitar, play the piano, sing, listen to music, travel, walk, drive motor, watch movies. I don't like when my brothers take my clothes and shoes (*laughs*).

Q: What are you studying at the University?

A: Languages, English and French. And I know Creole already.

Q: What sparked your interest in English?

A: Actually, at first, I didn't like English class. But when I saw the teams COPA brought, I thought, "I need to know what they are saying". I also started spending time with the teams and at Connie's house in Bombita where she taught me too. After that I liked it. It's fun to meet someone from another country and be able to surprise

them that you can talk to them in their language.

Q: What is your favourite school time memory from COPA?

A: Most of my memories were of getting in trouble! But my first grade teacher, Maximo, was the best. If you didn't know something he would stop before the next step and make sure that you understood. He was proud when we learned.

Q: What makes COPA different from another school here?

A: At other schools students don't have sponsors. Here the teachers are more worried about their students learning. As students, we are motivated; having black skin we know some people will look down on us, we have to be the best to succeed.

Q: How has being a part of COPA affected your life?

A: COPA makes me think, whatever you want you can work for, that's the truth. If you want something, fight for it.

(Edited by Ronald Tipan, photos by Gracie Koester)

Now meet Diego

Q: Hi Diego, the COPA community is excited to get to know a special group of people, teachers who grew up in the COPA schools themselves. Can you share with us a little about yourself?

A: Of course. I am a Christian. I love music, especially playing "la guida" (*percussion instrument that looks like a cheese grater*). I like to spend time with friends and talk about the Bible with them. (*You should also know that Diego is famous for his spaghetti dish & that he goes around saying he has two lovers...but it's okay "son Jesus y mi Biblia"*)

Q: What was your school experience like before you attended COPA?

A: I didn't go to COPA Bombita until '98. Before that it was a lot of sharing, I would dress and go to the school in the morning and then pass my uniform along to my brother to go in the afternoon. We cut notebooks in half to be able to use them in different subjects.

At COPA Bombita it wasn't like this. There were more resources, more materials: notebooks, coloured pencils, books, each class had a classroom, each classroom had a chalkboard, there was a chair for each student.

Q: What is one of your favourite memories from attending COPA Bombita?

A: For me, the assemblies. (*smiles remembering*) Especially at Christmas when we got pizza! Also that we were a family; our class, we shared everything.

Q: Which of your teachers influenced you the most?

A: Maricris, my sixth grade teacher. I was a rebel. She showed me patience like no other. She showed me how to control my temper and about respect. After her class I was different.

Q: What made you come back to teach at COPA Bombita?

A: First, I wanted to reciprocate, give back to what had been given to me. Also, I have a passion to teach, particularly maths. COPA gives me the best opportunity to do that. I didn't want to leave COPA as a student (*laughs*), I wanted to always to study there.

Q: In one sentence, what has COPA meant to you?

A: COPA has given me a chance to see different paths, to better life.

By: Gracie Koester



Graduation Day—Bombita

On 28 June, 2013, Escuela de COPA Bombita celebrated the class of 2013.

Everyone in the village watched as each of the Eighth Grade students and the pre school children walked around the village proudly holding their heads up high as they celebrated their educational achievements.



The work that COPA has done for the village of Bombita can only be described by the smiling faces of all of these eight grade students as they move on to the next phase of their lives. The preschool pupils have just started their journey of education and COPA will be proud to lead them the way.

It was an marvellous day of celebration. Congratulations.



Graduation Day—La Hoya

On 5 July, 2013 Escuela de COPA La Hoya held its Eighth Grade graduation at the local Evangelical Church whose pastor is our own Connie DiLeo.



Teachers, students and family members marched around the village to showcase the students' achievements in their education as they prepare for new

adventures. The parade included local small marching bands, village officials, COPA administrators, volunteers, and other school pupils as they pass by every house and wave at the people.

Half an hour later, the parade reached the church and, one by one, the seats were filled with parents and family members waiting to see each of the students receive their diploma. Select officials and students stood at the podium, offered congratulations to each of the students for their achievements. Younger students sang and some older, former students of COPA presented a dance. Everyone in the church gave a rousing applause as each of the graduates received their diploma.

It is always pleasing to see each of them complete their time at the COPA schools and we wish them well in the future.

They are well underway to new and exciting things.

Congratulations.



Something used, now something new

By Gracie Koester, early July.

There is excitement in the air over at COPA Bombita! All week the imaginations of our students have come alive as they have been working hard to construct creative projects out of recycled materials. Today is the grand exhibition! The whole school gathered under the trees, with each course displaying their inventions on class tables.

Mari Cris leads the assembly by discussing what recycling means and what we can recycle, especially the juice boxes students receive daily at school. Furthermore, Mari Cris highlighted that recycling is fun, cheap, and makes for great gifts!

Kinder, the youngest class, was the first to get to look around the class tables as the older students introduced their project and explained all of the recycled materials they contained. You could see their little eyes light up with delight and the inventors were proud to share their resourceful labours and creative ideas.



Among the inspired products were: juice box bugs, phones, cars, sugar cane trains; a milk jug video camera; several cardboard laptops; cardboard farms, houses, and colmados (corner stores);



newspaper flowers and fruits; a bottle cap and straw bicycle; and a intricate model of COPA Bombita.

The festivities ended by naming a frontrunner for especially resourceful labour and creativity. Drum roll please... Luis Antonio is crowned the winner for his cardboard helicopter with a straw propeller that actually spins! This budding engineer from fifth grade attached a wire to a battery, creating a motor! (see picture below)



A bug made out of juice box and straws.

This day, everyone walked away proud. Of their own efforts, the effort of their classmates, and feeling empowered to have the means to *create* in life.

(Edited by Ronald Tipan, photos by Gracie Koester)



Bob Hampton, our new Project Director, will be travelling to the DR in October accompanied by his wife Alison. They will both be at the COPA UK AGM on September 21st in Cricklade so, if you are able to, do come along and meet them.



Pictured below are the four Project Trust

volunteers who will be working at the COPA schools over the next 12 months. They are already in the DR and settling into life in La Hoya and Bombita. Currently they are preparing the art rooms and participating with the other school activities. We wish them well and look forward to hearing about their experiences in the DR From Left to Right: Ruth Webster from Derbyshire, Alice Creasy from Midlothian, Fiona Salisbury from Hampshire and Bryony Hill from Northumberland.



COPA BARN DANCE



Swing your partner by the hand and help raise money for COPA

Date: Saturday 21st September
Time: Doors open 7pm and the band starts at 7.30pm Event finishes 11pm
Location: Cricklade Town Hall
Cost: £10 Adults, £5 Children (under 14 years)
 Price includes a Ploughman Supper



MUSIC PROVIDED BY THE BEES KNEES BARN DANCE BAND

Tickets available from:
 DES Electricals
 John Youe 01793 751650,
 Sandra Samways 01793 751217
 Geoff Haslam 01793 750785
 or e-mail copa.secretary@gmail.com



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www.copa.org.uk

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Many of the articles of this Newsletter come from Gracie Koester, a volunteer with COPA from the USA, and Ron Tipan, our Admin/Maintenance volunteer in the DR and we thank them for supplying these and the accompanying photographs.

To read their 'blogs' please go to the COPA website, copa.org.uk and follow the link. This newsletter can be found in colour on the website.

As well as the website COPA now has a Facebook page—the link you need to take you directly to the page is:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/COPA-Community-Partners-Association/159479520829157>

Sponsorship Letters and Cards



The address for your letters and cards is:

Child's name and sponsorship number
Escuela de COPA (Bombita or La Hoya)
Apartado 42
BARAHONA
Dominican Republic

Please could you write your name and address on the reverse of the envelope. This will help the volunteers when they are delivering the letters and cards to the children.