

The Roundtable

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Bangor Area's Sister City: Emerging from Violence

Gang violence, poverty and immigration issues continued to make headlines in 1991 in Carasque, El Salvador. That was the year the Bangor-area/Carasque, El Salvador Sister City Project was established through the work of the Peace Through Interamerican Community Action (PICA).

Dennis Chinoy and Katherine Kates described conditions in that city and region in their presentation at this morning's meeting. The armed conflict in El Salvador jeopardized the lives of civilians; the Power in Community Alliances in Bangor stepped in to offer some protection for the city's residences. The couple has been long-time members of PICA, which was established in 1991.

One of the early projects in Carasque (kah-RAHS-kay) featured treadle-operated sewing machines. Motorized machines continue to operate today that contribute to self-sufficiency. Ms. Kates said handmade goods from the Carasque region are available in the Bangor area at various times and places. Corn is the basic commodity of the region; farmers with excess corn use it to buy shoes, clothing and other necessities. A new school and water system are bringing improved quality of life to the area.

Mr. Chinoy and Ms. Kates described the critical attention paid to youth in the region. Gangs tempt young people to join them. Killing is common. Gangs have caused over a million refugees to flee to the United States. The UN Conventions of the Right of the Child has been accepted by all countries in the world except the United States. The presence of the MS-13 gang in El Salvador and in the US brings urgency to finding ways to engage young people in the life of their community. One way is soccer, the favorite sport of Salvadorans.



Dennis Chinoy, Katherine Kates

“The violence may have gone away, but the new threat is mining,” Mr. Chinoy said. Gold mining creates deadly minerals that get into the soil and water. Area citizens are vigorously opposing the mining, protesting with shouts of “Green mining does not exist!” On March 29, 2017, El Salvador became the first country in the world to pass a comprehensive ban on metal mining within its borders. The victory came after a decade-long David vs. Goliath struggle that mobilized many thousands of Salvadorans across the country, and cost a number of Salvadoran activists their lives.

A celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Carasque/Bangor alliance will be held at Cascade Park on Friday, October 12.

The Morning’s Deliberations

Gavels pounding: **President June Kontio** promoted the Bangor Y’s gala and auction scheduled for October 27 at the Cross Insurance Center. **Jeff Plourde** distributed sponsorship opportunities brochures for our Annual Holiday Dinner and Auction. The event will be at the Spectacular Events Center on December 6. The wintery theme includes sponsorship levels named St. Nick, Noble Fir and Snowflake. The committee seeks 50 items for the silent auction and 15 items for the live auction.



We received word that **Caroline King’s** father-in-law died. **Tom Violette** said he is “not an emotional person,” but when he walked his daughter down the aisle for her wedding last week, “I became a puddle wall.” He is also happy about the Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems transition in name and organization.

Do you remember stamps, envelopes and “sending letters”? **David Zelz** does, and was commending the USPS for selling John Lennon commemorative stamps. If you want to do some heavy lifting, contact **Pudge Harrison**. He said one of his colleagues who planned to go to Nepal has had to drop out. Pudge needs another person to help move many items to and from planes and help with his project in Nepal. Speaking of heavy lifting, **Kristy Kimball** traveled 40 miles on her stationary bike before coming to this morning’s meeting. She stoked up on carbs at breakfast.

Les Myers- October 4, 2018



Katherine Kates