



Chicuchas Wasi

THE CHILDRENS PROJECT

A Newsletter for the Supporters of Chicuchas Wasi, Cusco, Peru • Summer 2009

A Busy Winter's Day at Chicuchas Wasi School

By Rae Lewis (Pieraccini), Chicuchas Wasi Founder/Board of Directors

Much is happening at our CW School in Cusco, Peru; it is all quite wonderful. I am eager to share the exciting news, and give you a glimpse of an average CW school day.

You may recall that the seasons are reversed in the southern hemisphere where we are located, therefore the academic year is also reversed. School began again in April 2009 with an additional classroom and a total of 48 eager learners. Our students are doing exceptionally well.



Our style of empowerment education for the student and the entire family has so impressed the involved families that this year they overwhelmed our Director, Ruth Uribe, with pleas to add another class to allow those completing first grade to continue on to second grade with us. Past years required a transfer to a public school. Ruth had also been thinking she wanted to continue with these enthusiastic little girls making impressive improvements in their self-image with our program. Second grade was added April 2009 and Ruth reports she is glad to have made this decision, even before our new school is completed.

An Average Chicuchas Wasi Day

The day begins at 6:00 am for Ruth. She is up, dressed and rushing her two daughters through breakfast and getting ready for school. By 7:10 the family is out the door and down the 70 or so stairs to retrieve the CW Van from the garage down the street. Ruth, her daughters, and the three or four CW students just arriving, hustle inside the van and they are off to CW School; dropping off Ruth's daughters at their school in route.

By 7:20 am the older first and second grade students are at their desks beginning their lesson. Younger students arrive at 8:15 am when the first bell rings calling all students to assemble in the courtyard. Everyone sings the national anthem, recites the morning prayer, and share important events. Ending the assembly, Ruth leads warm-up exercises to wake up



sleepy brains and cold bodies. Cusco mornings are cold; there is no heat other than the sun. All students split off to their assigned classroom seats and are awaiting teachers by 8:40 am. This year Chicuchas Wasi has four classes: two kindergarten, one first grade, and one second grade. We have five teachers, including our director, Ruth, and a cook.



I-r: Alicia (cook), Gloria (teacher), Carla (teacher), Ruth Uribe (director/lead teacher), Angela (teacher), Jovana (teacher).

(Busy Winter's Day, continued on page 2)

Busy Winter's Day

(continued from cover)

The bell rings again at 10:00 am when the first group of students breaks for lunch (oatmeal & bread or lentils & rice) as our little students arrive hungry, unable to



stay awake or study with growling stomachs. There is time to play on the swings, slide or bar, and then it's back to class by 10:30. The bell sounds again for the second lunch group, thus beginning the process again. Fed and ready to learn, all students are back at their desks and at their lessons by 11 am.



All classes are busy with lessons until 12:30 pm, when mothers come to collect the younger students. Older students continue class until 1:30 pm when they too are picked up.

Ruth is off to collect her own daughters from their school by 1:45 pm, and deliver the few students she transports. She is home for the main family meal (big lunch) by 3 pm.

Special classes are inserted into the week such as hygiene instruction when the toothbrushes, combs, soap and water action begins. We also have showers available to use as needed.



Cusco has many festivals, events and holidays to celebrate. Our proud students march with the other schools displaying our Chicuchas Wasi banner carried by the bigger girls and in the blue trademark uniforms of CW School. We joyfully celebrate Mother's and Father's day with dances and music.



All our students' parents are obligated to participate in the CW parent's school. In this program we focus on good parenting, coping with domestic violence, spousal abandonment, degrading behaviors, and abusive attitudes toward children and other members of the families. We help parents understand the value of respect and understanding, and

that the family is a support team for everyone.

Afternoons, from 4 pm until about 7 pm, Ruth is preparing or in meetings. Administrative duties require her presence with Government officials, official papers to file, and on and on. Our new CW primary school construction has begun. Ruth is busy; she must acquire workers, plans,



equipment to make an entry road, and building site preparation; adobes are being made for the security fencing; there are always more Government documents to be filed. We now have an access road.

This is our life in Cusco, specifically at Chicuchas Wasi. ■



Chicuchas Wasi Works With Students' Parents to Improve Family Life

By Ruth Uribe, Chicuchas Wasi School Director



The little girls we serve are hugely in need of special help in addition to basic academics. They come to us with eyes cast down afraid to make contact, withdrawn and lacking joy. After some time with us the change is notable; eyes sparkle with intelligence, personalities show and they grow stronger emotionally. Let me introduce you to a few:

Typical of our girls is **Leyde**, who depends on her uneducated and unprepared mother for her needs. A lazy, unprepared and delinquent father is absent. CW seeks to find the best possible solution for the difficult situations affecting each child and family. It is not an easy process.

Leyde, who is 7 years old, began with CW in Kindergarten and is in our second grade today. Her mother is irresponsible and desperate with 4 children to feed, all of different absent fathers. To control Leyde when she misbehaves, her mother would threaten to send her to her father. Leyde is terrified of the man she has heard such awful stories about. When the father reappeared, causing a crisis and further upsetting their life, Leyde changed. Late at night,

her mother would take Leyde to bars in search of the father, find him drunk, angry, and creating a scene of yelling and shouting that increased Leyde's fear. The CW staff noticed changes in her behavior including new aggression toward the other children. Leyde's mother was confronted, and finally the father left. A month later Leyde came to school with burns on her back. Ruth insisted the mother come to talk to her immediately, but she did not. Instead the paternal grandmother came, saying the mother abandoned Leyde on her doorstep and had moved to the jungle to work. The grandmother loves Leyde and accepts responsibility for her. CW provided legal assistance and counsel to assure the child's legal custody and safety. This grandmother is the best choice for Leyde and is now providing a home for her.

Almendra, is 7 years old, in the second grade, and lives with her mother and grandmother. The grandmother loves and takes responsibility for this child. Sadly her mother is uninterested. The mother demands money from the grandmother threatening to "disappear the child", so the grandmother pays, and lives in constant worry and fear. CW is working with the mother and grandmother in our parent classes and the relationship is improving.



The mother found work, and has begun to treat the child and grandmother better. All was improving until the mother became pregnant from her weekend escapes. She doesn't know who the father of this new baby is. CW is trying to keep an eye on this situation.

Atena is 6 years old and in the first grade. This is a good example of how we change the outcome of distressed families. Atena is from a poor and troubled family. Her father is resentful, abusive, and constantly insulting her older sister, his partner's daughter by another man. This came up in the parent's class and we were able to help them improve the family relationship. The mother was under so much stress and grief that she developed fainting spells. Atena's father found work in a nearby village and together they relocated there. Atena transferred to another school and has been doing very well. The mother and Atena came to visit Ruth and CW School to say thanks for the CW intervention, and proudly tell Ruth of the academic progress Atena had been making. The mother is very changed and happy, as is Atena. |



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Alternative School for Girls, Cusco, Peru

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2009

Look Inside...

...for the latest news about our girls
and their school in Cusco, Peru



Chicuchas Wasi
PO Box 2031
Sonoma, CA 95476

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Chicuchas Wasi Girls • 2009



Happy Summer to All in Our Chicuchas Wasi Family



Wishing you laughter, good health, good friends, love and prosperity in these changing times.

As has been true in years past, we continue to rely on donations from our many friends
to fund our school's month-to-month operating expenses

• • • Please mail your tax-deductible donation to: Chicuchas Wasi, PO Box 2031, Sonoma, CA 95476 • • •

With thanks and love from the Chicuchas Wasi Family,

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