

The Tarahumara Times

March 2019 - Issue 1

“Food Exchange For Community Work” Program Update

Through this program, 80 tons of corn and 16 tons of beans were distributed to the community in 2018 with 50 requests for assistance fulfilled. We truly appreciate and depend on our benefactors in Portland, New Orleans and Detroit to support this program and thank you all once again!

The beneficiaries committed themselves to perform community work by helping with the following projects: expanding a rainwater collection system for fruit trees, maintaining a church, cleaning plots of land, preparing benches for a health recovery house, building trenches to prevent the erosion of arable land, constructing roads, installing fences, removing stones from farmland, and constructing a small bridge, to mention a few. In addition, in the month of May they supported (as is customary) the traditional celebration of governors in the locality of Cuiteco, in the municipality of Urique.

Greetings from Fr. Miguel Quintanilla, S.J.

We are starting a new year in the Mission of the Tarahumara. As a special gift from God, by serving the Rarámuri people we are allowed to approach a different conception of time. It is not a linear conception, like ours; it is a circular conception.

Every year people have an opportunity to live again: a new opportunity to learn from mistakes and move forward in search of a wiser life experience. Our minds can deceive us. They can tell us "another year of the same", "Lent again", etc. The Rarámuri people, deeply connected to nature, live their lives based on the agricultural cycle which begins anew every year. This presents the opportunity to start again to make a "community" where past mistakes are lessons learned to improve life.

May God grant us the will to discover his grace in this spring cycle so that we can begin again and evolve with new eyes to discover God as someone who works together with us in our favor. May God Bless You!

In March we received two train cars of potatoes donated by Mr. Bernardo de la Vega and other producers from Los Mochis, Sinaloa. These were distributed among various boarding schools and charitable institutions in the Sierra Tarahumara, among which are the internees of the religious "Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" and the poor. A major portion of this potato donation was distributed under the Food Exchange for Community Work Program.

Potato production was significantly lower in 2018 and, unfortunately, we didn't receive a third train car as we had in the past. Therefore, it was not possible to supply the communities of Cerocahui under the care of the Jesuit Fr. Eduardo Silva. We pray that these producers will favor us with a donation in 2019 at which time we will first supply those communities not served in 2018.

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Average Temperature / Precipitation in Creel, MX in March:

High Temp 64 F / Low Temp 27 F / .75 Inches



Fr. Miguel Quintanilla, S.J. - Mission Director
Fr. David Ungerleider, S.J. - Liaison and Advisor

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A Brief History of the TCHF

The Tarahumara Childrens Hospital Fund (TCHF) consists of three separate groups working together to support the Tarahumara Mission in the Copper Canyon of Mexico. These groups are located in Michigan, Louisiana and Oregon. The Mission headquarters is based in Creel, Chihuahua, Mexico with Fr. Miguel Quintanilla, S.J. serving as Director since March of 2015. Fr. David Ungerleider, S.J., is based in Tijuana and serves as Mission Advisor.

The TCHF was first established in Detroit in 1966 as an independent, non-profit, tax deductible organization. Since that time, chapters have been created in Louisiana in 1983 and Oregon in 1999. Our purpose is to raise money and awareness in the United States to support vital services provided to the Tarahumara Indians in the Copper Canyon region of Mexico. A population of 60,000+ Tarahumara Indians who live in the Sierra Mountains maintain lifestyles much like their ancient ancestors. Many still live in caves, without electricity or running water. Their extreme poverty results in malnutrition, parasitic infections and other intestinal diseases which still claim 25-40% of their children before their fifth birthday.

The Mission Tarahumara provides a range of services to the Tarahumara people. After many years of operating in the most basic way, a small hospital was opened in 1979. Today, it has 75 beds, 2/3 for children. The Mission is also responsible for digging water wells which provide safe drinking water for many people. A "Water for Life" initiative began in 2015 is currently in the process of testing, remediating and installing new, clean and sustainable wells under the management of Schneider Water Services of St. Paul, OR. A boarding school has been developed which teaches the children about their own culture and language, the Spanish language and teaches them skills to make a living as farmers, craftsmen, and teachers of their people. In recent years, outdated and obsolescent oxygen and X-Ray equipment have been replaced as well as heavily used ambulances and rehabilitative playground equipment. All of these projects are funded through the generous help of patrons from around the country and world.

The Tarahumara people do not have the means to pay for these services themselves. The Mission must rely on the support of foundations and individuals who recognize the importance of both preserving a cultural heritage and ensuring the healthy future of a tribal community. Fr. Miguel continues the belief of "helping people help themselves" put forward by Fr. Verplancken back in the 1960's. The Mission does not just "hand out" charity today. It trains and uplifts the Indian people so that they can provide for themselves tomorrow.

Creel, Chihuahua, Mexico

Creel is a town in the Sierra Tarahumara (part of the Sierra Madre Occidental) of the Mexican state of Chihuahua. It is the second largest town (after San Juanito) in the municipality of Bocoyna. It is located some 175 km (109 mi) to the south-west of the state capital, Chihuahua City. At the census of 2010 it had a population of 5,026 inhabitants (down from 5,334 in 2005).

Near Creel is Divisadero, perhaps the best-known overlook of the "Three Canyons" area of the Copper Canyon, as well as Basaseachic Falls, one of the highest waterfalls in Mexico. Creel was historically a logging town, although tourism has become the primary industry over the last 25 years. There are many hotels, restaurants and a number of tours down into the canyons and throughout the surrounding area.

Creel was founded with the name 'Estación Creel' on May 26, 1907 as a railroad depot on the Chihuahua - Pacific Line. It was named after Enrique Creeland Astolfo Nicolas Mendoza, governor of the state of Chihuahua at that time. He was the son of Reuben W. Creel, an American diplomat in Chihuahua. For many years before its eventual completion the line ended at Creel which aided its growth as a commercial center.



Regional Provincial View of Creel



Regional City View of Creel