



Every day is special and these 45-50 boys really tug at your heart strings.

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## Traveling!

### WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT IT?

**Have you considered traveling and working as a volunteer on your trip(s)?** That's what Diane Springer of Pinole chooses to do.

Diane is a Real Estate Broker with Coldwell Banker Bartels in Pinole. She is a Pinole Valley resident and is a familiar face because she is involved in many community service projects. Her son Aaron is a teacher at Richmond High School and is the head coach of the Pinole Seals Swim Team in the summer months.

Diane just returned from her 4th working vacation. The first working trip found Diane working in Dominica on a study of health and stress in the children of a small village. The second working trip was a study of the Macaws of the Peruvian Rain Forest. The third and

fourth trips were to Guatemala where Diane worked in an all boys orphanage for 2-3 weeks each time. For the December/January 2007 trip, Aaron joined her as well.

Hogar Miguel Magone is an orphanage located about 30 minutes from Guatemala City. There are usually 45-50 boys that live at the orphanage. These boys might be orphans, have been sexual abuse victims or simply can't be cared for by their parents. They attend public and private schools and receive medical and dental attention, as well as psychological counseling.

What do you do when you work in this orphanage? Well, for starters, how about waking up at 5 am each morning to the yells & sounds of boys, their antics, their

work and calls for breakfast? The boys make up their beds, clean the floors in their dorm rooms & halls and clean the bathrooms. No adults do it for them. The working volunteers go to the kitchen at 5:15 AM to prepare breakfast and the protein drink, atol. Breakfast is very simple... beans, atol and sometimes bread if donations have been good. Then you walk the kids to school. The majority of the boys go to school in a neighboring town that's 1.75 miles away. It's downhill all the way but uphill on the return. But the views are incredible and you can get fresh fruits and vegetables from the street vendors.

The cook arrives mid-morning and starts cooking lunch and dinner, six days a week. There is a laundry woman who also washes clothes six days a week. Two teachers supervise the boys for 24 hours at a time and the teachers sleep in the dorm rooms with the boys.

Volunteers serve the meals, help pick up donations of food & clothing from people in Guatemala City, sort donations for monthly parking lot sales, take the boys to medical appointments or judicial hearings, break up fights, teach English, explain things to the boys, supervise, hug, wipe noses, help with homework or clothing needs, laugh, etc. They do whatever needs to be done. Every day is different. Every day is special and these 45-50 boys really tug at your heart strings. When you have a working vacation and mingle with the boys, the village residents and live as they do, you realize how lucky you are and how fortunate we are to live in the United States. And it is hard to leave the boys when the two or three week stay is over. Back here in Pinole, Diane thinks about the boys every single day and thinks of ways to improve their lives.

Diane feels strongly that these boys deserve so much more. Thanks to generous donations from friends, businesses and service clubs, Diane takes many, many new items to the boys when she goes to Guatemala. This last trip included 50 Oakland Raider shirts and Oakland Raider hats, balls and t-shirts from the YMCA, DVDs, 50 other new shirts plus new socks for all the boys, 50 name tag lanyards and flashlights for all the boys from American

Home Mortgage and 50 new backpacks from CASA of Sonoma County, CASA of Contra Costa County and Pinole Rotary Club. Local dentists donated toothpaste and tooth brushes, friends donated shorts, combs, school supplies and other items. The Exchange Club of Pinole donated \$750 and Diane bought new shoes for all the boys. Shopping for shoes was a very exciting field trip for the boys. Diane also raised \$4,000 in donations and gave the director the \$4,000 on this last trip. This money was used to pay for private school tuition and school costs for 7 boys for the entire year. Additionally, Diane bought a new phone system for the orphanage and a new fax machine.

Diane is returning in April 2007 and again in August 2007. In August, Diane will be supervising two college students from New Hampshire. The two brothers wanted to do a community service project and the plan is to renovate and improve the two rooms that the volunteers sleep in. They will be painting the rooms, buying 8 new mattresses, sheets, mattress covers, pillows, installing window coverings and storage cabinets, upgrading the plumbing and electrical and more.

What can you do to help? Plenty! If you have it in your heart to help out these boys, please consider the following: Diane believes that the boys deserve only new items so if you donate shirts, socks, etc. please make sure they are new and are sized to fit boys that tend to be smaller than boys in the United States. Money is always a good option and receipts will be given. If you have excess frequent flyer miles that you can donate, that would be a big help as it would enable Diane to travel to Guatemala more often. Diane wants to form a 501C(3) non profit foundation and needs legal advice pro bono or at a reduced cost. If your club or organization would like to do a service project, you can contact Diane for ideas. Diane is also willing to speak to service clubs, schools and other groups about the boys and her experiences working in the orphanage. She has a Power Point presentation that will keep you riveted to your seat. Please consider helping in any way you can.