

EPIC

MINUTES OF THE 38TH GENERAL MEETING

July 12, 2014

9:30 a.m. President Dana DeLoca welcomed everyone: Attendees introduced themselves and gave their hometowns, including three Chileans visiting Colorado accompanying Edward Ruddell.

Dick Williams gave the opening prayer.

Dana DeLoca – Presidential Update: “Who is EPIC?” video. Dana stated that EPIC is a group focusing on the environment, development, human rights and peace. It offers creative responses to development challenges worldwide.

Mary McKay, replacing absent Carter Epp, outlined 5 projects of the 2013–2014 fiscal year:

- In **Honduras** which is suffering from drug problems and an extremely high homicide rate, LA SEMILLA is teaching young men and women that farming can be a productive occupation, an alternative to getting involved with the drug related gangs. There are 200–300 families participating with LA SEMILLA.
- In **Guatemala**, FUNDAMARCOS is working toward food security through diversification of food crops, raising animals, and income generation. 25,689 trees were planted in fiscal year 2013–2014 to combat erosion and global warming and for improved family nutrition. There are 200–300 families participating with FUNDAMARCOS.
- In **El Salvador**, APRODEHNI is working for the human rights of the poorest children. APRODEHNI gives workshops and classes to help families build resilience to climate change. In addition, EPIC helps APRODEHNI in disaster relief work in areas that lack assistance from other organizations.
- In **Colombia**, unemployment is rampant in Soacha a very poor barrio of Bogota. The consequences are problems of drugs, violence and gangs. Creciendo Juntos has given workshops on conflict transformation dealing with neighborhood violence and child and domestic abuse. Afternoon tutoring is provided for students and a recording studio has been set up for teens.
- In **Mexico**, La Buena Tierra School in Cuernavaca began with preschool, and in 2009 started an elementary school with only first and second grades. This year classes were taught through sixth grade, and La Buena Tierra celebrated its first sixth grade graduation. A private Catholic school will give scholarships to all graduates of La Buena Tierra through high school! Upgrades to the school facility have been made through EPIC contributions. EPIC donated \$5,000 for readying the newly acquired playground with items such as an exterior wall, gate and paint. Help to prepare the playground also came from the parents.

- **Questions and answers:**

Indigenous peoples make up 10% of Central Americans and are approximately 50% of the population in Guatemala. The majority of EPIC’s work takes place with the indigenous – Lenca in Honduras and Maya in Guatemala. FUNDAMARCOS, working in agriculture with indigenous in Guatemala, started with work in ten villages in the department of El Quiché. After about 3 years they moved on to other villages in the adjacent department of Baja Verapaz, and they are now working in about 12 villages in this department serving 18 organized groups. This work expands via word of mouth and by neighbors seeing the example of their friends and family members.

EPIC looks for and helps inspired leaders “with fire in their bellies,” such as Felipa Xico. She began working with widows whose husbands were killed in the Guatemalan violence in the 1980s and founded Mujeres en Acción.

Visit to Mujeres en Acción, Guatemala – Linda Hardesty Women in local micro-credit groups make loan payments every two weeks. About one thousand people benefit from this loan program. Because of the high extortion risk in Guatemala whenever there is any money, Hardesty went to Guatemala to clean install Microsoft Windows 7 on their 7 computers running on the XP operating system so as to prevent hacking.

Mothers in the micro-credit groups asked for safe programs for their teens. One result is their program “Restoring Values” with 50 youths in four communities learning and working together to make music. New bands are being formed. At Christmas 2013, \$1,600 was raised for musical instruments.

An assessment of quorum – There were 67 proxies representing members not present plus 37 members present. EPIC’s bylaws stipulate “one hundred members or one-seventh of the total numbers of members...shall constitute a quorum at any meeting duly called.” The quorum was met by both of these two criteria. We could therefore proceed with business.

The minutes of the 37th Annual General Meeting were read by Paul McKay. Following a correction replacing Penny DeLoca with Dana DeLoca as President, a motion by Rich Blum and seconded by Loren Raymond to approve the minutes of the 37th Annual General Meeting as corrected were unanimously approved.

Treasurer’s Report "EPIC's Financial Health" – Dick Williams Of the \$190,582.51 in expenditures for 2014–15, 85% goes to programs. In 2002, EPIC had 80 life members; in 2014, there were 176.

Questions and Answers:

- There are 222 donors, and most are repeat donors. The Cowley endowment of \$380,695 brings in about \$11,000 per year. Three churches were contributors this year, two Mennonite and one Methodist. The Schowalter Foundation gave a grant of \$12,000 for the Maya Cultural Center. Volunteer services and in-kind gifts are extremely valuable. Unfortunately, the grant application to Coca Cola for COSECHA was refused. The request for \$300,000 over 3 years would have helped 25,000 people.
- EPIC focuses not on things but on leadership capabilities.
- Becky Sawatzky has been hired as EPIC’s new accountant and financial manager.

Presentation of Nominees for EPIC’s Board of Directors and Election of Board Members – Christie McKay A motion to accept the slate as presented was made by Paul McKay and seconded by Rich Blum. The Board members elected are: Gretchen Williams 2 years; Tony Brun 3 years; Cathy Egan 3 years; and Mary McKay 3 years.

Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange: COSECHA (Honduras) and APRODEHNI (El Salvador) – Tony Brun A video “Farmer-to-Farmer” explained how farmers share with others the appropriate technologies they’ve developed. APRODEHNI visited COSECHA in Honduras and learned about hand pumps to bring water from a river. Then COSECHA taught a 2-day course for APRODEHNI in El Salvador. EPIC provided \$2,500 for Farmer-to-Farmer exchanges.

Project visit to La Semilla del Progreso (Honduras) – "School and Water" – Tony Brun

Brun visited a one-room, one-teacher school for 48 Lenca children, grades 1-6. The school had no water, requiring long trips down to a stream to fill water bottles. Three months later, a pump was supplying water for the school. Protection of the spring is now important. Issues to be addressed include the possibility of fencing to protect the hose from theft and the possibility of the use of a bicycle to ease the difficult uphill hand pumping.

Taking advantage of new opportunities and responding to urgent needs – Paul McKay

There is a need to restore the concept of farming for the younger generation in Central America and Mexico. Since October 2014, 52,000 unaccompanied children have left their home countries, the greatest number coming from Honduras. Patricio and Laureano Jacobo have been effective in helping to give young people in Honduras hope and opportunities to earn a living locally by teaching profitable sustainable agriculture.

Last year, donations to EPIC's Christmas gift list brought in \$6,889.75.

Paul and Mary invited everyone for a potluck lunch at their home.

Mary Stern