

# CASA DE LA SOLIDARIDAD

## PLACEMENT SITES

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### 1. Praxis Site: Canton Los Sitios (Located in Jayaque)

Canton Los Sitios is located about 1 hour from San Salvador, in the department of La Libertad. This area is largely agricultural, with 60% of the population working in some sort of agricultural setting. Many of the women in the area are single moms who work in maquilas (textile factories). It is a poor area surrounded by coffee farms (fincas). In Los Sitios, there is 30% illiteracy rate. The average grade level completed is 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The majority of young girls leave school at the age of 12 or 13 and, as a result, many become pregnant at a very early age, leaving the burden of raising children to the young moms. Those who are able to continue and study at the high school and university level are rare.

Jesuit priests and Oblata nuns worked in Jayaque in the golden years of pastoral work during the war. Padre Nacho Martin- Baró was the pastor at the time he was killed at the UCA in 1989 and is spoken of often by community members.

Role of Casa students: Students work with at-risk school children through a variety of activities, outings, and conversations at the public school in Los Sitios. It is a big brother / big sister program with the idea of encouraging students in their studies. Most interaction is done in groups rather than 1-1. The majority of students in the program (age 10-21) come from disintegrated families and are experiencing academic / disciplinary issues. The lesson plans are at the discretion of the Casa students, but past students have discussed themes such as relationships, non-violent conflict, resolution, leadership, and the importance of education. Also, students spend one day visiting families of their students from Los Sitios and the surrounding area. The goal of the home visits is to learn about the reality in which people from the region live and to build a closer relationship with the students.

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### 2. Praxis Sites: Nuevo Amanecer and El Pueblo de Dios en Camino (located in San Ramon)

San Ramon is a semi-urban marginal community in San Salvador (about a 45-minute bus ride from the Casa)

The Association Nuevo Amanecer of El Salvador (ANAES) is an institution of human promotion and Christian inspiration, which emerged from the Christian Base Communities. The pedagogy / theology of Nuevo Amanecer is rooted in the idea of empowering individuals to better their living environment through education, solidarity, and Christian values. They recognize that investing in the physical, intellectual, and spiritual development of children with the collaboration of families and the community is the most effective means to promote development that is more humane, participative, and sustainable. Three hundred children between the ages of 2 to 6 years of age attend the childcare centers (there are 5 throughout the country). The majority of children are from poor homes of single mothers, whose work is washing / cleaning in private homes, selling in markets, working in the maquilas, and farming. Services provided to families include education of pre-school children, nutrition, physical health and psychological support, social work, after school program for school age children 7-9 years, school / education for parents of families. Nuevo Amanecer also has programs in family solidarity, communal development, economic initiatives, workshops, and health.

El Pueblo de Dios en Camino is a Christian Base Community found in the local community of San Ramon and is run by local leaders. This community emerged in 2000 in response to alienation from the local (conservative) parish and has since developed as an important support for the marginalized people in San Ramon. Programs and services offered include a soy project, a tutoring program for at-risk children and youth, a weekly Bible reflection, a scholarship program for young children and youth, a support group for single moms, and an artisans' cooperative.

Role of Casa Student: In the community of San Ramon, students divide their days between Nuevo Amanecer and El Pueblo de Dios en Camino. The primary role of the Casa student at Nuevo is to assist with the Program of Child Development, spending time with the children while supporting the classroom teachers. At midday, students spend their time in the comedor / soy project, visiting with members from the community and eating healthy meals. At El Pueblo de Dios en Camino, students spend time getting to know the community members and teach English classes to small groups of pre-teen and teenagers. At both sites, home visits are made to get a better understanding of the reality in which the people in San Ramon live.

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### 3. La Javia (Located in Tepecoyo)

Tepecoyo is a rural community located about 1 hour from San Salvador in the department of La Libertad. The area of Tepecoyo historically has been a coffee growing area. Other crops that are grown are corn, maicillo (a small corn-substitute grain), beans and tobacco. There are some people who raise livestock such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Primarily, the people have dedicated themselves to the cultivation of coffee, brick making, and the production of milk products such as cheese. However, with the recent fall in coffee prices, many of the landowners are no longer producing coffee, leaving most people in the area without work or income. As a result, many families do not have means to survive and many children go without education because families cannot afford the basic costs (uniform, food, school supplies, transportation, etc.). La Javia is a nearby rural village just outside of the small town of Tepecoyo and is made up of 3 zones. Currently, there is a functioning computer lab (with about 10 computers) where classes are offered to children of the community. English classes are also offered to small groups of children. In addition, the children in the classes receive a cup of soymilk each day to address the issue of malnutrition. Plans are underway to begin a more complete food program for the students. All of these projects are offered at the home of Angelica, a proactive woman in the community.

Role of Casa Student: Students participate in several newly developed programs including teaching English classes for the youth of the community and getting to know members of the community in their own homes through conducting home visits. Also, students participate in a soy project where they help with the distribution of milk to children. When the food program (comedor) is up and running, Casa students will help out in the preparation and distribution of food.

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### 4. Praxis Site: Meditation Center (Located in Mariona)

Mariona is located 6 miles north of the capital, San Salvador. As a result of the economic crisis in the country, the town has grown quickly in recent years as people are migrating to the city from the country in hopes of better living conditions. There are approximately 150,000 habitants living in 18 small communities. Mariona is also home to the largest male prison in the country.

The Meditation Center is a new initiative, which began with a few community members in Mariona. The idea of the center is to provide a space for community members, mostly women, to come together and receive support to face the many challenges of their days (economic struggles, violence, trauma from the war). Specifically, workshops are offered in meditations, massage / energy therapy, and yoga. There is also space for children to receive tutoring, English classes, and read. In addition, the center is home to Salvador Craft – a clearinghouse for 21 women’s cooperatives throughout the country who make artisan products.

Role of Casa Students: Casa students spend time collaborating with the center in the various activities / services offered. Students conduct home visits to get an idea of the reality in which many live in Mariona. Students also teach English classes 2 hours a week to children of the people who participate in the center. In addition, students have the opportunity to work with Salvador Craft. Currently, a website is being constructed to better market artisan crafts internationally. Lastly, students have opportunities to visit a local day-care center where children of single moms spend their days while their moms look for work.

NOTE: Time in this site is largely spent with a team of 3 families, who serve as Casa students' guides, teachers, and mentors.

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### 5. Praxis Site: Canton Las Delicias

Las Delicias is a small rural village located in the department of La Libertad, 28 kilometers from San Salvador. It has historically been a coffee producing zone and, until 5 years ago, was the main source of work and income for the region. But, with the fall in coffee prices, the community is no longer able to count on this as a stable source of income. There are 650 families with an average of 6 family members per family. The majority of people work as farmers. About 50% of the residents own their own land for planting the milpa (corn crop) and growing beans. Most of what is grown is used in the home and very little is left over to sell. Some young members of the community work in maquilas (textile factories), and some women work as domestic help in nearby larger towns. Men travel to San Salvador to work in factories or in construction, but this work is temporary and hard to come by. However, the majority of people of Las Delicias are unemployed. Some families survive from the remittances that are sent from family members who live in the United States.

The community of Las Delicias has a public school that serves children from primary school to 9th grade. The Catholic Church in Las Delicias has a youth group and small committees with various responsibilities. The committees are committed to the betterment of the community and are responsible for planning events such as retreats, workshops for spiritual formation, computer classes, tutoring children on scholarship, and providing medical assistance. Also, a community center / clinic has recently been constructed that serves Las Delicias and the surrounding communities.

Role of Casa Student: Casa students spend a lot of time with the children, youth and young adults of the community. Casa students in Las Delicias learn about the reality in which the people live not only by conducted many home visits, but also by engaging in conversation with the youth, young adults, and adults in the community. Casa students also teach computer and English classes.

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### 6. Praxis Site: Centro de Capacitacion San Vincente de Paul y Comedor la Casa del Cipote (Located in Canton el Cedro, Panchimalco)

Canton el Cedro is located 25 kilometers from San Salvador. It is a very rural area, surrounded by fincas (coffee farms). 6 year ago, work in the fincas was the main source of work and income for the community. Now, however, with the fall of coffee prices, few people are working in this industry as many fincas have been sold or are no longer producing coffee.

The people of Canton el Cedro are very poor and face many challenges, especially now because there is little work to offer in the area. Now many people travel to San Salvador, costing them money in transportation and time to travel. The farmers of the area find it difficult to encounter work in the city because many do not know how to read or write. The families in Canton el Cedro are organized with a community council. Houses are located far from one another, which makes it challenging for people to organize and work collaboratively.

The objective of Centro de Capacitacion San Vincente de Paul y Comedor la Casa del Cipote is to welcome, accompany, and educate children, youth and adults. There are many projects offered at the Center. First, there is a comedor (soup kitchen) for 120 children between the ages of 1 and 12. They receive a glass of milk in the morning and lunch Monday through Friday. Second is a pre-school for children between the ages of 4 and 6. Pre-school is offered Monday through Friday from 8-11:30. Third is a sewing workshop with 30 students. Fourth is a group of women who make artesanía such as bags, jewelry, and a product called “Perlas de Esperanza”. They sell their crafts in the community and in San Salvador. There, is a computer workshop for 17 youth that is offered in the afternoons. In addition, there is a garden project that provides vegetables to the comedor and for sale. In the near future, the center is looking to construct a high school and health clinic. Through these projects offered, those involved hope to improve their economic, social, and educational situation.

Role of Casa Student: Students are involved in the daily activities of the comedor, pre-school, community garden, and teaching English classes and computer classes to the children. Students may also have the opportunity to help with the construction of the new high school. Students get to know mostly women and children who participate in the center’s activities. Students are also encouraged to express if they would be interested in getting involved in any of the other activities mentioned above. Also, students have the opportunity to visit homes of the people involved in the Center and the surrounding communities.

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### 7. Praxis Site: Las Nubes, San Ramon

Las Nubes is a rural zone of San Ramon located at the base of the San Salvador Volcano. It is about a 20-minute bus ride from the Casa.

El Pueblo de Dios en Camino is a Christian Base Community founded in San Ramon and is run by local leaders. This community emerged in 2000 in response to alienation from the local (conservative) parish and has since developed as an important support for the marginalized people in San Ramon and the surrounding areas.

For 2009, El Camino de Dios en Camino, in collaboration with the community members of Las Nubes, will begin a community gardening project in the region. The goal of this project is to provide alternative methods of income generation for community members who otherwise have very little opportunity for employment. The families (18 in all) of Las Nubes have limited access to public services such as running water, electricity and garbage collection. The community is made up of elderly women and men, single moms, children, and youth.

In partnership with other Christian Base Communities and various non-governmental organizations, El Pueblo de Dios en Camino will provide necessary training, workshops, and formation for the gardening project. The project will begin in January due to the fact that the rainy season begins in May.

Role of Casa Student: Casa students will be involved in the daily activities of the community gardening project in Las Nubes. Activities will include, but are not limited to, participating in workshops and training with community members and physical labor associated with gardening. Other possibilities are providing after-school programs for children in the community who otherwise are not offered such types of services. Many home visits will be conducted in the community as well.

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### 8. Praxis Site: Amatapec

The neighborhood of Amatapec is just over the border between the municipality of San Salvador and Soyapango, a marginal urbanized area to the east of downtown San Salvador. Overcrowded conditions and urban poverty in this area lead to alcohol and drug abuse, family disintegration, and violence in the community. The community began to be populated as a squatter settlement during the 1980's by refugees from the more conflicted parts of the countryside; the older residents of the community are displaced 'campesinos' who still miss their rural lifestyle, while their children have made a life for themselves in the city, which is all their grandchildren know. Today the neighborhood is economically mixed: most people are working class or working poor and some professionals live in the community (teachers, nurses, etc.), which also has pockets of severe urban poverty.

The Episcopal (Anglican) Church, Iglesia y Colegio Episcopal San Andrés Apóstol, began working in Amatapec in the 1980's, and today the parish has about 100 members and a preschool-7th grade school with 90 students. Most of the children who attend the school come from broken families and many have one or both parents working in the U.S. Class sizes are limited to 20 to give a more personalized education. Extra curricular activities offered at San Andrés include a computer lab, a drum and trumpet corps, and baton squad, all of which have the goal of helping improve students' self-esteem and skill set. Iglesia San Andrés Apóstol works with "pre-youth," youth, women, men, and seniors in weekly group meetings designed to give them support and opportunities for spiritual growth. The church also offers "informal education" after school hours to children and adults in music, English, computing, handicrafts, micro-finance and micro-business skills, and literacy.

Role of Casa Students: This site provides an opportunity for Casa students to be involved in teaching English classes to children in the school. ½ days on Monday and ½ on Wednesdays are spent in the classrooms. The other time is spent visiting community members and points of interest in the surrounding community. There are also opportunities to be involved with any of the extra-curricular activities above.

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### 9. Praxis Site: Calle Real, Community Dolores Medina

Calle Real is located between the cities of Apopa and Ciudad Delgado north of San Salvador. Situated between two rivers, it is about 8 kilometers long and no more than 1 1/2 kilometers wide. Until 1980 it was a rural, agricultural community but due to rural to urban migration to escape the armed conflict of the 1980s it went from 5,000 to over 30,000 in just a few short years.

The project site is located in the Community of Dolores Medina. The community was established in 1986 with 43 families as its members. These families were displaced by the war and lived in the refugee camp at Calle Real for a number of years. The Passionist Sisters who were in the parish of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes helped the families clean off a garbage dump, which was to be the eventual site of the community. The families came from all over the country. Initially the refugee families worked together to build homes, dig wells and develop cooperative works such as sewing factory, carpentry shop and construction. These projects were abandoned due to multiple problems in the mid 1990s and conflicts with the local parish.

As a result, many of the young men immigrated to the United States in the late 1990s, leaving behind a majority of female-headed households. There are over 250 people living in the community with 70 percent under 25 years of age. Many of the women work in the markets in Apopa or San Salvador and in maquila factories. The men work in construction. During the past few years, gangs have also come into the surrounding area. Most of the families are at or just below the poverty line and several lie in extreme poverty.

In June 2006 the community began to reorganize and formed a youth group for peace and solidarity, a support group for women in the community (including a micro-financing program). In addition, they are trying to clean a small piece of land for a community agriculture project.

Role of Casa Students: Students teach English to children from the community of all ages (ranging from preschool to youth who have had to leave their studies). Students eat lunch with a new family each day. This enables students the opportunity to form relationships with most community members while learning about the realities in which they live (post-war trauma, immigration, gang activity, and violence) and the effects that these issues have on family life. There is also flexibility to visit other families in the community during the lunch break.

Note: The youth group meets on Saturday evenings and is a great way to connect with youth who cannot be present during the week.