

Worlds Away, and Yet So Close

It's six in the morning. I've just woken up and I stroll out onto the deck. The expansive, gray sky and the soft, damp coolness embrace and welcome me. I look out to the pasture and the hangar style barn in front of me. In one pasture, a mare and her foal are scourging the ground for grains, and, in another pasture further to my right, the stallion gallops up to the edge of the fence checking me out. Four Labradors bound up against the posts of the deck to my left, yipping for some attention. There is a harmonizing wakening all about me and I feel privileged to be here. I'm struck that I feel so at home here. It is not anything like my home, nothing like Honduras where I live. This November day in Ohio, so tremendously different from my home, and yet each in its particular way, so beautiful and so sustaining of life.



Laura and I were welcomed into the home of Wayne and Christina Waite. We worried about making this trip for fund-raising and building new relationships. It would mean meeting a lot of new people; people who perhaps wouldn't even understand why we choose to live in a developing country and a foreign culture. Maybe they'd resent us. Maybe they'd be put off by us. Could they understand the passion we feel about the people of Honduras? Would they be willing to engage our request that they partner with us in our mission? We both felt insecure as we ventured away from our comfort zone. But Wayne and Christina, their son Daniel and his wife Nidia (from Camasca, Honduras where our bilingual school stands), and their grandson, Jonathan received us with such empowering graciousness that it settled our concern. This same graciousness then imbued every encounter.



The night after the morning on the deck, we were welcomed into the beautiful home of Neil and Bonnie Freund, Neil being one of the partners of Wayne's law firm. Again I was first overwhelmed with the foreignness of the environment. Particularly with the choice of food -- scallops wrapped in bacon share little with refried beans. But the people there loved our stories and the amazing work Shoulder to Shoulder is accomplishing. By night's end we had raised over \$25,000; good people shouldering a good cause. And over the next few days we secured relationships that will further deepen and sustain our mission. Wright State will partner with our bilingual school, helping us to develop best practice models for teaching. Incarnation Catholic Church and their school will find ways to support our individual students and our classes in relationship to our students and faculty. A House of Prayer Church will consider all sorts of means to assist us from financial support to music ministry exchanges to construction brigades. With all of these new and exciting relationships, all of these new shoulders

that are now firmly pressed against ours, the mission of Shoulder to Shoulder is alive and growing.

Laura and I, at first afraid of meeting new people, found ourselves empowered and full of hope. But that is what we do, we find empowerment and hope in making new relationships. Ohio seems very far away from Honduras in so many ways. But it is really very close, and getting closer all the time.