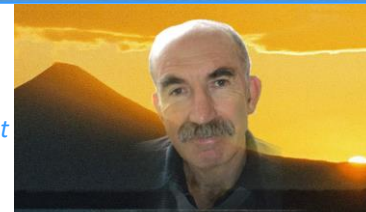


READING SAN FRANCISCO LIBRE ASSOCIATION

The Reading San Francisco Libre Association (RSFLA) is the organisation that facilitates the town-twinning link between Reading and San Francisco Libre, a small town in Nicaragua with rural outlying communities. RSFLA supports the Reading San Francisco Libre Trust (RSFLT), a registered charity. 100% of donated funds go to support the people, development and environment of San Francisco Libre. Many projects are implemented by the local NGO, APREDEN, which is also supported by the German town twinning association in Oldenburg. The David Grimes Trust, part of RSFLT, was established in memory of David Grimes, an RSFLT trustee and staff member of the Department of Meteorology of Reading University.



David Grimes Trust

Collaboration and progress

This newsletter reports Reading's collaboration with our APREDEN colleagues in San Francisco Libre since the December 2021 issue of Momotombo. The work of the David Grimes Trust (DGT) progresses well thanks to our generous supporters, the APREDEN team, our colleagues in Oldenburg and the community of San Francisco Libre. Two new projects have started: *Gallinas* (chickens) and *Clases de Guitarra* (guitar lessons) which complement the long term *Beca* (school scholarships), *Biblioteca* (community centre) and *La Guayabita* (environmental centre) schemes that we support.

Gallinas (local poultry)

Following consultations with local people, APREDEN identified that there was scope for improving diets and incomes through greater ownership of poultry at a small household scale that did not require much capital investment. Suitable interested families were identified, and in May, 27 families each received locally sourced chickens of a hardy indigenous breed (*gallinas criollas*) able to thrive while free ranging in the local environment.



Each family received a cockerel and five hens with some starter feed to supplement their free-range diet. In September, it was reported that production had been good, with many clutches of chicks raised and some families collecting three to five eggs a day. It is envisaged that the flocks will gradually expand in number and size, with families benefitting from the food and some sales. The DGT provided £1,350 towards the cost of the project, with families making a symbolic contribution to the start-up costs.



Guitar lessons

Also in May, APREDEN arranged for music teacher Cesar Vegas Cardoza to give a course of 18 monthly guitar lessons for eight youngsters who already owned instruments. The DGT has contributed £470 towards the teaching costs. By June we were sent videos of them playing and we look forward to more. The group practises together twice a week in *La Biblioteca*. A keyboard lesson group has also just begun. Music and dance are the life blood of Nicaraguan culture and, as Jimmy Zamora commented, 'without music, little by little communities die' (*Sin el arte de la música los pueblos mueren poco a poco*).

The Beca school scholarship scheme

In May we received the following thank you letter from Dr Graciela Castillo Martínez, a former *becada* (scholarship recipient) who is now a newly qualified medical doctor.

My name is Graciela del Carmen Castillo Martínez. I am a 26-year-old Nicaraguan from San Francisco Libre. I come from a large family with few economic resources, my mother is a housewife, and my father is a farmer.

I am currently a General Practitioner Doctor graduated from the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua. The reason for this letter is to formally thank the Reading and Oldenburg scholarship programme from which I have benefitted. I received for many years the scholarship stipend and school supplies, and I also benefitted from the various courses implemented by the APREDEN programme. Thanks to my scholarship my family enabled me to complete primary and secondary school. I managed to enter the Medicine and Surgery degree course in 2014, thanks to a special scholarship from the university. In 2020-2022 I did social service as a doctor in the Department of Managua. Having achieved this, I give infinite thanks for having been awarded the APREDEN school scholarship, being for me like a light in the midst of darkness. For many Nicaraguan families it was and will continue to be an opportunity to improve. I say thank you and wish you the best and I hope that this programme continues to change the lives of young Nicaraguans. Blessings, Sincerely, Graciela del Carmen Castillo Martinez.



The Beca programme, administered by former becado Manuel Vallejos, provides over 100 disadvantaged families with a monthly stipend and some educational materials to allow children to complete primary and secondary education. The annual cost is £120 per student. Since 2020 the DGT has supported 40 becados a year and Oldenburg has supported another 65. The DGT contributed £4,800 this year.

La Guayabita environmental centre

The fruit trees planted with DGT support have been highly successful, providing a range of fruits and encouraging wildlife.

In 2016, the DGT supported the start of a cooperative of six beekeepers. Since then, apiculture has flourished thanks to several initiatives and some external support. The cooperative now numbers 15, who meet at *La Guayabita*. Another 15 beekeepers work independently. Honey sales and the range of additional products are growing and recently the FAO provided additional specialist equipment.



La Biblioteca community centre

Administered by Emma Ocon, *La Biblioteca* is a thriving community and educational hub offering study space and

reference facilities for self-initiated groups and school and university students. There is a popular after school club to reinforce school learning and develop skills through crafts and educational games. This year the DGT provided £1,400 for educational materials and the internet connection.



Other projects

We are discussing providing funds for an additional teaching room for *La Biblioteca*, and electric water pumps for the arid community of Los Tiesos. We will keep you posted.

In Reading

In February the Mayor of Reading, Cllr. Rachel Eden, met Paul Starkey for a briefing on Reading's twinning with SFL and she offered her encouragement and support.

We remain grateful to our long-term regular donors and to the Department of Meteorology for their remarkable support. Individuals and groups raise funds throughout the year and the highlight is the annual Met Ball fundraiser. This year, thanks to organisers Harriet Turner and Isobel Smith, it raised £1,543, all of which will go to our projects with APREDEN.

Visits to San Francisco Libre

Our APREDEN colleagues always welcome visitors with links to Reading. They can provide friendship, free accommodation and the chance to take part in a community project. Advice and support are available from us and former volunteers and visitors. If you know a gap-year student or recent graduate interested in volunteering for a few weeks or months, do contact us. Also, if someone would like to do student or academic research involving San Francisco Libre, contact us at: jon@sanfranciscolibre.org.

Urgent request: webpage help

We need to revive our moribund website. If you can help or offer advice, please contact us at: jon@sanfranciscolibre.org

Donate

<https://www.justgiving.com/reading-sanfrancisco-libretrust>

More information

For more background information on the DGT please see Momotombo 16 that recalls the history of our town twinning and our many collaborative projects over the years. You can keep up with our activities online ('Like' them. 'Share' them):

<https://www.facebook.com/ReadingSFL>

[@SflReading](https://twitter.com/SflReading)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BJ8n9FWB0YZ/>

@ReadingSFLA