

Nunoa Project Completes Blanket Distribution Program in the Alianza Community

Program Introduction:

Alianza is one of the highest and most remote communities in the Nuñoa District with more than 40 families (200 people). While a good location for the production of alpaca fiber the harshness of the climate is a continuous challenge to herding families, especially their young. It is too high for agricultural production hence diet is limited and very far from the Nuñoa market in town and the medical center.

Last June when in Nuñoa distributing wheelchairs to handicapped adults and children the dedicated Alianza social worker, Luz Marina Antezana, approached me describing the hardships families encountered in their daily lives and their need for warmer blankets. Fortuitously, a member of a former research team, Art Morris, who had worked there over 50 years ago had just contacted me saying he would like to help the people of Nuñoa in some manner.

The Alianza blanket project immediately came to mind and with additional funds from the Nuñoa Project Luz Marina and Morgan Hoke, a graduate student working on early child development, bought blankets (frasadadas) and shawls (mantónes) for each family in a nearby city and bussed the large bundles back to town.

The rest is explained by Morgan as she distributed the blankets to the Alianza gathering. We thank both for their efforts in making this possible and, of course, to Art Morris who after five decades remembered and cared. We can only hope that the families of Alianza are sleeping more comfortably in the frigid mountain air.

Brooke Thomas
Vice President of the Nuñoa Project

It was a cool misty morning as my colleagues and I left Nuñoa to head up to Accapujio, the small rural community where Rural Alianza has its headquarters. We travelled across bumpy dirt roads for nearly an hour, twisting and turning up into the hillside. By the time we arrived, it was pouring and everyone who had traveled with us in the truck made a mad dash for the Alianza buildings to avoid the onslaught. We were invited to eat breakfast with the director of Alianza as well as some other administrators before we would journey further up into Alianza territory to the site where the blankets would be distributed.

After another forty five minutes bouncing along in the back of the crowded truck with 15 members of Alianza: men, women, and children alike, and several enormous and extremely heavy packets of blankets, the hills opened into a large rolling valley. A massive herd of alpacas roamed along the side of the road. Large groups of tiny crias (baby alpacas) ran about in fits and starts while their mothers grazed peacefully, undisturbed by our rumbling by. After crossing a formerly small stream now full of the recent rains we came to a halt in front of a small complex of buildings where a large group of people were awaiting our arrival. Within minutes the truck was empty, people streaming out and quickly forming a makeshift assembly line to pass the cargo out of the truck and carry it to the small patio space between the buildings. Men and women greeted each other with claps on the back and the exchange of coca leaves as everyone settled around the blankets, the women seated to one side with the children scattered among them and the men standing to another.



Luz Marina, the wonderful social worker who connected us with the people of Alianza and made this all possible, served as MC and allowed myself, the director of Alianza, and the president of the membership to make a

statement regarding the origin of the blankets to be distributed. After the statements were made each of the families were called up in turn to receive two frasadas (imagine a wool bed spread almost an inch thick and so heavy it sort of pins you to the bed) and a mantón or wool blanket that is folded and worn around the shoulders by the women, serving as their primary protection against cold, wind, and rain. Each member of Alianza



shook my hand after receiving their blankets and many whispered additional words of sincere gratitude. In particular, there was one older woman who had recently lost all of her bedding when sudden rains led to a flash flood that swept away her blankets as she was washing them beside the river. She received a few additional frasadas to help make up for her loss. She pulled me aside and took my hand, telling me in Quechua how

grateful she was and how she hoped that I and other representatives of the Nuñoa Project would return to visit the people of Rural Alianza.

It was a truly beautiful and touching day. On behalf of the people of Rural Alianza and myself, I would like to thank Art Morris who made this incredible day possible with his generous donation and all the other members of and donors to the Nuñoa Project for the wonderful work that they do and for letting me be a part of it. Thank you, thank you, thank you! Sincerely,

Morgan Hoke
PhD/MPH Candidate, Northwestern University