



Autumn 2010

BULLETIN

**international**  
International Programs YMCA Canada East

## TAULLABE

One of the boldest expressions of Canadian work in Honduras is a series of ten large signs painted on the rock face along the highway to Taulabé, northwest of Tegucigalpa. The red and white signs, bearing the logos of the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA] and the Red Cross, make statements about AIDS: Mutual Fidelity Prevents AIDS; Sexual Abstinence Prevents AIDS; Correct Use of a Condom Prevents AIDS; Know the Truth About AIDS; *Rompeo el Silencio*, and so on.

After the signs, one passes by a cluster of artisans' displays along the road: clay pots, hammocks, baskets.

Then a series of produce stands; depending upon the time of year, one sees massive piles of oranges or watermelons, and, of course, bananas, which for many years had been the country's primary export.

Taulabé is smaller than Marcala. The population is less than 5000 persons, but it is more spread out. The small ACJ [YMCA] building is centrally located opposite a school. The front wall, painted a few years ago by young volunteers from Montreal, displays both a Canadian and Honduran flag.

The director is Hermógenes Gomez. He is a Lenca, the dominant indigenous group in the country, and has their characteristic short stature. However, his high energy level and self-confidence belie his small build.

The ACJ operates a computer program here, as well as an AIDS awareness program, and the Citizenship Formation Program. It costs about \$45,000 [US] to operate the Taulabé center, which has only two full-time employees. There are also 25 volunteers here. Hermógenes tells us that it is a difficult place to work, because after they train the youth, the young people really have so few opportunities in the area that they almost always move away.



Hermógenes Gomez

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## HERMOGENES GOMEZ



*Hermógenes with members of the YMCA [ACJ] youth group in Nueva Esperanza, one of the communities served by the YMCA in Taulabé.*



It was on Good Friday in 1992 that I joined the ACJ/YMCA. I was drawn by the mission and vision of our movement, as well as the universal values associated with it, such as peace, tolerance, pluralism, fairness and justice.

I had never imagined I would have great opportunities in my life. The community where I grew up is called El Porvenir (the future), and, without a doubt, it is one of the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Although today, life has improved a little for some of the people living there, for the rest there are still few opportunities. Young people, with their yearning and great ideals, continuously feel oppressed and have their hopes extinguished.



For me, the YMCA is a sacred place; it is a place baptized by many, providing opportunities for youth. Here I learned to read and write and was able to earn a professional degree. I was able to develop leadership and become involved in youth advocacy; the institution's values taught me to dream, to fight, and to work to build a new, just and humane society.

Since then I promised to work hard to defend and to practice the values that we profane without our personal sacrifice; I promised to work without reservation to build a strong and solid movement based on the three essential elements of the universal symbol of the world-wide family of the YMCA: Spirit, Mind, and Body.

There is much I could write about the ACJ and about my personal life, such as about walking with other staff and volunteers for 15 kilometers under the sun and rain for up to two hours to visit small communities outside Taulabé in order to meet with the youth in those communities. It is really a story without an end, because whenever we leave a community, there are others who remain to carry on our work, and today many young people are benefiting from the efforts of volunteers whose work we have supported in 35 communities.

From 1992 -2002 I worked at the community and national level to develop several projects, dealing with leadership training, gender issues, community health, agriculture, computer science, and citizenship.

I also became involved in the policy side of the YMCA. I was Vice-President of the national board of directors in Honduras. I was President of the conduction team in the Taulabé sector. I have networked with other volunteers in Taulabé, coordinated the regional radio program “Youth Progress” and was chair of the Gender Committee of the National Board.

Since 2003 I have been able to work full time with the Y coordinating the Citizenship Formation Program.



**Karin Sundin of the  
Saint John YMCA-YWCA at Camp Glenburn**



The Saint John YMCA-YWCA International Committee provided complimentary fair trade coffee for all the volunteers who came to help clean up Camp Glenburn in preparation for the summer. The committee also set up a table with information on the Honduras Project, the Peace Medal, and offered Honduran coffee and Cookbooks for sale. The coffee information booth also was open during the Glenburn Open House.

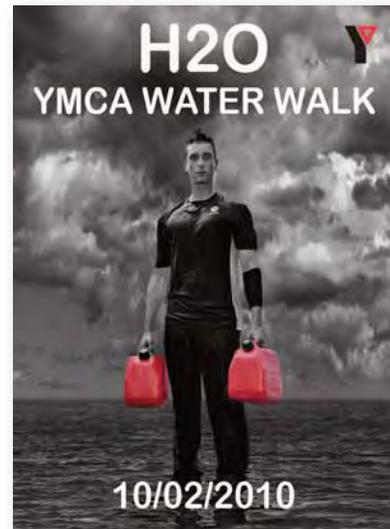
The Lunenburg County YMCA's International Committee is carrying out a 20 Kilometer Honduras Water Walk [H-20] on October 2.

The H-20 walk simulates the walk which women and young girls have to make every day in countries like Honduras in order to fetch clean water for their families.

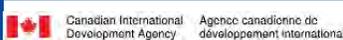
The Lunenburg County International Coordinator, Johnathan Gregorash, will begin the walk at Bridgewater's Shipyards Landing, traveling around Conquerall Bank and past Fancy's Lake in barefeet!

Johnathan hopes to raise at least \$2000 through the event.

*Both Johnathan and Karin will be taking part in the March 2011 monitoring visit to the YMCA in Honduras.*



**Water Walk Poster**



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