

“Free Education not Free Trade” a Pastors For Peace Interview – November 20, 2003 -
by David M. Boje

Becky Vaden is 19 years old from Sacramento. Becky got involved in Pastors For Peace right out of high school. She went on a caravan with PFP to Cuba, and again in July, and she is now on this one, visiting Las Cruces.

Becky says, “Next July I plan on taking 3 girls from a group I work with called ‘the Academy of Dreams.’ The Academy of Dreams, she added, “is a program for girls in high school. It is focused on pregnancy prevention and risk reduction. It builds self-esteem and helps them graduate from high school. It widens their perspective on life in the world. They will be graduating from high school, and I am going to take them on a caravan to Cuba. I want to help them see a new world; to let them know the world is bigger than Sacramento.”

I asked, ‘Why do you think that going on the caravan would help the girls from the Academy of Dreams?’ Becky said, “It helped me a whole lot. The first time I left Sacramento was on the Cuba caravan. It allowed me to see a whole new world and meet great people. It allowed me to see there are injustices all over the world. And you get a great feeling to do something about it. It is a great rewarding experience to be part of something that helps people.”



Brad Jones & Becky Vaden, “Pastors For Peace” – photo by D. Boje

Brad Jones is driving the bus for Pastors For Peace (PFP). Brad is from Ashland Oregon. "I have been personally involved in PFP since the Spring of 2001, when I went on a caravan to Chiapas and Central America, and I've also gone on the last 3 Cuba Caravans (July 2001, 2002, 2003). Now I find myself driving the bus (on this trip) and the designated speaker on each of the events on this route" The route consisted of seven events in seven consecutive cities on seven nights. The route started in Chico California, and goes from Las Cruces onto El Paso, a bus will continue on Chiapas, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

Last night (Wed Nov 19) 60 people gathered to hear Brad Jones speak at the Nason House, new home for the Center for Latin American and Border Studies on the New Mexico State University campus. The audience heard from Professor Neil Harvey, the Center's new director, and Professor Christine Eber, who has traveled to Chiapas and works with weavers there. However, the bus broke down, repairs were made, and Brad and Becky did not arrive until after the event was over.

Brad says he has a 60 second summary of what he wanted to say, "This is the 40th solidarity/humanitarian aid caravan that Pastors For Peace has conducted since 1988 which visited Chiapas, Central America, and Cuba on various caravans. We undertake them to raise awareness and the education level here in the US about the issues facing those countries and the people in them. In the countries of destination, we meet many people from many different walks of life, and NGOs and we stand in solidarity with them and their struggles, and also deliver many tons of humanitarian aid, which is comprised mostly of medical supplies and equipment, but also comprised of tools, computers, bicycles, books, etc. And it's a grassroots movements designed foster people-to-people meetings and exchanges between citizens of North America and Europe and our brothers in Latin America." If you would like to get more information contact www.ifconews.org or the local <http://PeaceAware.com> web sites.