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February 2019
PEACE CORPS

#### SECRETARY/TREASU **RER'S REPORT** Joan M. Larimore (San Francisco del Valle, 1986-88) amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com Editor Note: Joan's computer is having issues and she was unable to send a report for the Feb. newsletter. Current balance is about \$1000 less than last fall (now \$3500) due to the recent Amigos Grant for the Junior Rangers Program of the Montana de Vida Project by El Dorado, Santa Barbara National Park. Please send Grant proposals to Joan. We have money to allocate!

#### **EDITOR'S** CORNER Loren Hintz (Olanchito, 1980-82) ldhintz@bellsouth.net Honduras continues in the news due to migrants from Honduras. This issue contains some old articles printed in PC World Wise Schools that I hope you will find interesting. As you know Joan is retiring as secretarytreasurer after the May issue when she turns ninety years young. Please send Joan your thanks and birthday cards to her at 2334 Sunset Ave. Enumclaw, WA 98022.

A few people are thinking about volunteering for some of her jobs. We need someone to coordinate the Amigos de Honduras Grants committee. The main job would be to receive requests. Share them with committee members. And tell the treasurer where to send the money. Also we need someone to help with **Amigos de Honduras web page. Once a year we need someone to summarize the obits sent by Fred Corvi. Interested**? As always share news, stories etc. with the editor. Gracias! Remember you youngsters in your 70s or 30s, we need you to **volunteer to help.** 

Secretary-Treasurer Joan can give you all the materials, details, help and contact info needed. We need someone to be treasurer. This means receiving and depositing membership payments, writing checks for mailings, grants, NPCA and writing a brief quarterly report. We need someone to print address labels & have the quarterly newsletter printed and mailed. We need a secretary who will maintain membership list, contacts with NPCA and contact with Grants Committee. Tell your friends to do it! Please consider one or all of the jobs or recruit a friend and do it as co-treasurer-secretary. Contact Joan questions or potential with email is volunteers. Joan's amigosdehondurasjml@gmail.com and her phone is 360-802-4417. Dos Mil Gracias!

# PEACE CORPS CONNECT 2019 Npca

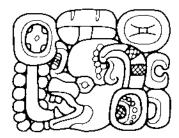
Join us on June 20-22, 2019 at Peace Corps Connect 2019: for Innovation Good. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, current and former staff. applicants, invitees, and friends of the Peace Corps from across the country will gather in Austin, TX to connect at the intersection of creativity and impact. Meet fellow Peace Corps community members, mix with local change makers, and learn about creating a sustainable impact on your community. These two and a half days will be full of expert panels, interactive sessions, and a whole lot of fun. We are committed to providing the lowest possible cost for conference registration by offering deeply discounted Early Bird pricing. Don't miss out: Early Bird sales end on March 17th.

We are looking for dynamic presenters to share new ideas about innovation that spark social change. Austin is a major innovation hub and the program will reflect how leveraging innovative thinking and technology can improve communities. The conference will also focus on how the Peace Corps community can

be better connected to work together toward common goals. All ideas will be considered so please do not hesitate to submit an application! Potential presentations can include:

- Individuals working in the field of technology or using technology to improve communities locally and abroad. Topics can intersect with the areas of education, business, health, and politics.
- Members of an affiliate group engaged in innovative activities in their communities
- Anyone with ideas on how the RPCV community can improve connectivity as groups or individuals
- Anyone partnering with host country nationals from their Peace Corps country on a great project that utilizes technology

The submission deadline is March 4, 2019. Proposals submitted after will be considered on a rolling basis.



## CO-OPS AND VISITING HONDURAS Antony Ives (La Ceiba, 2003-5) Contact: <u>luckyp49@yahoo.com</u>

I have been back to Honduras twice in the last three months. In November 2018, it was Marcala, La Paz and then La Ceiba where I served. Like a few of us always do, I stayed for another five years and started a pretty cool program that worked towards sustainable development, which included education, conservation, and job creation. Little did I know that the word sustainable really meant.

Editor Note: for PC group see https://www.facebook.com/gro ups/2209604190/?ref=bookmarks Although I follow Honduras Peace Corps Facebook Page, this is the first time I've shared to Amigos de Honduras. So I will go backwards. I returned last week from Marcala where I spent one week. I was fortunate to be a part of one of the most fantastic projects. Years ago in 2004, a few friends of mine had an idea. They were coffee farmers. Coffee prices were low. Family farms that had been in operation for generations were in dire straits. They wanted to start a cooperative, fight for fair pricing, and bring farmers together. Furthermore, the idea was to be an enterprise that would support education for children, eliminate the use of pesticides with organic farming, and clean up the region of La Paz by recycling and community education.

I have frequently returned to Marcala to visit the cooperative, COMSA, which stands for Café Organica Marcala, S.A. and to visit my friends and provide a few ideas. This time, I was told to stay and spend a couple of days with each area of the operation. As of this date, the COMSA international school has almost 300 students ranging from six months to 16 years. The school is massive and the education is enjoyable and intense. The education committee is dedicated to student development. While I was there, I saw youth learning French, English, and German. The geometry that was written on one of the whiteboards I had to think about and I am not sure I could've solved the problem. They asked me for one thing: help to generate scholarships for study. The student commitment will be to help their communities and their families. Just create the alliance and the school will do the rest.

I spent time in one of the laboratories. The lab tests for pesticides and humidity in the beans. It was a fascinating experience as it was much like watching a high-end winery testing grapes. Lennon was in charge of the process. The beans are tested in a few ways. Lennon could look at a sample and derive what to expect from the test. I saw it. He was spot on. Like all of us, the US and the EU demand testing of the highest quality to ensure zero pesticide use. COMSA seeks the highest quality from the 2,500 family farms that are cooperative members.

I spent two days participating in the formulation of a project to eliminate a specific pesticide promoted by Roundup and ironically by USAID. Freddy was in charge. This pesticide is now being banned in the United States. With the technical staff and the head of the large farming project, we were through the short and longterm objectives, the budget, and the indicators to measure success.

COMSA is one of the best projects I have ever seen. With strong commitments from the Executive Director, Rudolfo Penalba, and every single farmer and family, the

project has become a model for the entire county. The coffee is sold in the US (including Starbucks), Japan, Italy, France, Russia, and more. The cooperative represents the best of Honduras and what it could duplicate throughout Latin America. I am honored to be the only US citizen member of the cooperative. Each time I go, I learn so much from the organization. This is sustainable development and the story needs to be told.

# DESTINATION: HONDURAS Office of World Wise Schools 1992.

Honduras was one of just a few PC countries shared with teachers and students around the USA via a videotape and 70 page study guide. RPCVs Deirdre Barnwell, Claire Friedlander, Ann Jimerson, Mary Quijano, Betty Rosentrater, Dan Stanton, Curtis Wahl, Marilyn Watts, Anne Clark, Joan Learner, Jeanne Miller, Suzanne Monroe, Julie Morrisroe, Martha Sanchez-Garcia, Ferol White, Torrence David Miller, Vince Murphy, CD Kate Raftery, PSUM Naomi Till were all listed as providing information. What follows are an article and a poem written for the Study Guide.

#### DEAR

#### FUTURE

**VOLUNTEER, (John Ferguson, Santa Cruz, Lempira)** I am currently living in a remote part of western Honduras working as a crop extensionist.... It takes two days of travelling from the PC office to get to my site. I live in an adobe house with a dirt floor and a tile roof. I have running water but do not have electricity. My house is one of only 20 homes in the center of town. I am lucky to have a large backyard that boasts not only my garden but also 4 large orange trees and about two acres of coffee, bananas, plantanos, pineapples and many tropical fruit trees. I pay the going rate for monthly house rental (\$5) and needless to say, it does not stress me out much when it comes time to pay rent.

When I first showed up in town it was obvious that they were not used to having visitors. Within 5 minutes over 20 kids of all ages were completely surrounding me and following me everywhere I went. I later found out that they had never seen a person with fair skin and light hair before... Most of the people in Santa Cruz are Lenca Indians, and are very short with dark skin. I must be quite a contrast to what they were used to seeing!

I remember vividly my first adventure into the market they have every Sunday in the center of town. As I approached, the crowds of people, everyone there turned and stared at me and started whispering to each other. When I approached a woman to try to buy something, she just smiled and turned her head. Most other people that day did the same until a man I had spoken with earlier walked with me around the market. With him beside me I was able to buy anything I wanted. Well that was the beginning of my learning the culture and being well accepted into the small Indian community I was to live and work in for two years.

Around Easter time once I was invited by a neighbor to eat tamales at their house. When I arrived they brought out a great tamale and said, "We made this one special for you." I thanked them and before I could even start eating it, they broke it open to show me the delicacy inside--- a huge black pig's ear. Since eating the pig's ear seemed to be an honor, I figured there would be no way out of this one so I may as well dig in. Problem is I could not help but eat it slowly because it was chewy and sometimes when I tried to swallow it would come back up again. Halfway through eating this thing the family finally finished. I found out that half the family had already gone to bed.

Living across from the schoolhouse has had its moments, too. Once when I was in front getting my horse ready, kids from the school came over to watch. "Run fast," they said. What they wanted was for me to ride fast or do things on my horse to entertain them. When I mounted my horse Canario, I nudged him with the spurs to go but he would not budge. Thinking he was being stubborn I gave him some kicks and started yelling at him. "C'mon you stupid horse," I said. About now all the kids started laughing, as if this was the funniest thing they had seen in a long time---my horse was still tied to the post!

Attending church in my town has been the key to my adjusting. Every other night there is a 3 hour service held in someone's house. I do not attend all of them but when I do it is quite an experience. Usually people walk a great distance to attend and they arrive in groups with each person holding either a flashlight or a flaming piece of wood. From a distance, if you are behind such a group, you can see a trail of lights going up the mountain. Then people bring out their guitars and everybody sings. Afterward, people sit around, drink coffee and talk. The town's

social structure is centered on these services and besides being a worship service it is here where people exchange news and information.

I spent last Christmas Eve in such a service and people were asking me questions. "Are you an orphan?" they asked. "Are you going to ride your horse to visit your family sometime?" Even after assuring them that I cared about my family, I think they did not quite understand what I was doing all alone away from my family ---without even a brother or sister in Honduras! They would never be away from their families on an important occasion. such Questions like that often got me thinking. Living here in Honduras is sometimes stressful because of the cultural differences, but one thing for sure: never in my life have I experienced so much personal growth in such a short amount of time.

Last week I started the long walk out of Santa Cruz with more gear than I usually carry with me. I was on my way, this year, to visit my family in the United States for Christmas. As I walked along the trail, people who were working in the field waved, yelled out my name and said "Merry Christmas!" When I finally got to the end of the trail where I could sit down and rest, the thought occurred to me that instead of feeling like I was going to visit my family, I felt like I was leaving it.

## A POEM: CATACAMAS MARKET (Rebecca Easton, Iban, Gracias a Dios, 87-9)

The Market keeps transforming itself one minute to the next/as I gaze about./ First, a dirty noisy,

smelly place,/everyone in rags and everywhere/mothers poor, flies scolding their screaming children,/and me guarding my pack like а hawk against thieves;/people selling worthless junk imported from/ the States, and the poor wasting their last centavos to buy it;/ And the busses squashed full with sweaty bodies/ pushing and velling and the whole scene is/Very dreary and trodden looking. /

Then, it becomes a social place, people buying and selling, and kids playing with the dogs,/ sharing their ice cream, and bananas piled high, five/ centavos a piece (a bargain) and it's active here,/ but relaxed; people watching busses, talking about their neighbor's jealous husband;/

And it's a colorful place, oranges hanging in bags/ trinkets of all kinds glimmering for the children's eyes, /and people going places, their bags packed, / and others waiting, watching each other and / watching the afternoon going by at the market and/ just being themselves.

## WE RECOVER THE "AMERICA" BICYCLE !! Tabaré Alonso, Uruguay

Editor Note: Tabaré had his bike stolen in SPS Sept. 15, 2018, while on a multiyear bike trip through the Americas. You can follow him on https://www.facebook.com/pg/cicl istatabare/posts/?ref=page\_internal



HONDURAS. Ahora que conozco una parte de tu oscuridad.../

Ahora que veo tu lado malo, ese del que el mundo entero habla. / Ahora que no es un buen momento y que desde la rabia, la angustia, la frustración, la impotencia y la desmotivación se dicen y se piensan muchas cosas negativas.../

Es justo en este momento en que digo: realmente estoy enamorado de ti Honduras!/ Estoy viviendo y sintiendo este país de pies a cabeza, así como quien se enamora de una rosa con todo y sus espinas... algo así Honduras. /

I do not have words to thank all the help and support that people gave me, not only my friends ... but a whole city, a whole country that helped me to recover it, all America united by our *America*!!

Again I am in shock, many friends from the south said: - Tabaré, it is very difficult to find your bike, it is better that you accept it and keep going with another bike. !! - Take here my own (hundreds of Americas), or together we will buy you one, my friend Eduardo Chikitipa was willing to bring me his own bike from Costa Rica to San Pedro de Sula. From Uruguay, Peru Colombia, Panama, United States and so on like him many people offered me solutions ... even yesterday already in my mind a part of me told me "and let it go is just a physical object, you have to keep moving forward because the time the immigration office gave you is limited" ... But even so I never lost faith and today, upon awakening, I received the long-awaited news

#### February 2019

## Amigos de Honduras

#### APARECIO AMERICA!!! YOUR BIKE HAS BEEN FOUND!!!

Thanks to our cycling friends from the city of San Pedro Sula, who searched under the stones! to the Honduran authorities and the media for helping me spread the word. We were all part of this search, today in the morning we knocked on the door, "Tabaré! We find America! What happiness!!!"'A whole city, helping me in the search, a whole city, San Pedro Sula, A country of 8 million inhabitants joined this search, 8 million people plus a Uruguayan brother united for a purpose: find the bicycle. There was never seen so much brotherhood. This does not happen even in movies, even in dreams! Honduras that is located in the heart of America and in its sky painted our dreams under the linen cloth of the Stars and today 6.45 AM. Honduras rewrote its history, only one person who carelessly took advantage of us and separated us from America for 58 hours.

I am impressed and moved by the quality of friends that you are, beautiful as a person and even more beautiful as friends, I feel fortunate and I really do not know how to thank them. If America is here with me today is because of you! That with their faith and unconditional support conspired to make America appear. I do not know what else to say ..., A THOUSAND MILLION THANKS TO ALL AND ALL, my friends, my friends, my brothers, my dreaming children from all over the world, my family, cyclists and cyclists of the world.

# NEWS OF HONDURAS

CompiledbyLorenHintz(Olanchito, 1980-82.)HondurasTipsreportedthatCornellOrnithologicalLabreportsthat

Honduras has better habitat and larger populations of the famous bird the Resplendent Quetzal than Guatemala where it is the national bird and the national currency.

NEW SEEDS, NEW **OPPORTUNITIES** Communi in ties Honduras recently participated in their first seed exchange as part of Sustainable Harvest International. (January 2019 Newsletter) Participants swapped grains, legumes, roots, tubers, medicinal plants, and so much more. Seed exchanges are a great way to save money, experiment growing with different plants, and maintain diversity in gardens.



Gabby Rosazza via Laborrights.org reported that the Irish multinational company Fyffes signed an agreement recognizing STAS - el Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria y Similares - as the legitimate union representative of workers employed at Fyffes' melon subsidiaries in Honduras. This agreement comes following а three-year global campaign urging Fyffes to remediate two decades of human and labor rights abuses on its Honduran melon plantations, including wage theft and exposure to toxic agrochemicals. STAS' organizing was courageous and unwavering, despite being faced with a violent anti-union campaign led by Fyffes local management. After international solidarity efforts, Fyffes was suspended from the Ethical Trading Initiative and decertified by Fair Trade USA for its blatant disregard for union rights.

This agreement is a welcome first **step** for Fyffes to begin remediating the labor abuses that have long existed on their plantations - but our work isn't over vet. On February 5th, the union will begin negotiating a collective bargaining agreement. International allies and supporters will be watching to make sure the agreement covers all workers across all Fyffes' subsidiaries in Honduras. The company also agreed to rehire union members who had not been rehired this harvest season due to their union affiliation, which we'll be monitoring closely.

Linda Qiu New York Times 11.2.18. Among asylum seekers, only 11 percent did not show up for legal proceedings. Of the asylum seekers who participated in a pilot program tested as an alternative to detention, 99 percent attended Immigration and Custom Enforcement check-ins and appointments. And 100 percent turned up for court hearings. The Trump administration ended the pilot program last June.

October 30 at 2:52 PM · The Guapinol community of the Aguan Valley are protesting a mining project in the nuclear zone of Carlos Escaleras National Park. https://www.facebook.com/ringco nnection/videos/114950912854060 6/?

According to Worldatlas.com using 2017 data, San Pedro Sula is no longer the murder capital of the world. Los Cabos, Mexico at 111 homicides per 100,000 people is number one. The USA has 5 cities in the top 50 murder capitals of the

world: (Rank, rate of homicides per 100,000 residents) St. Louis, MO 13th,66; Baltimore, MD 21st,55; San Juan, PR 32nd,49; New Orleans, LA 41st,40.1; Detroit, MI; 42<sup>nd</sup>,39.7 In Central America and the Caribe, St. Louis(13th) beats Kingston, Jamaica, 16th, 60; Salvador. San 17th,59; Guatemala City, 24th,53; San Pedro Sula, 26<sup>th</sup>,51; Tegucigalpa,35<sup>th</sup>,48. Note that Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Belize and Panama continue to be relatively safe. In the world the USA, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia and South Africa have the most cities with high murder rates.

The World Economic Forum has listed Honduras in 22nd place of the 2018 Corruption Index of Transparency International. Other Latin American nations in the top worse 32 include Venezuela 2; Haiti 10; Nicaragua 13; Guatemala 21; Mexico 25; Paraguay26.

Nov. 26, 2018 the DEA announced Iuan Antonio (Tony) that Hernández, former deputy and Orlando brother of Juan Hernández, president of Honduras was arrested. He is one of the region's largest drug traffickers, according to the DEA. Also Mario José Cálix Hernández, former vice mayor of Gracias and cousin of Tony and Juan Orlando Hernández, is being asked for extradition by the US for conspiring to import massive amounts of cocaine to that country. Tony Hernández and Juan Orlando Hernández are cousins of Soraya Cálix, head of the Directorate of the Fight against Drug Trafficking, who in turn is the sister of Mario José Cálix Hernández. Juan Orlando Hernández presides over the allpowerful National Defense and Security Council, which brings together all the State's intelligence

and investigation agencies. Soraya Cálix is at the head of the Public Ministry agency that fights against drug trafficking. **Honduran News media are asking about Las casualidades de la vida**: "Being in charge of such powerful institutions, did they not know anything about the activities of their relatives? Undoubtedly, if they knew they are accomplices and if they did not know they are incompetent."

Nina The Guardian 11.29.18 Lakhani reported seven men convicted of murdering Honduran environmentalist Berta Cáceres. Cáceres, a winner of the Goldman prize for environmental defenders, was shot dead late at night on 2 March 2016 - two days before her 45th birthday – after a long battle to construction stop of an internationally financed hydroelectric dam on the Gualcarque river. The court ruled the murder was ordered by executives of the Agua Zarca dam company Desa because of delays and financial losses linked to protests led by Cáceres. The murder was contracted to a group of hitmen who were paid to kill Cáceres. The seven men convicted of orchestrating her murder by a court in Tegucigalpa were Sergio Ramón Rodríguez, communities and environment manager for Desa; Douglas Geovanny Bustillo, former Desa security chief and ex-US trained army lieutenant; Mariano Díaz Chávez, US-trained special forces major who served with Bustillo; Henry Javier Hernández, former special forces sergeant who served with Díaz; Edwin Rapalo; Edilson Duarte Meza; and Oscar Torres. An eighth defendant was cleared.

The verdict confirmed that a Desa executive coordinated with Bustillo before and after the murder. During

the trial the executive was identified as company president David Castillo, US-trained former military а intelligence officer. Castillo faces trial separately, accused of masterminding the murder. Bustillo coordinated with Diaz, who provided a gun, logistics, and participated in a reconnaissance mission. Diaz linked Bustillo to Hernandez, the point man on the night of the murder who organized the group of killers. These four military men, ruled the court, were involved in an aborted attempt to kill Cáceres on 5 February 2016. Gustavo Castro. а Mexican environmentalist, was shot in the same attack but survived by playing dead. Hernández, Rapalo, Edilson Duarte and Torres were found guilty of the attempted murder of Castro. Thursday's verdict was welcomed by Cáceres's family and colleagues, but they reiterated demands that justice be delivered against the masterminds and financiers of the plot.

Many RPCVs were affected by the Christmas government shutdown. NPCA stated: Peace Corps Director Jody Olsen assures us that the agency is fine, and Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) are fine – for now. Focusing on the field, leadership has directed limited fiscal year 2018 carryover resources toward supporting and caring for serving PCVs. Host country national and expatriate staff at post are working - the latter unpaid. Volunteers are being paid on time. Most field-based training continues, and most pre-service staging events for invitees remain on schedule. PC Recruiters emails read: Due to a lapse in Government funding, I will be out of the office on mandated furlough and will not have access to any computer systems or voicemail. I will not be able to respond to your emails or voicemails until I return at a date that has yet to be determined. I will respond to all messages upon my return.

# A PROACTIVE RESPONSE TO THE HONDURAS EXODUS Carol Spangler (Cofradia, 1966-68) <u>ckspang@centurytel.net</u> (Editor Note: This article was also published in the electronic version of the Nov. newsletter.)

Reading about the caravan of immigrants, primarily from Honduras, escaping their country because of poverty, violence and lack of economic opportunity is painful. The answer, of course, is not to build costly walls (estimated cost: \$10 billion) or send 7,000 US troops to the border (estimated cost \$100 -\$200 million). The answer is investment in impoverished Central America so thousands don't feel forced to leave. This is a compelling vignette of a small, effective nonprofit with an annual budget of \$250,000 that is changing the lives of more than 600 Honduran students and their families annually.

I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras fifty years ago (1966-68). In January 2018, I had the opportunity to return to my site -Cofradia, Cortes about 20 miles from San Pedro Sula. I went to see firsthand the work of BECA, (Bilingual Education in Central America), a 501(c) 3 organization that recruits, trains, and supports native Englishspeaking volunteer teachers to staff a network of community-run bilingual schools in Honduras. San Jeronimo Bilingual School (SJBS) in Cofradia is BECA's first community partner school. The vision for BECA was born in the homes of several Honduran families. Its mission is to provide quality, affordable bilingual education to the educationally

disenfranchised while fostering meaningful cultural exchange. It is a community driven, solutionsoriented response to multiple issues impacting children and families - a lack of educational opportunity, stagnating economic development, insufficient jobs, a growing drug trade, and surging violence.

One quick story. I visited a third grade classroom and was invited to introduce myself, which I did in halting Spanish. One of the children politely raised his hand and said "you can speak in English, Señora. We will understand what you want to tell us." In third grade, these children are totally fluent in English! Currently BECA works with Honduran partners in three bilingual schools -- located at the epicenter of a crisis that is causing tens of thousands of children to leave for the United States. Yet in spite of its location, a grand total of zero BECA graduates have come to the United States illegally!

At a BECA school, students are taught much more than just English. Students graduate as champions of learning and literacy, as challengers of the status quo, and as leaders who embody a service-minded attitude to become persistent advocates for social change. While in Cofradia, I stayed with a family with two graduates of San Jeronimo. Their son recently graduated from university and is now an agronomy engineer. Their daughter is studying business management and is working part time as a bilingual interpreter for a major corporation.

And so, as I read about the young and old migrants leaving Honduras in desperation and fear, I want to

share this compelling story. What I've written is just a glimpse of all that BECA is achieving. Check out website their (http://www.becaschools.org/abou t/about-us) and consider a generous It is a proactive donation. response to our deeply flawed immigration policy and a rewarding investment in the future of Honduras.



San Pedro Sula Oct. 2018



Tegucigalpa Oct. 2018



Art Museum Tegu Oct. 2018 Julio Visquevra

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Amigos de Honduras Membership Info Use this form to renew membership or notify us of a change in address. Or, copy and give to a friend whom you think might like to keep in touch with Honduras and RPCVs. Other than your name, enter only the info that has changed.				NPCA Supporter (Basic FREE):	\$50 🖵
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Make check payable to Amigos de Honduras: Mail to Joan Larimore, 2334 Sunset Avenue, Enumclaw, WA 98022

02-19

#### Aviso: the date on the mailing label is the expiration date of your membership - please renew if you're due!

