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[www.reachingu.org](http://www.reachingu.org)

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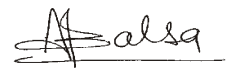
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## Editorial

First, a big thank you to everyone who has helped in so many different ways. It is because of you that Reaching U has grown steadily and achieved many of its goals. The last six months has seen a number of significant achievements and highly successful events: a silent arts and crafts auction in New York (see page 2), a lecture on Feng Shui, and a cocktail party in Miami (see page 3), a sample sale to benefit Reaching U in Connecticut, and a special fundraiser in Boston. The proceeds from these events together with direct donations financed, in part, the reconstruction of the inner courtyard of the Banneux School in Montevideo (see page 2), a birthing bed in the Rivera public hospital, the Álvarez-Caldeyro Barcia Foundation (page 4), and overhead, machinery, and furniture as well as part of the new house for the Casa Lunas Center in Montevideo. Also, through the efforts of our working groups, directors, and supporters, Reaching U is establishing a presence and a reputation for transparency, trust, and professionalism that in turn helps to attract new supporters and to continue growing in the direction of our goals. Of particular note in this

regard are the consolidation of the working group in Miami and the efforts of the Reaching U group in Uruguay to put its fundraising activities, fund use monitoring, needs awareness, donations tracking, and incorporation of new projects into the organization on a firm footing.

As we all know, the worst of the economic crisis affecting Uruguay and our people in 2003 appears to be over. Nonetheless, a large percentage of the population, particularly children, still lives in poverty (see page 3). Reaching U continues to identify multiple needs in the areas of health and education, particularly of young mothers and needy children. More than ever, we need your help to make a difference in the lives of those we have the opportunity to reach. We're counting on you!



Ana I. Balsa  
Member of the Board

## Preparing to Live Better! By Fiorella Magnano

Casa Lunas is a specialized shelter for pregnant women and new mothers aged twelve to eighteen and their families. The mothers and children participate in this project until the children reach the age of two, at which point we are often asked: What happens next? At Casa Lunas, the young women acquire tools for dealing with the challenges of raising a family.



Opening ceremony for the new house at Casa Lunas

Skills are acquired in a number of different ways. By working at the center, the women learn the basics, like diapering and feeding their babies, but more than that: they learn how to care for them, support them, encourage them, and help them grow, with the assistance of the program coordinators, in an atmosphere of respect, free of violence. They are organized in teams to run the house: cooking, cleaning, organic gardening, composting trash for the garden, child care, yard work, and other tasks. They are also in charge of budgeting the week's food. And, so that they can learn to run things themselves, instead of just giving them baby needs (diapers, garments, and accessories) Casa Lunas trades these for other articles, or sells them to the young mothers at discounted prices.

(Continues on page 4)

# Silent Auction in New York

The second annual Reaching U Silent Auction was held on November 10 last at the OPIA Restaurant, New York. On view during the auction: works of art, handicrafts, books, jewelry, and other attractive lots donated by galleries, artists, and people in the Uruguayan community, both USA and Uruguay residents. Some of the works of art auctioned were by important Uruguayan artists, including one by Joaquín Torres García and another by Julio Alpuy, which drew considerable interest and brisk bidding. About one hundred people attended the event, most of the Uruguayans and friends of the Uruguayan community abroad. The excellent service at the OPIA Restaurant and the beautiful setting made for a pleasant evening. We would like to thank the OPIA Restaurant and all the artists who donated works for the occasion (for a complete list of donors and donor organizations, visit our website at [www.reachingu.org](http://www.reachingu.org)). The funds raised went to two of our

projects: the Banneux School and the Álvarez-Caldeyro Barcia Foundation.



Isabel Millot, Pablo Mautone, Inés Bonicelli, Beatriz and Guillermo Campelo and Ricardo Salmón

## The Banneux School By Mercedes Portas

Since 1955, life has been much better for many of the inhabitants of Aparicio Saravia, a *barrio* (neighborhood) of Montevideo. That was the year a major project, the Banneux School, was started at the initiative of a group of nuns (Daughters of the Nativity of Mary) who recognized the need for a local school. In the early days, classes were held in a yard with neither roof nor walls, but with great enthusiasm and the firm intention to build a school.

Aided by many of the students' parents, the school became a reality and now offers complete elementary education and a balanced diet to 454 students. Also, nearly 200 of the students attend "resource room" classes taught by professional teachers. No fees are charged, but space is tight so that every year the lines of parents registering their children for the 65 annual openings grow longer.



Schoolchildren at Banneux

The school also tries to involve the parents to establish better links with the family. So great is the dedication of some parents that they help to clean and maintain the building.

Given the harsh realities of life in the *barrio*, the contrast between the school and its surroundings is striking. The schoolyard is filled with children running, playing, and eating their meals, regardless of everything that goes on around them. Yet the school is surrounded by tiny houses made of sheet metal where most of the schoolchildren live. The missionaries are no strangers to life in the *barrio*, and allow one school room to be used for periodic Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, which some of the children's parents attend. Everyone who works at the Banneux School, and the neighbors, alumni, and parents, have shown enormous respect for the project and profound gratitude for what the school means for the neighborhood. Reaching U has supported the project since 2003. This support includes donation of a washing machine to the school, and US\$ 5,000 for repairing the inner courtyard; the work was carried out in January, 2004.

Although these contributions have been valuable for the running of the school, much remains to be done. The *barrio* continues to grow, and so do the numbers of children who need attention. The economic crisis that Uruguay is going through has pushed up the



local poverty index, making the Banneux School more acutely needed than ever. Fortunately, there is good news too. One former student has been performing really well at the School of Medicine something that would have been unimaginable a few short years ago and which fills the neighbors with pride.

This story does not have to be an exception. Through Reaching U, you can help transform a harsh reality into a promising future.

Thanks for your contribution.

### Volunteers of Reaching U

**In Uruguay:** Valeria Angenscheidt, Valeria Estrugo, Rocío Lapitz, Marcela Mailhos, Florencia Martinelli, Patricia Pintos, Mercedes Portas, Fernanda Solari, María Solari. **In Florida:** Virginia Bove, Mariella Bruno, Lucienne Cambón, M. Victoria Ferréz, Rosana Lema, Fiorella Magnano, Guadalupe Martínez, Martín C. Martínez, Pilar Mercader, Pilar Sánchez Varela, María Eugenia Vilar del Valle. **In New York:** Consul María Luján Barceló, Isabel Millot, Macarena Real de Azúa, Adelita Villar, Fernanda Vincent, Nidia Viña. **In California:** Ana Casterán-Winkler.

## Miami Events: Feng Shui Lecture and Cocktail

On October 23rd Ms. Silvia Kaupert gave a lecture on the secrets and technique of Feng Shui. Feng Shui is an interior design technique to create environments which foster harmony, prosperity, abundance, and energy, among other positive aspects. The lecture took place at Brickell Park Salon of Courts Brickell Key, in Miami. More than 40 people attended Silvia's presentation. The lecture was very engaging and many questions were raised about the process and philosophy of Feng Shui. At the end of the lecture there was a raffle of several Feng Shui decorating objects meant to implement Silvia's suggestions.

*All help is valuable and everyone's involvement is important!*

The Miami group also organized a cocktail party on May 1, 2004 at the beautiful home of Martín C. Martínez, a Uruguayan interior designer who lives in Miami. It was a very pleasant evening,

when Uruguayans and their friends met to enjoy hors d'oeuvres, paella, sips of Bacardi, and the magic show of Enrique Pochat. The two events together raised almost US\$ 6,000, which will go to various projects in Uruguay. Thanks to all who participated; we hope to see you at the next event.



*Pilar Mercader, Martín C. Martínez, Pilar Sánchez Varela, Mariella Bruno and María Eugenia Villar del Valle.*

*Images of a crisis*



## Images of a crisis By Estefanía Martínez

Many of us who live abroad hold vivid images of Uruguay, which is unique in so many ways. It is one of the most democratic countries in Latin America. Its safety makes it an ideal place to raise children. A quiet place, where a child can still walk to school without fear of being kidnapped. Uruguay has no natural catastrophes. While other countries wait nervously for the next earthquake or the next terrorist attack, Uruguay remains untouched. It has sun, beaches, bustling summers, and tranquil winters. Uruguayans believe in investing in their people: In Uruguay education is compulsory, free, and a state rather than a church function. Uruguayans are usually hospitable, friendly, and uncomplicated people.

But not everything is rosy. Over the last few years, Uruguay has gone through one of the worst economic crises of the past hundred years. The crisis has increased the percentage of homes where people live below the poverty line, and the level of extreme poverty or indigence. The gulf between rich and poor yawns wider than ever. In 2002, according to the National Statistics Institute, over 645,000 Uruguayans lived in homes below the poverty line, of whom about 53,000 subsisted in conditions of extreme poverty. The middle class is waning. Education levels

are falling. Although schools are free, they require materials that many families cannot afford. All this is accompanied by an increase in teenage pregnancies. According to data from the School of Social Sciences, the number of babies born to mothers aged 10 to 14 increased by 50% in the 1985-1996 census period; the percentage is 21% for mothers aged 15 to 19. This research shows that reproductive behavior varies according to the age and social conditions of the people. Women with lower educational levels, without steady jobs, and in precarious social conditions have more children. Poverty forces larger numbers of people to live together: As many as ten people may be living in one house, so that there are more mouths to feed. This, and the lack of jobs, leads to the picture we are seeing today in Uruguay. Thousands of people climb on board buses every day to sell a pen, a candy bar, or even a spot remover. Many of these people are blind or are missing a leg or have a congenital deformity of some kind. The streets are filled with begging children; homeless old folks wander through the city and rummage through trash piles looking for food. The crisis has also spurred emigration, increasing the trend to an aging population. The problems of seniors, who are now a large percentage of the population, are becoming increasingly severe.

In answer to this situation, community associations have formed which try to address basic family needs: food, housing, health, and jobs. Soup kitchens, flea markets, and swap meets have popped up everywhere. Most of them are not government-supported. Good will abounds, but the projects do not have what they need to accomplish what people expect of them. Funding sources are hard to find.

For all these reasons and more, Uruguay is asking for YOUR help. The help of those who, although they live abroad, continue to believe in the country and its people. Reaching U is a link between those who feel the need to show solidarity with Uruguay, and those who need help. Through Reaching U, you can stake a bet on Uruguay and help to make a difference. Nothing is too little and it's never too late to chip in.

### OUR MISSION

To improve living conditions and opportunities for the neediest Uruguayans, helping them to raise their self-esteem and strive for a better life.

## Preparing to Live Better! *(continued)*

In return for their labor, Casa Lunas offers workshops that help prepare them for the future. In the Mother and Baby workshop they learn about health care during and after pregnancy, relating to the partner, sexuality, contraceptive methods, children's rights, breastfeeding, and parenting skills: caring for, stimulating, and understanding their babies. In the job education workshop, they are taught by professionals to improve their reading and writing, and learn how to find a job. They may also participate in writing and crafts workshops where they make a number of products for sale such as stories, candles, metal earrings and necklaces, and wooden toys.

Each family receives individual psychological, legal, and social attention depending on its individual situation. The young women gradually become independent of the Center as they are ready and willing, and Casa Lunas always keeps its doors open for those who need support.

Reaching U offers financial and psychological support for this organization by regular donations and the Amigas de Casa Lunas sponsorship program whereby sponsors maintain links with the Casa Lunas teens through an exchange of letters. This experience

turned out to have a highly positive impact on the young Casa Lunas women; they look forward eagerly to receiving and answering our letters. Knowing that other women living in very different circumstances have similar experiences to share and are concerned about the Casa Lunas women gives them confidence and hope, and broadens their horizons. By supporting this work, we are helping the next generation of Uruguayan men and women to grow up in a healthier environment.



*Opening ceremony for the new house at Casa Lunas*

## News from the Álvarez-Caldeyro Barcia Foundation

With the support of Reaching U, the Álvarez-Caldeyro Barcia Foundation has accomplished several things over the last six months. The Mother's Milk Bank has been running since December, 2003 at Pereira Rossell Hospital by collecting milk from patients. In the first few months, only 25% of the hospital's demand could be met but within a short period of time, with much hard work and perseverance, the volume of milk collected was doubled.

Today, the needs of premature infants in the ICU and intermediate care unit of the hospital are now being met. The

Foundation's goal today is to broaden the spectrum of donor mothers to cover 100% of the hospital's milk needs and build a modest reserve. For this purpose, a telephone line is being set up so that women capable of donating milk can do so from their homes. The first regional chapter of the Álvarez-Caldeyro Barcia Foundation has been created in the Department of Rivera, in the interior of the country. This chapter arose from the need to improve maternity services to very-low-income women.

The immediate goals are to replace equipment in birthing wards, improve the tables, the surgical instruments, and the nursery. Thus the opportunity arose for Reaching U, from fundraising efforts by the Boston group, to donate a pneumatic birthing bed to this cause. It will arrive in Uruguay in the next few days and be set up immediately a dream come true.

### *We would like to thank:*

*World Famous Brands,  
Pagnifique, Marcela Carilli,  
Martín C. Martínez, Opia,  
Bacardi, Le Provençal  
Ana Rocha, Country French  
Isabel Leonard and Ana Sibils.*

*Special thanks, too,  
to Jovita Castillo  
for her drive, enthusiasm,  
and dedication to this  
organization from day one.*

## News from Casa Lunas

September, 2003 saw the grand opening of the new house at the Casa Lunas Center, which will be a home for mothers who are unable to return to their families for some reason. It was a happy occasion, at which representatives of Casa Lunas and a number of organizations supporting the project told the young women how delighted they were with the new facilities. The new house has a large, sunny dining room, rooms for the various activities, and a lovely yard including a garden. With this development, Casa Lunas is entering into a new phase which calls for our wholehearted support.