

We are home...and yes, we were crazy to come back to these cold temps, but the snow is sparkly *and* we slipped between the winter weather events with no travel delays!¹

Epiphany journeys really have no beginning, no ending; we continually seek and are transformed. it's always bitter-sweet to say *muchisimas gracias* and *hasta la vista*...even over ice cream at MaryMary's with the AVS team ;) This last week proved to be as action-packed as every other:



Well #91: For the Los Corrales extended family system, the Agua Viva Serves team mixed and poured concrete around the well casing to prevent water from entering the top of the well; laid out, dug, formed the re-bar and poured concrete for the tower footers: .8x .8x 1 meter deep (lots of digging and mixing). The family will put a fence around the well to keep their livestock away from the well head.

Water system upgrades:

- 2 Water hook-ups in Isla Chica: a house to be built and a one room wooden house with dirt floor and no electricity...

we hear repeatedly: ***water is more important than lights!*** This was the first community to have a water system and now has a 2nd well drilled & fenced "to specs" that help expand the # of houses with water.



- 2 new connections with water meters in Medio Queso: currently this system is serving over 100 homes with it's 2nd well.
- Checked out the well-drilling in La Trocha...67 meters and still drilling...for this expanding community's much needed additional water source.

San Isidro de Pocosol water system updates:

- Board members of San Isidro's Development Association expressed how challenging the delay has been and their connections/communications with members of the La Guaria board. San Isidro officers, like the La Guaria Water Committee, want a Plan B.

- HidroAmbiente set up their larger pump for the well study Monday, Jan 31! We anxiously await the report on the capacity of the La Guaria well with important data that determine details of a Plan B and the modeling for construction.
- With those details, decision-makers of both communities need to weigh-in on a Plan B and then hold community assemblies for information, questions and affirmation from residents.
- The Global Grant annual progress report and a zoom update on steps we've taken this past month to create Plan B keeps The Rotary Foundation program manager informed. She adds their encouragement to find the solution for this community's potable water system.



¹ our delay in this last update has something to do with the 'normal' part of life back home ; (

Our final weekend included these local culture tours with Bijagua friends:



• another **Rio Frio tour**. this one down river to the Nicaraguan border seeing both white face (capuchin) and mono congo (howler) monkeys, boat-billed heron, yellow crown night heron, tiger heron, roseate spoonbill, iguana, jumping gaspar...and Capitán Yeudy let us take turns at steering the boat :). Fun for all!



• **Project Trapiche/Restaurant BaZú** <https://centro-turistico-bazu-proyecto-trapiche.webnode.cr/> gave us a thorough explanation of the trapiche (sugar mill) process and also making tortillas from scratch (white corn kernels) and a pre-tour lunch. We'll return when they are actually reducing the oh so sweet sugar cane juice (90-1) for the mould for tapa de dulce (brown sugar candy)

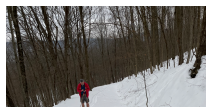


- A visit with **Cinco Ramas'** owners Geri and Rob on their 26 hectare **organic vanilla and spice/herb/fruit farm**. This is a favorite 'discovery' early in our Los Chiles visits with an info-packed tour about:
 - the intricacies of vanilla cultivation, pollination, harvesting, drying;
 - sustainable agriculture and forestry;
 - the health benefits of turmeric, ginger, black pepper, hibiscus and other spices/herbs rotated strategically for pest control.
- Plus perspectives on local tourism, Costa Rican labor laws and practices, environmental issues/impacts, and adapting to COVID when all the hospitality/restaurants closed and their sales fell flat. Tip: we can order on line <https://cincoramas.com> (up-graded site coming soon)



We had a couple of meetings on our last rainy, chilly day in Bijagua then off to Liberia (LIR) for smooth flights to MIA and Baltimore (BMI) arriving ~midnight. As Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow the next morning we retraced our steps with logistical help from sibs. Then we meandered home, taking advantage of heated car seats and the warmth of friendships and memories that don't fade even when Groundhog Day "Dome-coming" looks like this:

snowshoe-ing up the driveway to plow down



it's all part of an epiphany journey.



Thanks, all, for your support. We're sending abundant blessings for your journeys! n & G

