

Weeks 1-3+...wow! Can't believe it's been a month since we dove into the flow of Agua Viva Serves (AVS) activities here in Los Chiles. The local team was just returning from their holiday/vacation break with high aspirations for 2025: **Reaching New Heights for Clean Water!** [l-r: Omar, Lineth, Fran, Bayron; missing: Brayon, Merleth]. We were re-integrated into the day to day tasks to *Serve. Give. Love.* ...with some significant changes making this year extra special!



Some AVS background. In 2024 the AVS Board of Directors re-organized the leadership model from a native english-speaker leader to 100% local employees: co-directors for administration, Bayron, and for field operations, Omar, each with two staff whose unique talents/responsibilities make a close knit, smooth running organization; they work/play together well! **The Board plays a key role with regular check-ins and guidance** on planning and issues as they arise; AVS resolved major transition and organizational structure legal issues last year. **Key to this model is having two bi-lingual staff and several bi-lingual board members PLUS** continuity of dedicated experience on both Board and local staff. See more about AVS team, Board, history, volunteering and 2024 report: <https://www.avs.ngo/>.



Their 2024 report for donors, volunteers includes their 2025 project list, so with a few quick edits and the January Board meeting approval is now posted for the world! And the AVS field crew has already checked off a project installing new water meters in the Achiotal <<<<< neighborhood system right on the edge of the Los Chiles city boundary. Also checked off a health department request for a concrete pad to protect the Llano Verde well from surface water contaminates, and starting to drill a new well. >>>>>

More background on water & sanitation.

Achiotal and several other pockets of homes in Costa Rica's protected 'biological zone' are not served by AyA (Acueductos y Alcantarillados <https://www.aya.go.cr/>), Costa Rica's visionary, cerca 1960, country-wide policy plan and operations for municipal water and sewage managed by ASADAs in local communities.

Which is why Agua Viva Serves came into being: to help these clusters of families/schools have 'meanwhile water systems' in anticipation that AyA would be able to extend their systems in the future. And this has started to happen. **You might see AVS as a catalyst for systems change...** in a country that

already has the policy and supports the UN Declaration of Human Rights, including water and sanitation <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights-water-and-sanitation>



Fellowship, Fitness & Fun in the Sun!!

Sundays: #1: we returned to Iglesia Evangélica Metodista (IEM) in Los Chiles with Pastor Elías (retired outreach healthcare provider) and Praise Band filling

the small space with people (all ages), their spirited singing, soulful prayer and power-preaching. **They send greetings to St Paul's!** We come together with the same Christian/Wesleyan base, God's Love, with different understandings of Scripture. Costa Rican IEMs separated from the United Methodist network decades ago; so we bring a 'frame' of the nurturing inclusivity of Divine Love: "all means ALL". BTW, a helpful read/handbook on cognitive science v-a-v frames, values, politics is: *The All New Don't Think of an Elephant!* by George Lakoff (2014)

#2: we took an early morning bus to visit Pastor Francisco and the **IEM in Ciudad Quesada** and reconnect with several friends St Paulians know from **Volunteer In Mission (VIM) trips** when UMC missionaries Ralph & Mary Miller were serving/living there. It was such a warm reunion; we will continue to stay connected. BTW, they are renovating a space for classrooms; a VIM team from UMoUpper NY has been working on it! >>>>>>>



#3: participating in the **27th anniversary of St Paul's Reconciling Ministries** was especially significant from afar...we continue to send our prayers for Peace and Justice in this era of challenges with our country's elected/appointed leaders. **Be reassured that the rest of the world is watching closely and deeply concerned.**



Chirripó Challenge...an AVS fundraiser!!

<<<<<< There are **11 of us training for the trek up Costa Rica's tallest mountain: Cerro Chirripó, Land of Eternal Water, 12,532 ft (3820 mtrs) above sea level** in the Talamanca Mountain Range. "The steep climb to Base Camp Crestones offers constantly changing flora and fauna, culminating in the stark and beautiful Paramo, formed by the last ice age. Chirripo National Park is part of the Amistad International Park--the largest protected area in Central America."

"...the trail is long, (9 miles, 15 km), and steep with nearly 10,000 feet, 3,000 meters of elevation gain." Our permits are for March 18 & 19; **please keep the 4 AVS crew and 7 USA supporters in your prayers.** We're

getting acquainted virtually, planning the gear, budgets and logistics, and created a logo and slogan for our team's t-shirts...to be unveiled in the next update ;)

Rotary. Peace. National Theatre. Pool. What fun to reconnect with the **San Jose Noreste Rotary Club** this past week and reflect on their previous project with AVS and learn about other connections for water projects with Bayron, AVS director of administration. Their dinner featured **an interactive program on Peace** presented by Michelle Helman, <<<<<< former Rotary Peace Fellow now pursuing her doctorate at United Nation's University for Peace in San José: <https://upeace.org/>. The 4-5 hr trip was made easy with Bayron, aka 'AVS uber', navigating the twisty roads and sharing a visit his creative/entrepreneurial sister & brother. We enjoyed a dramatized tour of the National Theatre and the less humid/cooler temps of the Central Valley.

Top that off: a BnB apartment in a high-rise overlooking a lap pool with the wind creating 'open water' waves... it's refreshing to be in **the flow!**



Blessings for our collective work for Justice and Peace, n & J (aka G)