



A ROUND TABLE OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## Success Stories Sister Libraries

### **North Shore Country Day School, Illinois, U.S.A. / Maria Pino Suarez Elementary School, Mexico**

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Several years ago, Barbara Castilla, the Head of the Foreign Language Program at North Shore Country Day School in Winnetka, Illinois, went to Oaxaca and enjoyed her visit so much that the next summer she took her children to Oaxaca. When she told her Spanish students about her visits, they asked if she could take them also. Through a special summer grant program funded by parents at the school, Barbara took a group of students to Mexico in 1997. As part of their tour, they visited a school in Xaaga, a small village outside of Oaxaca. The students were struck by the contrast between what they had at North Shore Country Day and what the Maria Pino Suarez Elementary School had. When they returned home, they raised enough money through sales and donations to buy new desks, repair the roof and put windows and doors on the school. In summer 1999, Barbara received another enrichment grant and took a group of students to Xaaga again. This time, the project was to start a library for the school. Nancy Figel, Librarian for the Middle and Upper Schools went along to help organize and catalog the 250 books purchased for the library. Because there was not enough space in the school for a library room, the books have to be kept in a storage room. The volunteers from the U.S. (including Nancy's mother and step-father), volunteers from the village and the Mexican students built portable book shelves that teachers could fill with books to take to their classrooms. The students, faculty and staff at North Shore Country Day School want to continue their "Sister" relationship with Maria Pino Suarez Elementary School. They hope to continue adding to the library, providing school supplies and doing whatever they can to improve the facilities at the school. Maria Pino Suarez only goes through sixth grade and because the cost of traveling to the next level school in a neighboring town is too expensive for most of the students, they usually

stop their education at the sixth grade. North Shore Country Day School is looking for ways to raise the money for a scholarship fund that would help the Xaaga students continue their education.

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