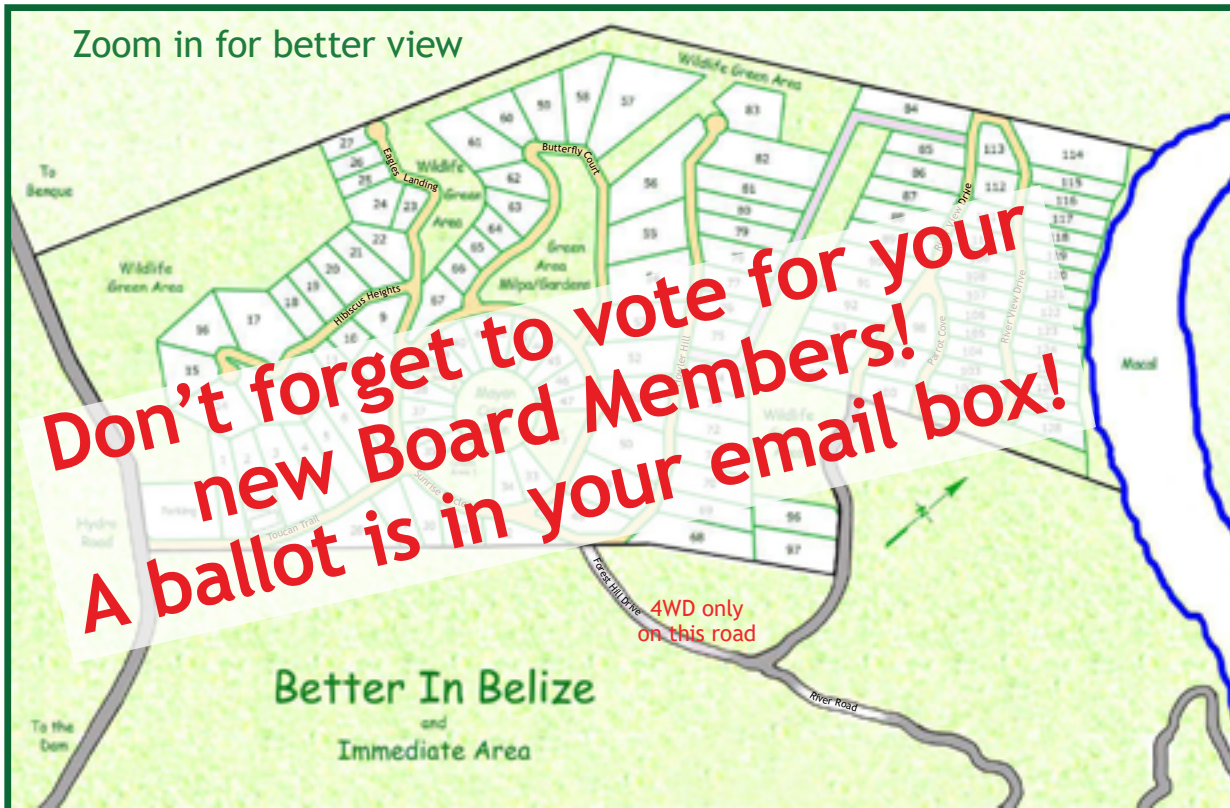


# Your Better in Belize Newsletter

BIB - A Lively Eco-community in the Jungle

WINTER 2019



## Participate!

A dynamic eco-community like ours needs a lively newsletter — and I need your help.

If there are subjects you'd like to see covered, contact me at [irene@natureworkspress.com](mailto:irene@natureworkspress.com).

Thanks in advance!

Renie Brady



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## Shipping Packages to Belize by Freight

Getting items to Belize can be a problematical. Friends can bring small, light-weight items when they visit. But for heavier or larger things, the best option is to order online and have them sent to a freight company which will ship to Belize where you can pick it up. Arrow Freight is one shipping option I have used, and there are several other freight shipping options - you can visit the Belize Freight website here: <https://belizefreight.com>.

Arrow Freight, out of Arlington, Texas, ships every 10-14 days. To use Arrow Freight, just make them the destination for your package like this:

Your Name/Arrow Freight  
1014 Oakmead Dr.  
Arlington, TX 76011-7734  
Phone: 214-650-0205

Next, notify Arrow Freight at [arrowfreightent@gmail.com](mailto:arrowfreightent@gmail.com) that your package/s will be coming and ask them to drop your order at the Spanish Lookout store. They'll group multiple items if you ask. Provide a phone or Whatsapp number so they can contact you when packages arrive. Their phone number is 615-2350.

Remember to take enough \$\$ with you to pay both freight and import duties when you go to pick items up.

## Country Mass Services in our Neighborhood



Sisters led the congregation in singing hymns

fifty-five people – a collection of families from the surrounding area and people who came out from town to join in this historic occasion. Nacho, Nora, and their children, Estuardo, José, Darwin, Gaby, Beirin and Kevin provided cold drinks and set up chairs and benches (some of them borrowed from neighbors and our Student Center) in a covered, open-sided structure, and the congregation was entertained by attending chicks, ducks and sheep (the chickens wandered around peoples' feet cheeping cheerfully), while the other animals added their voices occasionally during the sermon.



Photos at Rivera's house Mass by Sister Mary Rachel.

The services are mostly in Spanish, with some English portions, and with handouts for hymns. All are welcome, regardless of religious beliefs.

The Mt. Carmel Catholic Church in Benque celebrated a Mass (Misa) in October at the home of our neighbors, Ignacio (Nacho) and Nora Rivera, who live down the road a couple of miles. Father Tony, several grey-robed nuns, and Kevin Rivera as altar boy, performed the service, which included Communion, for more than



Father Tony offers a homily

A November Mass was hosted on the veranda at Martz Farm, and a December Mass will be at Lucy Martinez's house, on the 29th at 1pm. The



A November Mass was held at Martz Farm

## Organic Coconut Sugar - FYI

If you're are looking for a natural sweetener (other than cane sugar, which I think is pretty "natural") you might try coconut sugar. I recently bought a 7oz. package of Jans "all natural" Coconut Sugar at Three Flags in Santa Elena. It cost \$3.50bz, which I thought was pretty expensive at 50¢/oz., but I wanted to try it out.

I looked up Jans Organic Coconut Sugar online and found the following:

**100% ORGANIC COCONUT SUGAR** - Our coconut sugar is guaranteed to be 100% USDA certified organic, unbleached, and unrefined ...

**LOW GLYCEMIC INDEX** - Coconut sugar is low on the glycemic index, allowing you to still taste the natural sweetness of coconut sugar without raising your blood sugar levels as quickly as refined white sugars would.

**MILD CARAMEL FLAVOR** - Coconut sugar has a subtle caramel flavor, comparable to brown sugar without compromising taste and quality.

**PALEO & VEGAN FRIENDLY** - Made from fresh coconuts, coconut sugar is paleo and vegan friendly, fit for any plant-based diet.

**HEALTHIER ALTERNATIVE** - Coconut sugar retains nutrients found in the coconut palm such as iron, zinc, calcium and potassium.

Using it in coffee with creamer, I couldn't detect any taste difference between it and the brown cane sugar I buy at Zhen's Chinese grocery in Benque at 5lbs for \$2.50bz, or 50¢/lb, which is 1/16<sup>th</sup> the cost.

It is a beautiful dark brown and a fun conversation piece, but at sixteen times the cost of the brown cane sugar, it would have to be a WHOLE more interesting for me to buy it again.

Oddly, the Belize price, 50¢bz/oz is only half what it is on Amazon, at 50¢usd/oz.



## Tortilla Workshop- Another Culinary Adventure to Educate the Gringos



Twelve gringos from BIB recently enjoyed a tortilla-making workshop presented by José Rivera and his mom, Nora, our neighbors who live about a mile down Hydro Road. Tortillas for the Rivera family of seven require about 72 ears of corn. Turning them into tortillas involves everyone in the family.

José started the workshop by teaching us how to strip husk and kernels from the cob.

Next, the kernels are boiled in water with white lime over a wood fire until they soften and the skins loosen. Rinsing and scrubbing with successive water baths removes the skins to prepare the corn for grinding.



Nacho, José's father, showed us the traditional way to grind corn with a stone *mano* and *metate* (see photo), then José gave us all a chance to grind the corn with a hand-turned *molino* (grinding mill). The Rivera boys do this every morning before school and the resulting moist flour, *masa*, is then kneaded by their sister Gaby and by Nora into dough with the addition of water, and prepared



for the next step, flattening and shaping the tortillas. Several of us tried kneading, then we went on to try making tortillas.



Everyone was amused at our attempts that produced lop-sided, misshapen, holey, cracked-edge, too-fat tortillas.

In time, with intensive help from family members, we turned out decent tortillas, which we toasted on the giant *comal* which forms the top of Nora's *fogon*, a traditional hearth, where she does her daily cooking. Hot tortillas were tucked under a colorful towel on the tortilla bowl.



We also learned the Guatemalan technique of mashing a ball of dough between plastic sheets, and also tried our hand with a tortilla press, the newest addition to making tortillas. Wayyyyy too easy!



While Nora and Gaby made lunch, José and Nacho showed us plants around the house and garden that are used in Belizean cooking. We learned something new every few minutes.

Lunch was pot of delicious chicken stew with a side of vegan vegetables, which we ate with our hand-crafted tortillas amid discussion of other workshops we hope Nora and José will present.

We are planning some future workshops with Nora and José to learn more about Belizean cooking, herbs, and traditions.



text and photos by Renie Brady

## Building Tips: Jalousie Windows

As the dry season ends and the cooler wet season takes hold, BIB residents have been talking about windows lately. The consensus is that *you definitely need windows, not just screens.*

If you bought your lot and only visited in the warmer seasons, you might not realize that once your body gets acclimatized to Belize's relatively balmy weather, you'll get chilly during sunless rainy days. If you can't close your windows, you're going to be wrapping up in blankets and saying grumpy things about humidity and the tropics and why didn't they TELL you about windows.....just sayin'! To be honest, in our Maya Mountain area, even a *fireplace* would be welcome at those times. Some BIB homeowners have installed those, and the rest of us wish we had done so.



There's another reason you need windows. Sometimes during the rainy season your house will be bombarded with gusty winds, particularly if your lot is on one of the higher elevations where rain sometimes falls sideways. If you have no windows, it will come right through your screens, making a big mess inside your house.

Doubtful? Well, when it rains 3½ inches in an hour, you're talking a LOT of water coming down. Without windows, you may be having regular mop-up sessions, and you won't feel comfortable leaving your house untended because the weather here can change in minutes.

The most satisfactory window for this climate appears to be the louvre, also called a jalousie window.

Wikipedia says: A jalousie window or louvre window is a window composed of parallel glass, acrylic, or wooden louvres set in a frame. The louvres are joined onto a track so that they may be tilted open and shut in unison to control airflow, usually by turning a crank.

With jalousie windows, you have control over how much air you let into the house, and you can direct that air straight in when you want a cooling breeze or toward the ceiling or floor if you want air but no draft. Also, you can open and close jalousies without a big fuss (even if they're up high, with an extension rod to turn or shift the crank).

The glass panes can occasionally slide out of the clamps, but this can be avoided by squeezing the clamps tighter. The only time this has failed for me was when an opossum tried to remove a pane to get in the window to the fruit bowl which I had carelessly left right inside the window. My bad! The opossum gave up when it encountered the screen inside the window. If they break, they're easy to replace.

### LESSONS YOU DON'T WANT TO LEARN THE HARD WAY:

1. It will get cold and perhaps wet in your home if you don't install windows. You will not be happy.
2. Experience at BIB points to jalousies as the most satisfactory type of window for this climate.
3. It is much less expensive to install windows when the house is being built, rather than after
4. Listen to your builder. Jorge has been building here for years, and if he or any other local builder suggests changes to your plans (not just windows!), pay attention.

### Belizean Holidays ~ Mark Your Calendar!

Tue.	Jan 1	New Year's Day
Mon.	Mar. 11	National Heroes and Benefactors Day
Fri.	Apr. 19	Good Friday
Sat.	Apr. 20	Holy Saturday
Mon.	Apr. 22	Easter Monday
Wed	May 1	Labour Day
Mon.	May 27	Sovereign's Day/Commonwealth Day
Tue.	Sept. 10	St. George's Caye Day
Mon.	Sept. 23	Independence Day
Mon.	Oct, 14	Pan American Day
Tue.	Nov. 19	Garifuna Settlement Day
Wed.	Dec. 25	Christmas Day
Thur.	Dec. 26	Boxing Day

### Xiyinqing Natural Fiber Cleaning Cloth

I found this in Zhen's grocery store in Benque. It's a mesh fiber square, about 12"x12." When new, it is stiff as a board, but hey, look at the claims on the package:

Grease removing, Softness, Bibulousness (which translates to 'highly absorbent') and Antibacterial. "It is soft when being put into water. And it has the super effect in absorbing water and grease removing. It is easy to be washed and dries quickly."

It's only \$1.95bz for a natural cleaning cloth that lasts for MONTHS of daily use. Perfect for an eco-community.



## A Full-Moon Music Night in the Milpa

In September, Kathie Miller initiated a couple of really great events. Having captured a traveling musician, David Eckebrecht, during her trip to BIB, she hosted him for a couple of days in return for a great concert under a full moon. We'd intended to have Music-by-Bonfire, but a torrential rain during the afternoon soaked

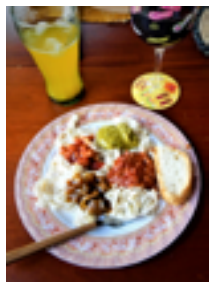


the wood and despite Doug DeGirolamo's best efforts we only achieved some memorable steam. But the music was great, and we spent the evening on our camp chairs under a canopy Doug set up for us, listening to 70s & 80s music, with a few more recent bits added in. Thanks to Kathie and David for a very enjoyable evening.



## Pasta Party Potluck at Kathie's

Kathie wasn't finished with the entertainment, however, and hosted a Pasta Party, during which several BIBers joined her during the afternoon to knead up pasta dough. Joined by more folks bearing potluck pasta sauce, everyone got an opportunity to turn the handle on the pasta machine to produce some of the tastiest pasta ever produced on earth. Kathie says the pasta machine, a cunning little gizmo that clamps to a table top, may be used by residents who wants to make pasta when she is not here.



## Give Mold the Boot!

If you have any areas or items in your house that get a thin film of white mold on them during the rainy season, here is a recipe for mold inhibitor which will take care of the problem for a long time.

### Mold Inhibitor

- 1 - 25ml bottle of tincture of Iodine
- 3 tablespoons soda
- 3 ½ cups water

Above is a current photo of an inside wall of my house which had gradually acquired a whitish cast due to mold. I scrubbed it with vinegar, Citrus Power, and other cleaning agents, but the mold always returned during rainy season.



contributed by Renie Brady

I made up a solution of mold inhibitor in a spray bottle and sprayed the wall about three years ago, and it has remained mold-free since then. The solution is tan at first, due to the iodine, but turns clear later and will not stain (although you might want to test it on a hidden area to make sure). It works on rubber and leather, too.

Tincture of iodine can be bought at Farmers Trading Company (FTC) in Spanish Lookout. This isn't my invention, but I can't remember whose it is. Sorry!



pasta photos by Kathie Miller & Linda DeGirolamo



## Thanksgiving at Better in Belize

Thanksgiving came a week early at Better In Belize this year as residents opted to share the American holiday with Canadians Francesco and Mari Anello, who wouldn't be here on the official day.

It was potluck, as usual, with people sharing their personal traditional food, or just making something yummy to share.

Accompanying Doug DeGirolamo's amazing deep-fried turkey were delicious offerings from the rest of us: vegan dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, corn casserole, cranber-



Sam, the coati mundi

ries, dinner rolls, olives, pumpkin and pecan pies, and pumpkin cupcakes. Beth and Bryan produced a bottle of starfruit wine, and we also consumed the usual



red wine and beer as the hummingbirds on Beth and Bryan's veranda swooped and zoomed around our heads and the coati, Sam, came by to provide entertainment. We were joined by our latest new neighbors at BIB, Rick and Marcia Sickelsmith, now living here permanently with their three fine cats, Eddie, Kevin and Stanley.



## This is your Safety Committee at work



Linda DeGirolamo and Marcia Sickelsmith sort and pack first aid supplies in the kit

## Pooping Protocol in 3rd World Countries

The first time people from first-world countries visit third-world countries, they notice (within hours, usually) something which is done very differently: used toilet paper is tossed into a trash can instead of being flushed down the toilet. This is because sub-optimal septic tanks and sewer systems in poorer countries often cannot handle the addition of toilet paper, which does not break down as fast as other elements contributed to the toilet.

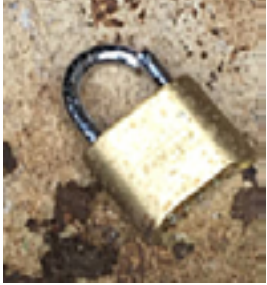
This custom can be confusing to the newby The question is, does EVERY bit of toilet paper you use need to be tossed in the trash? What about if, you know, it's..... ummmm..... a bit messy?

I asked some locals about the protocol. Here's the deal: fold 6-8 tissue squares into a single multi-layer square, use the tissue, then fold it over and press it together, concealing your "contribution." Reuse this folded version if necessary, then fold it still smaller for disposal in the trash. Sometimes your results will be a little less tidy, and in that case it's better to flush it than put it in the trash.

In Benque, trash gets handled by workers. To protect the landfill workers' health, line your bathroom trash can with a bag, then tie it shut tightly when you remove it for disposal. This will keep the used tissues from getting scattered throughout your other trash.

One of my sources said, with a certain amount of awe, "Gringos sure use a LOT of toilet paper!" So when using the facilities in Belizean homes, buck the trend and don't use excessive paper.

## Recent Thefts, and Measures Taken



Crime scene: bolt-cut lock

You may be aware that we had a theft on November 3. According to our Safety Chair, Linda DeGirolamo, in a Message sent to all homeowners in residence:

“... Sometime Saturday night (we think), the bodega and garden share shed was broken into. The locks were

cut off with some type of bolt cutter. With the help of Beth and Bryan [Weary], and Paul [Prescott], we recovered some items on BIB property. The thieves stole 2 weed eaters and 2 chain saws. Jorge and I filed a police report in Benque this morning, and Benque police were just here to try to collect fingerprints, which was unsuccessful.

The board has approved some immediate security items and measures for the community, which will be completed this week. . . The board and I are taking this matter seriously and want to assure everyone of their safety. I would ask that any owners that have security cameras at their home keep them activated as a deterrent. Benque police have given me the [WhatsApp] number to the chief of police. Chief Diana Hall is available 24/7 at [WhatsApp] # 601-4594. She can then direct Benque police to respond to any emergency.



Crime scene: Garden Share Shed

NOTICE: For safety concerns, the front gate will be closed (not locked) starting at 8pm tonight. It will be kept open during the day. Thanks everyone for your cooperation.”

**[You must download the WhatsApp app to your phone to use the above numbers]**

The AED was taken from the First Aid Kit in the Garden Share shed,

but was discarded by the thieves next to the tractor – possibly because it would be too traceable.

As soon as the thefts were discovered, members of the community visited all uninhabited dwellings and determined that none appeared to have been broken into. As of November 25, the thieves have not been apprehended nor the stolen items recovered.

However, the event precipitated a flurry of



Crime scene: Earthbag Bodega



Crime scene: abandoned AED (Fibrillator)

action with regard to safety measures which had been awaiting approval and funding. The Safety Committee, assisted by Dr. Anello, determined what was needed for equipment and supplies, and money was made immediately available to purchase these and a larger first aid container. The Safety Committee and Renie Brady then packed these together with laminated instructions for emergency reference in the kit. A centrally located secure area is being worked on to house the first aid kit and AED (defibrillator). Until that happens, it is at Linda’s place, Lot #1, next to Toucan House.

Six trail cams have been ordered, and two are now set up on BIB property to detect future unwelcome activities. Being out here in the boonies, there is little way for us to apprehend troublemakers, but when the word gets out to the neighborhood that we have surveillance cameras, this might have the desired effect of deterring future problems.

When asked if further action had been taken, Linda responded:

“We have also ordered 4, solar powered, motion-activated security lights. The 4 additional cameras, and lights should be in at the end of [November]. We have also checked in to giving each home an air horn (free of cost to the homeowner). They will be ordered and distributed as soon as we have board approval. We expect to have all updated security measures in place by the end of the year. Jorge and Bryan have installed solid, steel reinforced doors to our community buildings, along with dead bolt locks.

Also, the board is doing an inventory of all community items to add theft insurance to the current policy. Right now BIB only has liability insurance.”

Kudos to our Safety Committee for outstanding service to the Eco-community!

*contributed by Renie Brady.  
Photos by Linda DeGirolamo*

## Seven kids take Sewing Workshop



Our local kids are such eager beavers for new learning experiences that they recently spent an entire Saturday learning from Miss Dee Shanley, who teaches sewing at San José Succotz RC High School in Succotz, how to sew and embroider. Seven boys and girls, ages seven to seventeen, worked



diligently at sewing machines, ironing board, and with embroidery hoops, needles and floss, and an old-fashioned “darning egg” to learn how to embroider and sew tortilla warmers, mend their clothes on the machines, and darn socks by hand. Dawna Bemis helped with the sewing machines, and Renie Brady taught sock darning and helped with embroidery. We already have big plans for the next sewing workshop!



This photo by Miss Dee. Others by Renie Brady.



## How is your Scholarship or Student Center Donation Used?



Meet José Rivera. José is a tutor in our Student Center and he will graduate from high school this year. Four years ago, when I was just starting to invite students onto my veranda to do their homework, Jose was one of the first students. There were no desks, study lights, computers or even a warm room for them, but still they came, huddled on chilly nights under the dim veranda light to access the internet on borrowed cellphones or laptops, using flashlights and determination to get through their homework.



José was the oldest, still in middle school, and I can still remember his hesitant approach one afternoon to ask me if I could help him get ready for a classroom presentation. "I need some advice, Miss Renie," he said. "My voice shakes when I try to talk, and I don't know where to look."

I gave him some pointers, he worked on his speech and visuals for a day or two, then gave me a barely audible, shaky-voiced presentation. "That was a good beginning," I said. "Here are some ways to make it even better."



Kids doing homework on my veranda

And so it began. Every time he had to give a presentation it was better than the last, as he put into use what he had learned from the previous one. Soon he was doing them on his own without help from me, his research relevant, visuals appropriate, his voice growing strong and confident, and his grades holding firm.

Now on school nights, José does his own homework while monitoring the Student Center and tutoring younger children when needed, earning a small



income in the process. His brother Darwin is learning the process, in order to take José's place when he graduates in the spring.

Hand in hand with the Waterhole Scholarship tuitions and help with school supply expenses, the Student Center has helped José and the other twenty-plus kids along Hydro Road stay in school and compete on an even footing with the Benque kids. And a lot of you have helped make this possible.

But back to José. In mid-November, just a couple of weeks ago, at my request (but with no further input from me), José put together a truly professional Tortilla Workshop presenta-



*....continued from previous page*

tion which he gave with his mother, Nora. Nora was in charge of the hands-on process of preparing the dough and patting out and cooking the tortillas (and preparing a delicious lunch), but since she speaks no English, it was up to José to make sense of it all for us.

His presentation was faultlessly designed, every step clearly outlined and explained, with history, background, anecdotes, demonstrations, and hands-on experiences from shelling the corn through every step of the process, keeping twelve gringos engaged and fascinated for four hours. That workshop was better prepared and executed than many professional workshops I've attended, and



in the process, José was able to improve his family's financial position with our workshop fees. The workshop attendees were fascinated, offering ideas for future workshops we'd like José and his mother to give for us.

I don't pretend to be responsible for José's excellent capa-

Along with his parents' support and encouragement, his own will to succeed, and the aid of scholarships and the Student Center, José now has the capability, confidence, and presence to do just about anything he wants in the future. Other children, with similar zeal and different but desirable capabilities are following his footsteps in the Student Center. We have given these country kids a huge step up in the world, and I'm hoping we can continue in this vein for a long, long time.

This is such a worthwhile project - helping young people realize their potential and move forward into the modern world. Some of them are coming from a single-room house with a dirt floor and no windows, moving into the 21st century of computers and slick commerce. It is a huge jump for them to face, but together we can offer a helping hand.



Are you in this with us? Can you contribute? Nothing you donate will go to advertising, office space, secretaries or company cars. We're working out of living rooms, and using our own cars and gas. The Student Center is a spare room in my house. We are liaising with principals to make sure kids get their homework in. We transport the kids in a caravan of cars when the bus breaks down. We're making sure the dirt-floor houses have electricity for students doing homework outside of the Student Center. We've been doing it now for several years, and no matter how you cut it, it's worth the effort.

Help us if you can - you won't be sorry. And as "your kids" go out into the world and do great things, we'll try to keep you posted.



## Leishmaniasis - what you need to know

by Dr. Francesco Anello and Renie Brady

Recently a BIB homeowner visited their property at BIB and was bitten by a female sandfly (not sand flea - they live at the beach and are a different insect). The sandfly bite is actually painless. It's the tiny parasite called *leishmania protozoa*, a one-celled organism, which MAY be carried by the sandfly's saliva, that can cause a lesion called Leishmaniasis, "Leish" for short. The local Belizean name for Leish is *chiclero* as the ulcers once appeared regularly on jungle workers who extracted chiclero gum from trees.

Sandflies are found in the jungle around animal burrows and in cracks of stone or cement walls. Regular mosquito screens won't keep out a tiny sandfly. When out after dusk, consider using permethrin-impregnated clothing or insect repellent.

The type of Leish encountered in Belize is cutaneous leishmaniasis, which affects the skin. The sore usually starts at the site of the bite, which fails to heal and very slowly grows larger. In a few people sores may appear on mucous membranes. It's not very common, but there have been several cases at BIB, and it is something you need to know about if you get back home with a sore that doesn't heal.

Doctors in Canada did biopsies and other invasive procedures to try to figure it out because leishmaniasis was not on their radar. It was weeks before a correct diagnosis was made and with treatment the ulcer, now a couple of inches across, began to shrink and heal. If you have an unexplained lesion, have your doctors test for leishmaniasis before doing anything more invasive.

The typical treatment in Belize, Glucantime (GLOO-cun-teem), is a preparation of the heavy metal Antimony, *meglumine antimoniate*. Treatment costs around \$200usd, and requires about three weeks of injections. In the US or Canada similar treatment can cost thousands of dollars.



Don't let it get this big!

and Honduras and found to be very effective. It may cause localized pain for a few hours, but has no side effects. And it cures the leish.

The paired photos above right are before and after images of a Leish lesion that was treated within two to three weeks of the ulcer's appearance with PDT. One application completely healed the ulcer within a few weeks.

An alternate to Glucantime has been undergoing trials by our part-time resident Dr. Francesco Anello. Using a treatment strategy called PhotoDynamicTherapy (PDT), the ulcer is exposed to an intense light of a specific frequency. This treatment is being used in Israel

Don't let the thought of getting Leish scare you away from coming to BIB. People live here year-around and few of them experience chiclera. If you do, a treatment from Dr. Anello, if he gets to it before it gets too big, will take care of it. Leish lesions are nearly painless unless you have to sit on them (Renie's personal experience with an ill-placed lesion).

If Dr. Anello's treatment is not available, there is a Dermatologist/Internal Medicine specialist in San Ignacio who diagnoses and treats Leishmaniasis. Glucantime injections are available in Guatemala. Polly Red Head (*Hamelia patens*), a Belizean medicinal plant and a source of iodine, is used by locals to make a poultice for Leish lesions.

To stay safe, treat all insect bites with a solution of Iodine and DMSO until they completely heal - the DMSO carries the Iodine into the skin, and Iodine will kill microorganisms before they can infect the surrounding cells. You can get a bottle of this solution from Dr. Anello.



before PDT treatment



after PDT treatment

## ANGELS STILL NEEDED!

The Student Center needs Angels who can commit to supporting our basic needs on a monthly basis.

**TUTOR ANGEL:** \$80us/month wages for the sixty hours spent by the student monitor to open the Center, tutor and supervise the kids in the Student Center each month.

**INK ANGEL:** \$50us/mo or HP664 printer ink cartridges.

**SUPPLY ANGEL:** \$10us/month slush fund for copy paper, glue, display board, markers and other supplies used by the kids at the Center.

**OR:** Could you slip a solar or USB-chargeable flashlight kids can borrow to get home after dark (sun sets by 6:30) on busy nights into your suitcase for the kids next time you come to Better in Belize?

If you can help, please contact Renie at [irene@natureworkspress.com](mailto:irene@natureworkspress.com).

**ALL of EVERY DONATION goes to these expenses.**



## Home Invasion and Security Beef-up at BIB

### Love FM Belize - News and Music Power

November 26 at 8:20 AM

#### \*\*HOME OF SENIOR CITIZEN INVADED\*\*

The home of an American national was broken into last night at around ten o'clock. Love News understands that 75-year-old Irene Brady was at home on Hydro Road, Benque Viejo del Carmen, Cayo District, when two men wearing masks entered her home. One of the men was reportedly armed with a shot gun while the other proceeded to take Brady's cellular phone and tablet and subsequently driving off in her Toyota pickup truck.//////////

Hello, this is your intrepid newsletter editor speaking. You may have heard by now of my latest heroic efforts to get my name in the newspaper/internet. On November 25 I experienced a house break-in, wherein a couple of miscreants stole my cellphone, Android tablet, and my 1998 Toyota pickup, Taco. The event was online by morning. Amazing!!!

I emerged undamaged except for a head wound acquired from tripping over one of those nasty speed bumps while walking to Doug and Linda DeGirolamo's house after the incident to report the theft. Linda patched me up proficiently, and did an exemplary job of mobilizing the police on WhatsApp, which resulted in a nocturnal visit by Benque Police. Unfortunately, there's not much chance I'll ever see my beloved truck again.

This whole misfortune – the loss of a vehicle, phone and tablet (and the hole in my head) – were offset somewhat by:

1. confirmation that WhatsApp-to-Police really works.
2. knowledge that calling the police results in their speedy arrival, even in the middle of the night
3. redoubled efforts to get a serviceable security system in place
4. the allocation of enough money from the HOA treasury to do the job immediately.

A topic that isn't revisited or called upon loses its urgency and fades from view after awhile, thus it has been hard to concentrate on expensive security measures when we have so many other things that require attention (roads, internet, community center, etc.). But with the theft of the tools, then this much more serious robbery, it became clear that security was of the highest importance.

As a result our Safety Committee, chaired by Linda DeGirolamo, and helped by numerous other residents, has accelerated the installation of lights on the front gate after dark, trail cams on trails where someone

can approach on foot, and is ordering airhorns which make a truly hideously loud honk when a button is depressed, so that

someone needing assistance can call for help. Also in the works are additional trail cams and video cameras at various important points, a sturdy, lockable gate, and we are looking into hiring a security guard who will lock the gate after dark and not admit anyone who shouldn't be here. And it's all happening right now.

But "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good." Now we know we can get five glass jalousie/louver panes cut to order at the glass shop in Benque for only \$20bz! Wow!

Ann McGregor has set up a GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-renie-replace-her-stolen-truck>.



TACO, IN MEMORIAM

## Awesome Community Spirit

Renie speaking: I want to thank this amazing community of BIB homeowners, both those currently here and those connected by internet, for their awesome support and kindness with regard to my recent incident.

The outpouring of generosity, assistance and offers of help have been gratefully received and truly heartwarming. If you ever had doubts about moving to the wilds of Belize, rest assured that BIB is a mellow and supportive place to make your home. Just a guess, but I'll bet living here is safer than living in Denver or Detroit!

## Typical Bag Sizes When You Fly

- Carry-on bag: maximum dimensions 9" x 14" x 22."
- Personal item: maximum dimensions 9" x 10" x 17."
- Checked bags: outside length + width + height = 62"

All dimensions include the handles and wheels.

## Current HOA Board & Committees

### HOME OWNERS ASSOCIATION (HOA) BOARD MEMBERS

Ann McGregor . Sandi Smith . Gene DeMarco . Beth Weary . Doug DeGirolamo

### COMMITTEES

Safety: Linda DeGirolamo, Marcia Sicklesmith

Garden: Beth Weary

Roads: Bryan Weary

EAB: Doug DeGirolamo, Renie Brady

Communications (internet): Ann McGregor

**VOTE ONLINE NOW  
FOR NEW BOARD  
MEMBERS**

## Scholarships – Help Us Fund 2020-21

We managed to get all our kids tuition and 39% of their supplies paid for the 2019-2020 school year, but our funding for next year (which we need to have in hand by June) is lagging woefully behind.

Until last week, we had had zero contributions. We're off the ground now, with donations from Sue Waite and Francesco and Mari Anello, but we could use some more help if you are feeling benevolent.

These are good kids, and this year their families are in dire straits due to summer's dead-serious drought which killed their original corn and bean

crops and then a torrential rain which washed out *the replacement crops* they had dug deep for in order to replant.

Usually at this time of year, farm folks are harvesting and eating the beans and corn they planted in the spring. But this year, if they didn't have enough cash to pay for a THIRD planting, they're having to buy all of their food. Many of the subsistence farmers don't have money for food and are out searching for work. Some have no idea how they're going to pay for the kids' school tuition and supplies.

If you can help with their kids' tuitions for the coming year, it would be a true act of mercy. Can you?

## Rentals Currently Available at Better in Belize

If you want to spend some time at BIB but don't have a house here, there are several B&Bs and many variations of service right here in the community, from totally hands-off – you cook and do for yourself – to all-meals-provided and activities arranged. Prices and availability vary widely.

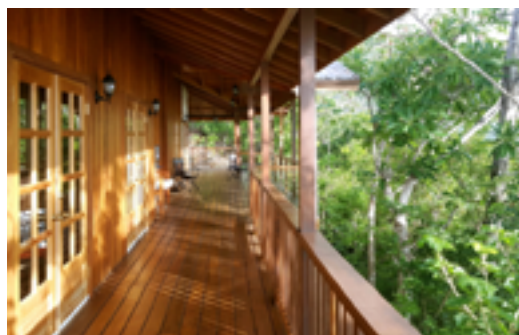
Additional lodging is available at [Martz Farm Treehouses](http://www.martzfarm.com), [www.martzfarm.com](http://www.martzfarm.com), two miles back toward Benque from BIB. If you don't mind the daily drive, there is also lodging in Benque and San Ignacio.



### Casa Gala - Lot 68

\$150usd per night, 2 bedrooms  
\$300usd per night  
\$15 per adult meal.

<https://www.junglesplashes.com>



### Casa Tropical Howler Hill - Lot 77

\$105usd per night based on double occupancy  
Dinner upon request at \$25usd per adult

Contact: [millerkathiem@hotmail.com](mailto:millerkathiem@hotmail.com)



### Casa Santa Maria

\$129usd per night, double occupancy  
Optional meals also available

[www.CSMbelize.com](http://www.CSMbelize.com)

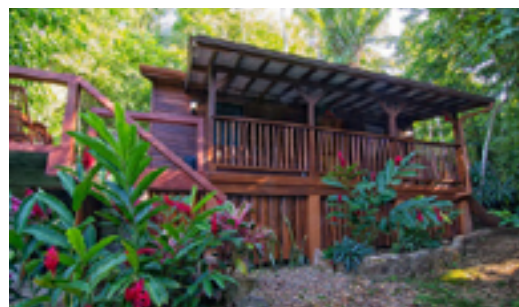
<https://www.airbnb.ca/rooms/6775096>



### Jungle Escape Belize - Lot 97

\$75usd (winter) \$50usd (summer)  
double occupancy,  
Minimum 2 night stay,  
enquire for weekly or longer  
meals available on request

Contact: [ritamartin@sasktel.net](mailto:ritamartin@sasktel.net)



### Tree Tops Vacation Rental - Lot 40

\$124usd (winter)  
\$99usd (summer)  
for entire home/night

<http://www.betterinbelize.com/belize-vacation-rental-treetops.html>

Contact: [april123@sympatico.ca](mailto:april123@sympatico.ca)



### Toucan House EcoLodge - Lot 2

\$75usd (winter) \$55usd (summer)  
room/night.  
Meal option \$50usd daily for 3 home-cooked meals. 9% Hotel Tax charged.

<http://www.betterinbelize.com/the-toucan-house.html>

Contact: [april123@sympatico.ca](mailto:april123@sympatico.ca)

*A Newspaper is Only as Interesting as the People Who Contribute To It*



*A Message  
from the Editor*

This newsletter needs volunteers to contribute items about the outings, home building, gardening, and activities we engage in here at

BIB – kayaking, hiking, potlucks, bonfires, pontooning, music nights, cave explorations, trips to Xunantunich or Caracol, excursions to Melchor, tips and advice, experiences at the market – everything!

If others don't contribute, it's all just going to be stuff I happen across or am interested in, written with my viewpoint and opinions. Obviously I am deeply involved in the Waterhole Neighborhood Scholarships, the Student Center in the spare room of my house, and the amazing natural history of our beautiful rainforest at Better In Belize. I can only speak easily from my own particular point of view.

I could use some help.

You don't have to be a great writer to contribute. Polished pieces would be welcome, but so are simple notes and observations. And questions or comments from people who don't live here (yet!) would also be welcome!

Let us know what's happening in your neck of the woods. Suggest topics. Share what you know. This newsletter goes out to people here at BIB but also to owners who may not hear about BIB any other way, and we'd like to encourage everyone to join us in the adventure.

Thanks to all of you who contributed advice, tidbits, photos, information, and were interviewed for this quarterly newsletter issue. Send future events, tips, information, interesting facts, photos, stories, B&B listings and anything else you want to see in newsletters to: Renie, at [irene@natureworkspress.com](mailto:irene@natureworkspress.com).

This BIB Newsletter was assembled by

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