

# ATENAS TODAY

Issue No. 63  
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*ATENAS TODAY is a free English language newsletter for the residents and potential residents of Atenas, Costa Rica. It contains informative articles and creative compositions submitted by our readers, and is distributed via email approximately once a month to over 250 email addresses. To get on the distribution list or to submit material, please send an email to Fred Macdonald at [fredmac222@yahoo.com](mailto:fredmac222@yahoo.com).*

*Compositions from back issues are archived by category on the Atenas Chamber of Tourism and Commerce website, [www.atenascatuca.com](http://www.atenascatuca.com). Click on the English version and then Atenas Today on the business page.*

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## DIRECTORY OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE IN THE ATENAS AREA

New names and numbers have been added to the directory. With each issue Atenas Today subscribers will receive an updated file containing the names and contact information of people who have chosen to be listed. Simply download the PDF file attached to this Atenas Today email and print it or save it on your computer.

If your name is on the list without contact information, it is because you are a subscriber to the newsletter, but have **not authorized the publication of your email address or other information**. To add or correct data please send an email to [fredmac222@yahoo.com](mailto:fredmac222@yahoo.com).

# Linea Vital Expands Operations



In a move that is intended to insure that Atenas will continue to have the English-speaking medical services provided by Linea Vital, the company is expanding operations and hiring more personnel. Director Jorge and Doctor Candy need the additional staff in order to keep providing 24-7 medical services and still have a life for themselves.

The growth in Atenas over the past few years has kept them busy, but at present there are not enough customers in Atenas alone to support a second doctor. Therefore, they have taken an opportunity to generate more revenue by setting up a similar medical service business in Quepos. By having a larger staff and moving personnel back and forth between the two towns, they can maintain their level of service while having some time off for themselves.

Our continued support through our memberships will help them succeed. If you are not a member, please visit them and sign up so that they will know where you live in an emergency. The cost is only \$20 per month for your entire household, and that gets you heavily discounted prices on all medical services. **WE NEED THIS SERVICE IN OUR TOWN.**

Shown below is Jorge's letter that was sent via email to existing members:

Dear members,

We would like to take this opportunity to inform you that Linea Vital is expanding its operations and will be opening a new office in Quepos, with support for the surrounding Manuel Antonio area.

Dr. Candy will be moving to our new office for the first few months to help get the service started. In her place will be Dr. Carlo Magno Rios, a graduate of general medicine in Cuba who will be ensuring the health of all of our patients. On the weekends, the clinic in Atenas will be attended by Dr. Mauricio Vasquez.

Dr. Candy will continue to be the head of medical direction for Linea Vital, Atenas and will be visiting periodically. Please take note of our new web address, [www.lineavitalcr.sa.cr](http://www.lineavitalcr.sa.cr), as well as our new email addresses. We will be in contact with our customers via e-mail, and welcome your comments and concerns at [operaciones@lineavital.sa.cr](mailto:operaciones@lineavital.sa.cr) or [medico@lineavital.sa.cr](mailto:medico@lineavital.sa.cr). And as always, we also have the support and supervision of Dr. Ivan Kafarela and the group of specialists at CIMA.

We would also like to inform our members that they will be covered reciprocally in both the Atenas and Quepos locations, in case your family is traveling or working in either location. The numbers in Quepos are [2777-68-68](tel:2777-68-68) and [8705-90-91](tel:8705-90-91).

We appreciate your support and understanding as we begin our new project.

Linea Vital at your service.

Sincerely,

Jorge Morera S  
Paramedic cod 2617  
Director

## A Baseball Story

*A reader passed on this story to me, and even though it is corny and may not be true, I liked its message of recognizing and seizing opportunities to be kind. If this really happened I am sure the people involved remembered this game and forgot all the others.*

*--your editor*

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves children with learning disabilities, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question:

'When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does, is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?'

The audience was stilled by the query.

The father continued. 'I believe that when a child like Shay, who was mentally and physically disabled comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes in the way other people treat that child.'

Then he told the following story:

Shay and I had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, 'Do you think they'll let me play?' I knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but as a father *I* also understood that if my son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging and some confidence to be accepted by others in spite of his handicaps.

I approached one of the boys on the field and asked (not expecting much) if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and said, 'We're losing by six runs

and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning.'

Shay struggled over to the team's bench and, with a broad smile, put on a team shirt. I watched with a small tear in my eye and warmth in my heart. The boys saw my joy at my son being accepted.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the right field. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as I waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat. At this juncture, do they let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible because Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball. However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher, recognizing that the other team was putting winning aside for this moment in Shay's life, moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly

towards Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher. The game would now be over. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman.

Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game. Instead, the pitcher threw the ball right over the first baseman's head, out of reach of all team mates.

Everyone from the stands and both teams started yelling, 'Shay, run to first! Run to first!'

Never in his life had Shay ever run that far, but he made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, 'Run to second, run to second!' Catching his breath, Shay awkwardly ran towards second, gleaming and struggling to make it to the base.

By the time Shay rounded towards second base, the right fielder had the ball. The smallest guy on their team who now had his first chance to be the hero for his team. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions so he, too, intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head.

Shay ran toward third base deliriously as the runners ahead of him circled the bases toward home. All were screaming, 'Shay, Shay, Shay, all the Way Shay'

Shay reached third base because the opposing shortstop ran to help him by turning him in the direction of third base, and shouted, 'Run to third! Shay, run to third!'

As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams, and the spectators, were on their feet screaming, 'Shay, run home! Run home!'

Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the grand slam and won the game for his team

'That day', said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, 'the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world'.

Shay didn't make it to another summer. He died that winter, having never forgotten being the hero and making me so happy, and coming home and seeing his Mother tearfully embrace her little hero of the day!

A wise man once said every society is judged by how it treats it's least fortunate amongst them.

# Family Emergency Creates Opportunity for Bargain Hunters

Last month a neighbor named Janell Gehmlich from Alberta, Canada was forced to leave her home in Costa Rica on short notice in order to provide care for her sick mother. She had to leave behind a number of valuable possessions, which friends are now trying to sell for her.

The Jeep Wrangler can be seen by contacting Constantino Bustillos at 2246-3732 (home), or 2258-8111 (work). The other items can be seen at Maggie and Constantino Bustillos home in the Fatima section of Atenas. Please call them for directions and to set up an appointment. Neither of these individuals speak English, so you may need a translator to help.



**JEEP WRANGLER:** 2003, 4x4, gas 4.0L 6 cylinder engine, 96,000 km, hard top, bikini soft top, tarp cover for bikini top, roof rack, roof basket, trailer hitch, new CD/radio/iPod stereo, new alarm, A/C, cruise control.

Original owners, driven down from Canada.  
All marchamo and RiTeV paid up-to-date.

\$20,000

- GE refrigerator, stainless steel and plastic, one year old : \$700
- six foot Guanacaste desk with side drawer and cupboard : \$200
- metal loaf pan : \$5
- 2 cooling racks : \$5
- oven mitts : \$5
- 2 wire mini-shelves (perfect for doubling cupboard shelf space) : \$5
- Brita fridge jug (box style with spout) : \$10
- surge protection/current regulation and cleaning power bar : \$60
- 8 plug power bar : \$25
- Brother printer/scanner/copier/fax : \$150
- tall glass vase : \$10
- 3 bamboo beach mats : \$2 each
- plastic clothes baskets : \$7
- locally handmade wicker clothes basket : \$5
- large plastic garbage can with swing lid: \$15
- games- Rook, Yahtzee, Cribbage board and cards : \$5 each
- 3 decks of playing cards : \$1 each
- set of four resistance bands with padded handles : \$20
- professional waxing kit- wax warmer, 1 unopened pot and one half pot of wax, wooden spatulas, muslin strips, pre and post waxing cleaners,
- talc powder : \$50
- plastic hangers, set of 10 : \$3 each set
- unopened food and toiletry items : \$ various prices
- curtains- various sizes and colors : \$ various prices
- Fender 100, 2x10" Rumble bass guitar amp : \$400 (currently at the store Electro Grecia, kitty corner from PeriMercado in Grecia)
- SLR/video camera tripod, extendable legs : \$60
- O'Neal motorcycle helmet : \$100
- Yakima locking box for roof of cars or trucks, mounts on a bar rack : \$250

## Contact:

Janell Gehmlich

[janellonthebeach@gmail.com](mailto:janellonthebeach@gmail.com)

# Melanie Opens Cafe and Bistro



Well known for her breads and delicious deserts, Melanie Lesueur is now running the **Balcon del Cafe and Bistro** and serving breakfast and lunch .

The Balcon Cafe is located on the second floor in Roma Centro, the new shopping plaza in central Atenas. The hours are 8am to 6pm, six days a week.

The menu offers four different breakfasts: Tico, American, German, and Sport (cereal and yogurt).

For lunch you can choose from a variety of salads: mixed veggies, mixed with chicken, Greek with feta cheese, club (ham and cheese), nicoise, and a special German farmer's combination. There is also a special entry of the day, with fresh fish or another delicacy.

Then there are bocas, Melanie's deserts, ice cream, bebidas, and all kinds of coffee (cafe, capuccino, expresso, mocca, amaretto-laced, etc.)

**Give it a try!**

## Costa Rica To Enforce the Luxury Homes Tax

A report in AM Costa Rica reveals that only about one third of the estimated 10,000 properties that should have reported and paid the new luxury home tax have done so.

The report says that the financial watchdog agency of the government has ordered the tax authority to begin enforcing the tax and imposing the times ten penalty. Town governments in particular areas have been requested to supply information on expensive properties. Apparently not much has happened so far, and time will tell whether those who paid will be glad they did or feel foolish. Remember, if you file before they catch you, you will pay a late fee, but not the times ten penalty.

# A Message from Lee

Hi guys! it is me LEE CORTES (formally Lee Rodriguez!) from Hotel el Cafetal Inn, Santa Eulalia, and Restaurante Mirador Del Cafetal in Estanquillo.

As many of you know, when I got divorced I took over operating the Mirador, and Romy took responsibility for the hotel until we are able to sell both properties! In the meantime, since my business at the Mirador has suffered because of the new highway diverting traffic away, I decided to open the restaurant by the Hotel El Cafetal -- called Rincon LLanero -- to the public starting weekends only: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. When you come for lunch the use of the pool is free; NO KIDS please! and at night the ambience and great food is a perfect blend.\*Wine lovers enjoy a 2x1 promotion WINE ONLY during dinner! Atenas desperately needs a good restaurant, with atmosphere, and excellent prices – this is my goal. When you come to the hotel, the restaurant is located by the pool with parking exclusive for the restaurant.

Also, in times of crisis or change new opportunities arise . . . both the hotel and El Mirador will offer a terrific location for special events. The hotel is ideal for weddings, lunches, special private dinners, etc. Whereas, the Mirador is ideal for big groups looking to have fun dancing, or to rent the location for special events. El Mirador can accommodate 200+ people, with plenty of parking in an isolated environment in the mountains where no one will be bothered by loud music.

So here I am kind of starting again. I would like to take this opportunity to announce our first event, scheduled for 5 p.m., Good Friday, April 2 at El Mirador. This will be a very special occasion, as I am setting out to try something new for the area (and new for Costa Rica!) – a Game Show night! Some of you in town may know Dean Lichtenwalner and his background in entertaining – specifically Game Show systems and programming. We are planning to demo a system called Face-Off! which promises to be something everyone can enjoy. There is no cover charge for this initial demonstration. In addition, this will be a night filled with music and fun. I can think of no better way to kick off my new endeavor.

For additional Game Show information please call Michael at 8921-1793, or call me directly -- if you can understand my English, haha at 8831-8086 . . . .

I look forward to seeing you all, and I thank you for your consideration.

A LITTLE MESSAGE ABOUT LIFE....

" the good thing about the future it is that comes one day at a time!

Happiness is the legitimate fruitage of love and service.

(Arthur S. Hardy)

## Canadians Brings State of the Art Waste Treatment to Atenas

Marie-Josée Diamond and her partner are representing a Canadian company named **Bionest** in the Atenas area. Bionest's mission is the development and marketing of treatment systems that come the closest to eliminating contaminants discharged into the environment, while remaining sturdy, easy to install, simple to maintain, and very competitive in the market.

With over 14,000 systems installed world-wide, Bionest provides wastewater treatment with effluent values less than 5 mg / l in the BOD and Total Suspended Solids, which compares with Costa Rican regulations of less than 50 mg / l. This ten fold improvement in the quality of treatment allows the colorless and odorless effluent water to be used for irrigation, toilets, washing, and other non drinking purposes.

Installations can be sized to serve individual homes or large complexes such as condominiums, hotels, shopping centers, etc..

The system is based on the use of a biological process in which microorganisms are fixed on a non-biodegradable synthetic substrate, called the "Support Bionest". This massive biomass digester removes contaminants, and an air pump powers fine bubble diffusers that ensure that different sections are alternately aerated and non aerated. The result is a purification technology that is simple, effective and durable.

Bionest system can be installed on existing septic tanks, making them a complete system of water treatment, without the need of a drainage field. Or they can be prefabricated to fit the needs of new construction.

For quotes and information: Marie-Josée Diamond,  
Bionest sales representative, Atenas  
Cell: 8702 9422 or [marijodiamond@hotmail.com](mailto:marijodiamond@hotmail.com)  
Office: 2288 4358 or [eberrocal@bionest.ca](mailto:eberrocal@bionest.ca)



# Our Columnists



*Diane Holman*

March 1, 2010

A cab goes by too fast this morning at 6:15, and I think of the lives of children on Calle Zacatal. I want them to be out of harm's way. Especially, I think about three-year-old adorable Josue—and then suddenly realize that he may never know war. I next think about Diego, my 40-something Spanish teacher, and realize he has never known war. And then I begin to weep for the children of Afghanistan.

To mount a war against terrorism is to use a Glöck to kill a fly. Everyone knows, at some level of their being, that it's absurd; and yet we all participate in the mad drama, "honoring the troops" and spending ever more on "defense". We are caught up in a mass delusion, killing because we can. The tears flow harder now, as I realize I will never in my lifetime know my country to be at peace.

## Dailiness

The view from my front window, were it captured in a painting or photograph, would be deemed hackneyed and sentimental: rolling hills, a house set in a clump of trees, smoke from a fire rising beside it. Nonetheless, it is the view from my front window.

There are pleasures so simple one feels nearly philistine at indulging them. A play of light, the benevolent greeting of a stranger, a committee of three children who come searching for a flower, from whom I request the scissors one holds before bending into the garden to cut the perfect bloom: an arc of simple movement, a moment of sublime self-possession.

Life has always exceeded my expectations.

## The Costa Rican Bird Route and Saving the Great Green Macaws



by Lorna and Darrell Smith

When people around the world visualize Costa Rica, what comes to mind is a beautifully lush tropical paradise with friendly people, beaches, jungles, colorful flowers and monkeys birds. For those who are interested in birds and other animals, one of the beautiful unique creatures at the top of their list are Great Green Macaws.



Costa Rica has two species of Macaws—The **Scarlet Macaws** found in several areas along the Pacific Coast, and the **Great Green**

Macaws which inhabit a very restricted range on the Caribbean slope near the border with Nicaragua. Both species are endangered throughout their ranges, but the remaining

population of Great Green Macaws is most critical.

The greatest factors threatening Macaws today are habitat loss and continued poaching for pets. For the Great Green Macaw the big habitat factor is the bird's dependence on one very important species of large tree. This tree is the wild Almond tree, *Dipteryx Panamensis* – only distantly related to domestic almonds. Survival of these big green Macaws depends very closely on Almendros both for the nesting habitat the tree provides and for food -- for the tough but nutritious nut from this invaluable tree.



Great Green Macaws are big birds and they need large nesting holes for laying eggs and raising young. They enlarge the holes first excavated and used by woodpeckers in these trees. The Macaw's very robust, nut-cracking beaks evolved to take advantage of the trees hard nuts.

Almendros themselves are very large canopy-forming trees, which grow best in the tropical

Caribbean lowlands. The problem is that lumber from Almendros is very highly valued for its beauty and immense strength and hardness which make it exceptional for use in the construction of homes and other buildings. Here in Costa Rica, this tree has been severely over-harvested, leaving limited habitat for the macaws

Almendros continue to be cut and are very slow to grow back. The scarcity of mature almond trees means fewer Great Green Macaws can survive in the wilds of Costa Rica. Recently, the Costa Rican government, at the behest of the Rainforest Biodiversity Group (RBG) among others, declared Almendro to be a protected species off limits to logging. This helps, of course, but it will take years for any replanting projects to make up for the trees already harvested.

The prospect for survival of the Great Green Macaw in Costa Rica is not all bleak. There is a group working tirelessly to ensure that the Great Green Macaw continues to fly the skies. The RBG, a non-profit conservation organization based in the Sarapiquí region of Costa Rica, has done much to promote the cause of Macaw conservation in its main area of remaining habitat in the Country's north centered in the Sarapiquí/San Carlos region.

RBG established the Costa Rican Bird Route in the Sarapiquí/San Carlos area mainly to protect and improve habitat for Great Green Macaws and to provide incentives through increased ecotourism. This helps for private reserve owners such as the operators of Laguna del Lagarto Lodge and Albergue del Socorro out of San Miguel near La Virgen del Sarapiquí. Costa Rica has just established the brand new Maquenque National Park. Maquenque encompasses a large area north of the Sarapiquí River between Braulio Carillo National Park and the Rio San Juan on the Nicaraguan border. This is the largest remaining area of prime Macaw habitat in the Country. Funding, insufficient so far, has been allocated to purchase private landhold-

ings. Money is still short so many of the former destructive activities such as logging and poaching continue. Therefore, the role of the system of private reserves, including the two just mentioned, is essential to protecting the Great Green Macaw.

Laguna del Lagarto Lodge and Albergue del Socorro have been owned and operated by the Schmack and Miranda families for many years. Both have overnight accommodations for ecotourists. Laguna del Lagarto features comfortable hotel rooms and a very nice dining area with a real bird's eye view of the reserves many avian occupants. This is one of the best places anywhere to see 3 of 4 species of toucans, most of Costa Rica's parrots, and both Red and Green Macaws. These are some of the most colorful and charismatic birds on the planet.

El Albergue del Socorro is a much smaller family bed / breakfast / lunch / dinner kind of place. Don Jose's Lodge is at middle elevations in the Caribbean above San Miguel de Sarapiquí and very close to the borders of Braulio Carrío National Park. Don Jose keeps track of elusive and very rare Tapirs (relatives of horses and elephants) and also Costa Rica's largest mammal. Tapirs are very wary and difficult to see, but possible with Don Jose's help. A truly impressive array of middle elevation bird species lives here. Of particular interest are the many colorful tanagers, hummingbirds and much harder-to-find forest birds as well. Family members prepare and serve very ample meals in a large open-air kitchen and dining rancho. Specially featured are homemade cheeses from the family's own dairy cows. Jose and Maria are great people and the rest of the clan when you visit here, and you will soon become fast friends.

It is amazing that families like the Schmacks at Laguna del Lagarto and the Mirandas at Albergue el Socorro have worked so tirelessly to protect and preserve forest habitat on their lands, all to benefit the Great Green Macaws and many other species as well. Several of the

private reserves have active reforestation projects they are undertaking on areas of former pasture. All of this is voluntary, and done for little compensation. Government enrollment in open space/forest preserve brings certain tax advantages and small payments, but hardly enough to offset the sacrifice of forgoing major income from these lands. Across the Costa Rican Bird Route, you will find this story repeated--families and communities voluntarily working to preserve habitat and protect the Great Green Macaw, while forgoing other potentially more profitable uses of their lands because they have a passion for Costa Rican nature.

Through the active promotion of the sites on the Costa Rican Bird Route, the Rainforest Biodiversity Group has been able to increase the number of ecotourists/birders visiting the system of private reserves, including our own birding tours, **Birding on a Budget Costa Rica** based here in Atenas. We recently hosted a 3-day birding trip to the two sites above, which was a great success with 137 species of birds recorded in less than 24 hours of birding. Even though occasional downpours slowed us down a little, the birds were plentiful and cooperative.

The highlight of our visit was seeing a pair a Great Green Macaws and a pair of Scarlet Macaws overhead at one time, proof-positive that the private reserves along the Costa Rican bird route are providing much needed, undisturbed habitat for macaws, for today and for future generations.

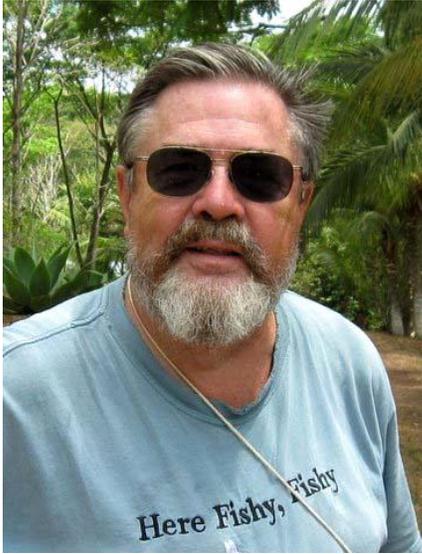
We will soon be returning to the Costa Rican Bird Route in search of more Macaws and other bird species.

For more information on the Costa Rican Bird Route and saving the Great Green Macaw, visit

[www.costaricanbirdroute.com](http://www.costaricanbirdroute.com)  
or for trip information contact us at  
[www.birdingonabudgetcr.com](http://www.birdingonabudgetcr.com)



## The Resplendent Quetzal



by *Martin Lively*

No self respecting birder's life book can be complete without the Resplendent Quetzal; and there is no place where you are more certain to see them than at Albergue Mirador De Quetzales, also known as Finca Eddie Serrano, which is high in the Talamanca Mountains just a couple of hours South of Atenas.



On a recent trip I got this photo of a male when only about 20 minutes on a not too difficult trail from the office/dining area.

To get to the Albergue you take an easy drive on the new road bypassing San Jose and

connecting with the beltway to Cartago, and then continue down the InterAmerican Highway to Km marker 70 where you turn West and go about a kilometer. They have A frame cabins for rent for \$45 per person including dinner, breakfast and a guided tour. During the early morning walk you WILL see a Quetzal and lots of other birds, flowers and vistas present themselves to your camera.

Of course the kind of picture you really want is one like this, taken a week later by world class photographer Dennis Jones (you can see more of his work at [www.dreamcatcherimaging.com](http://www.dreamcatcherimaging.com))



Albergue Mirador de Quetzales, phone/fax  
8381-8456  
<m><

## Best Friends



by Dana Schlieman

I sat on my bed, my legs stretched out in front of me, and tried to make myself believe the line I'd been hearing so much recently: "Change is good."

A sigh escaped my nose and I pulled my knees up to my chin. Change is good. I closed my eyes. Change is good. I clenched my jaw, and closed my eyes harder. Change. Is. *Good*.

I opened my eyes and forced my molars apart. It wasn't working. The knot in my stomach hadn't come untied, nor had the lump in my throat disappeared.

I stood up and paced around my room. I tried a different approach: lying to myself. *Maybe things won't even change so much. Maybe it just feels like everything's going to change, because...* I sighed again. *Because they are.*

I never had been good at lying to myself. My dog Sol stared at me from the top of my bed. Or *our* bed, it sometimes seemed. It was

littered with her coarse hairs. I stared back at her. Her dark, round eyes bore into mine with

an intensity that only canines can muster. I frowned at her.

"Stop it," I snapped. Her ears flattened against her head. "Don't judge me."

She thumped her leg against the bed like she did whenever I talked to her. I sat down next to her on the bed and she inched closer, touching my hand with her long black nails. I scratched her neck and behind her ears. It wasn't her fault, everything that had me in this mood.

I heard a light padding noise outside my door, coming down the hall. It wasn't loud enough to be either of my parents, or my brother. As it got closer I could hear the unmistakable sound of doggy nails against the floor.

The other family dog, Winnie, walked up and stopped at my door, wagging her tail. I smiled as she sank against the floor with a tired-sounding exhale. Our third dog Canela barked just then, from outside in her own house. This was weird. It was like all three of the dogs were trying to alert me in different ways that they were there, steady as ever. Like rocks. Really furry rocks.

The lump in my throat swelled and my eyes filled with water. They *were* there. They were *always* there. Sol was present all the time (albeit sleeping), Winnie was there when she felt needed, like when I first woke up in the morning or when I was sad, and Canela was there, too, even though I didn't see much of her, really. (I'm not quite as outdoorsy as I used to be, and she *is* and outside-dog.)

Most of the members of my family are "dog people". I thought about that. I thought about why that was. Like I said, the dogs were always there.

I remembered the rare times when we'd had to leave one of our dogs at the vet's office. It never felt right when they weren't there.

I thought about the time when I was 5 or 6, when I went to school crying because I hadn't had time to say good-bye to Winnie.

With more tears in my eyes, I thought about Sol's mother, who we'd lost a couple of years ago. My brother hadn't gotten to say good-bye to her, either.

I thought about how Sol always jumped on me while I ate dinner, and sometimes stared at me for no reason I could ever figure out, while I watched television. (What could *the dog* possibly be thinking while I watched TV!?)

I thought about how Canela didn't exactly get as much attention as she could, but she always came home after being let out for a few hours. (Granted, she usually came back just in time for dinner, but still.)

I thought about all the times one of my family members had kicked or tripped over Winnie because she was sitting in the least logical spots, just to be close to us. Man's Best Friend, they said.

I stroked Sol's head again. Her leg thumped against me. "Human's Best Friend", that should be the title. Or "Girl's Best Friend".

Things didn't change for the dogs. I mean, I was sure they'd notice when my brother went off to college in a few months. Winnie especially, might be sort of devastated. But she'd be the same. She'd keep leaning against my closed door in the mornings; she'd keep hopping around when it got to be almost-dinnertime.

Sol would keep...sleeping. But she'd be there, at least. Canela would keep barking at inappropriate hours and racing around her doghouse when she was feeling hyper. None of that would change, not for a long time.

I slid off my bed and sat on the floor. Winnie pushed herself off the floor and came over. I

kept one hand on Sol and the other around Winnie. I leaned over and pressed my chin against her furry head. A tear rolled down my cheek and soaked into her light hair. She pulled out from under my arm and looked at me. She sniffed my face and licked my nose. I laughed softly and the noise of it made Sol's leg thump.

And then, all of a sudden, it didn't even matter what was going to change in my life. Just by being there, just by breathing, the dogs had made everything feel different.

It didn't matter that my brother was leaving soon, and I was going to live alone with my parents. It didn't matter that my whole side of the house, which I shared with my brother, was going to be empty. (Actually, that might turn out to be pretty cool.) I would share it with the dogs, and it wouldn't seem as lonely.

It didn't even matter that I was now officially the only underage member of my immediate family. (Although that did kind of suck.)

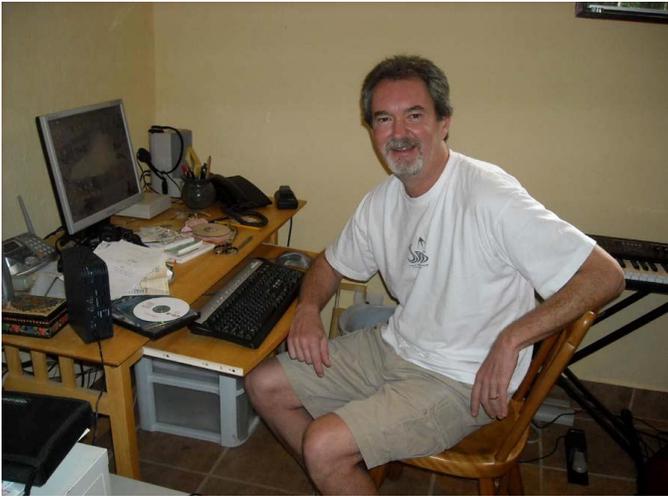
Winnie got tired of sitting and slid onto her stomach. The tags on her collar clinked against the floor. Sol rolled onto her side and closed her eyes. I stared at both of them. I trusted my dogs more than I trusted some people. I'd known them for longer than I'd known most of my friends. How had I ever doubted their ability to cheer me up?

Just then I heard someone take the lid off the dog food barrel. The dogs heard it at the same time. Winnie's head snapped up and she was out the door in the next two seconds. Sol leapt off the bed; her long nails scratched against the floor and kept clicking all the way down the hall.

*Way to kill a moment, gluttons,* I thought, amused.

## TECH TALK

### Email Etiquette



by Gordon Klatt

Yes, there really is etiquette when it comes to email. And I don't mean 'don't use all caps or people will think you're shouting'.

#### **Rule 1**

Use Bcc: when addressing a message that will go to a large group of people who don't necessarily know each other.

When composing an email, we're given three choices where we can add the names of the people we want to receive it, To:, Cc:, and Bcc:. Most people recognize Cc: from the days of typewriters and carbon paper, but a lot of people are not familiar with Bcc:, or Blind carbon copy. Unlike To: and Cc:, when names are added to Bcc: they will not be shown in the received email. One reason for this option is to provide privacy to the people you're sending the email to.

Just as it's not polite to give out a person's telephone number without his or her knowledge, it's not polite to broadcast their email address. For instance, when you send a message to 30 people and use the To: or Cc: fields to address the message, all 30 people see each other's addresses. By using Bcc:, each recipient sees only two, theirs and yours.

If you want to send an email to more than one

person, put your email address in the To: field and all the others you are sending to in the Bcc: field to protect their email address from being published to those they do not know.

#### **Rule 2**

Do not overuse 'Reply to All'. Using this option will send your reply to all the people in the To: and Cc: fields who received the email, not just the person who sent it. Only use 'Reply to All' if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message.

Using the 'Reply to All' button can generate a lot of unnecessary email. For example, if I send a dozen people an email inviting them to a party I should get a dozen replies and that's it. However, if each person hits the "Reply to All" button not only do I get a dozen replies, but so does everyone else for a total of 144 messages!

#### **Rule 3**

Forward with care.

I often receive emails that have been forwarded to me, maybe it's a joke or funny story. But when I look to the content of the email, it's just a bunch of information relating to all the people who had previously forwarded the email. I have to scroll down to find the actual content of the email. So if you decide to forward an email that's already been forwarded, delete the forwarding information, >>>>, other email addresses, headers and commentary from all the other forwarders.

Don't forward emails that say to do so, no matter how noble the cause. Most are hoaxes. Bill Gates is not going to send you \$350 for every email you forward. A man in Nigeria is not going to send you a check. Barack Obama was not born in Kenya. If you question the authenticity of an email and think it might be a hoax, go to [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) to verify it.

## **Rule 4**

Don't send large attachments.

We love taking digital pictures and sharing them with our friends, but sending and receiving pictures in their original size can be a problem. Learn how to resize photos to about 600 pixels in width before attaching them to an email. Or check out one of the many web sites that allow you to store and share your photos. I use Google Web Albums.

## **Tip**

If you've received PowerPoint slide shows as email attachments but haven't been able to view them because you don't have the PowerPoint program, there's a free download from Microsoft that allows you to view these files. It's available here:

<http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=048dc840-14e1-467d-8dca-19d2a8fd7485&displaylang=en>

There are also viewers for Microsoft Word and Excel.

Another option is to use the free OpenOffice.org office suite. The presentation portion of the suite can both display and edit PowerPoint presentations.

If you have a question or suggestion for a future column, send an email to [gklatt@live.com](mailto:gklatt@live.com).



## A Buying Experience



*by Marietta Arce*

I have had the same TDMA cell phone for more than a decade and was adamant about NEVER replacing it. Recent news, however, made me aware that the TDMA technology will not be around forever in Costa Rica and I decided I'd better have a look at the 3G cell phones so that I could make the 'upgrade' while the ICE is still allowing us to keep our same numbers. After a couple of weeks of informing myself about options and comparing prices, I finally made a decision about which cell phone I would purchase.

I try to spend my money here in Atenas. I went to a local store, and was surprised that the price of the phone I wanted was 17,000 colones **more** than in Zapote. I felt the difference in price warranted my making an appeal to the store manager. I was unsuccessful. I went back to Zapote (PLAY) and made my purchase.

Naturally I wanted my cell phone to work immediately. It was too late Friday evening so the salesman suggested I return on Saturday morning. I decided I would visit our local ICE office. I went there early yesterday morning all set to activate my new phone. Imagine my disappointment when I got there and they were closed! I would have to wait until Monday....or would I?

I remembered that the salesman in Zapote mentioned that he thought Casa Blanca in Atenas might be an authorized ICE agent. I felt uncomfortable with the idea of making the request and admitting I had purchased the phone elsewhere but I decided the worst that could happen would be that they would turn me down. I went in optimistically and after just a minute of consultation, Kenneth (his real name) said he would be glad to help me.

The transaction is supposed to take just a few minutes. I sat and watched as he entered my identification numbers time after time and kept getting rejected. He decided to call someone at ICE to see what the rejection was all about. He was determined that I should be able to use my phone NOW!

After what seemed a long time, he was able to speak with a supervisor and the problem was cleared up. He proceeded to make the change and I had a working new phone. I asked him sheepishly if they stocked that model (yes) and how much it cost (1,200 colones **less** than I had paid).

I thanked him for what I believe was superb customer service and he graciously downplayed his part. I informed him that I have two more TDMA lines that I must upgrade in the near future and that I will do it there at Casa Blanca, this time purchasing the phones as well! I left the store feeling an overwhelming urge to share my experience with everyone I know. People like Kenneth remind me that we are making choices every minute of our lives. I would not have thought less of Kenneth if he gave up in the first few unsuccessful attempts, but I think so much more of him because he persevered. His choice made me glad I chose to walk in the store. How about you, are you making the kinds of choices that support the way you want to live your life? I hope so.

## Tough Questions



*by Lois Craft*

Recently, Time Magazine had an article on longevity, ([http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1963392\\_1963365\\_1963378-2,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1963392_1963365_1963378-2,00.html)) stating that, through medical research and healthier lifestyles, there could be over 800,000 people in the U.S. alone, living into their second century by the year 2050, and a projected population of 394.7 million world-wide who will live to be over 80.

At age 62, I don't expect to be among those kicking in 2050, but the article made me think about the future of our planet.

Medical research into longevity issues includes studying the genetics of families with a history of longevity – *healthy* longevity – and trying to find the genes responsible, with the hope of replicating them so that more people can live without the horrors of debilitating illness and dementia.

Imagine, living to 100 or more, feeling great and being mentally sharp! Personally, my limited exposure to people who have lived into their 90s is not something I would aspire to achieve.

My mother-in-law is 94-years-old. She is in a skilled-nursing facility, and spends most of her time asleep. She can no longer hear, so conversation and intellectual stimulation is minimal. But in the future, bio-medical advances may be able to “cure” these age-related maladies.

I remember Willard Scott on the Today Show years ago, naming people who had made it to the venerable old age of 100, and I began thinking of a future Willard Scott, showing photos of people who were turning 125 or 130. And the questions began....

*How many people can afford to live to be 100?*

I just received my very first Social Security check, because I decided that I'd better get it at the first opportunity, or it may not be available in another few years.

The simple fact is that there are not enough young people paying into the system to support us baby-boomers. If even a portion of us live to be 100 or more, there will not be enough money to support us.

So that leaves the very wealthy, who have the means to live comfortably and have quality medical care to ward off the more unpleasant manifestations of aging.... interesting population control, but not so different than today, except more of us will experience the *possibility* of long life, but will not have access to it.

Health insurance for people expected to live to 100 or more? Not likely, so who will pay?

*Can the world's natural resources support such a large aging population?*

To quote Time's article:

The World's Population Age 80 and above

1950 – 14.5 million

2009 – 101.0 million

2050 – 394.7 million

How much food will be required to feed such a population, in addition to the normal population? We already have world-wide water wars, so how can we quench the thirst and irrigate the crops for so many *more* people? Will this lead to more war for resources among countries, states, and.....generations?

*Who will care for the elderly?*

Let's assume that science will be able to keep us healthier, longer. But at some point, our bodies will fail us. Many cultures still revere the elderly, and families happily assume responsibility for their care in their waning years, most notably, Latin and Asian cultures.

We in Costa Rica live in such a culture, but will the time come when the young cannot take care of their own families, as well as one, or even two, older generations? And should we expect them to?

These are not pleasant questions, but I think they are important moral questions that we need to address.

I'm not suggesting that we quash the ideal of a long, quality life or the medical research that will contribute to that. Our generation has benefited from advances that have kept us healthier and happier. Our parents aged far more quickly than our generation, or so it seemed, but there were no miracle drugs to keep them young into old age.

Is the new science a blessing? Sure, we all want to live and feel great until our dying day, but at what cost?

I do not have the answers, but we have much to think about...



*Meet Corporal Win Hilsman, my nephew who was about to graduate from the Citadel Military College in Charleston SC, but decided to postpone his studies in order to go with his buddies to Afghanistan. He arrived there in February and has agreed to write a regular column for Atenas Today describing his thoughts and experiences. If you have questions you would like to ask him, please send them to me at fredmac222@yahoo.com.*

*Here is his first contribution.*



*Win Hilsman*

The one point that I would like to address in my first column is how much the Afghan people truly want American help. So far my experience has been limited to the Kabul region, mainly in and out of Kabul city proper.

One night sitting out in the mountains overlooking the city, which reminded me of looking onto San Jose from Atenas, I got to talking with my interpreter about politics in Afghanistan. As we sat there discussing different historical events and their impact, he looked at me and thanked me for what America is doing.

Now the Afghan culture to me mimics what I experienced at the Citadel in the sense that the people are very loyal to each other. It seems to me that this is a trait that is all too absent in American culture today.

I truly believe that the Afghans see us as invited guests in their country, that we are there to help them. They are very appreciative. Now with any society there are bad apples; even in the states we are not immune to such things.

## Atenas Foundation for Helping Abandoned Animals



by Lorna Smith

I have written a number of columns for Atenas Today, but this might be the hardest one that I have written. The story isn't pretty; but I must tell it. I hope that many of you who have compassionate hearts continue to read on. I challenge those of you who do care, to spend a day as I did with Dora, the Association's President, visiting and photographing some of the animals in the gravest need. For all of you who have helped the Foundation to date, a huge thank you from us and from the animals. For those of you who want to help, please consider making a donation or better yet volunteering your time to help take care of the many, many dogs and cats who are suffering and in need here in our own picturesque town of Atenas!

The first stop we made today was to a family in Barrio Jesus. Here we encountered a woman, her small son, and husband living in a very small house, not much more than a shack. Outside, we found five adorable puppies, one female and four males, suffering from severe malnutrition. The mother claims that they "gave away" the mother dog, but we had to suspect that

something much worse had happened to her. The puppies are mostly skin and bones and extended tummies that we expect are full of parasites. And yet, they still were lively and adorable, begging for attention and love. These puppies are in desperate need of homes, or foster homes. Once these puppies are in a better environment with food, water, treatment for the parasites and love, we are sure they will thrive. Without this care, the outlook is very bleak. Look at these beseeching faces and let us know if you can give at least one of them a temporary home where they can receive nourishment and love.





The next stop we made was to visit a sweet dog, part Rottweiler, living in a cage not much bigger than the dog herself. Her “owner” (read that abuser) says that he keeps the dog in the cage to discourage thieves because he can’t afford a gate! And this is all the life that she has. We are fervently hoping that we can get permission from the authorities to remove this poor dog from this horrific situation. We will need an immediate home or foster care for her. Take a close look at you will see that she barely has room to stand. The cage has no floor, just the bars.



And if these two cases were not enough to cause us enormous distress, the third home we visited was even worse. There, we found an emaciated-beyond-belief beautiful Golden Retriever. At one time, I am sure he had an impeccable pedigree and perhaps a loving home. Did he get lost and end up in these intolerable conditions? Was he stolen? We may never know. We made two visits to the house where he “lives” today. The first

was to find him with no food or water and no sign that he had been fed in the recent past. No one was home, and it appeared they had not been home in some while. The dog was locked in a carport. We forced our way in to give him water immediately, and to check out his condition. He was so skinny he had become weak and also had the worst flea infestation that Dora had ever seen.



So, we made an emergency visit to town for food and flea treatment. Still no sign of the owner upon our return. It broke both our hearts to leave him, but at least for tonight, we knew he had food and water. We vowed to return the following day to “liberate him” with the force of the authorities behind us and find him an immediate foster home,



When returned to health, this dog will be a gorgeous fellow. Please consider helping him out right away. He is so sweet, and will be eternally grateful.



I know that these photos may be hard to see. But please think of the difference you can make in the life of a dog, (or cat)! By taking in one of the animals who so desperately need a home. Or volunteer your time or make a donation. A little goes a long way to help give hope to an desperate dog.

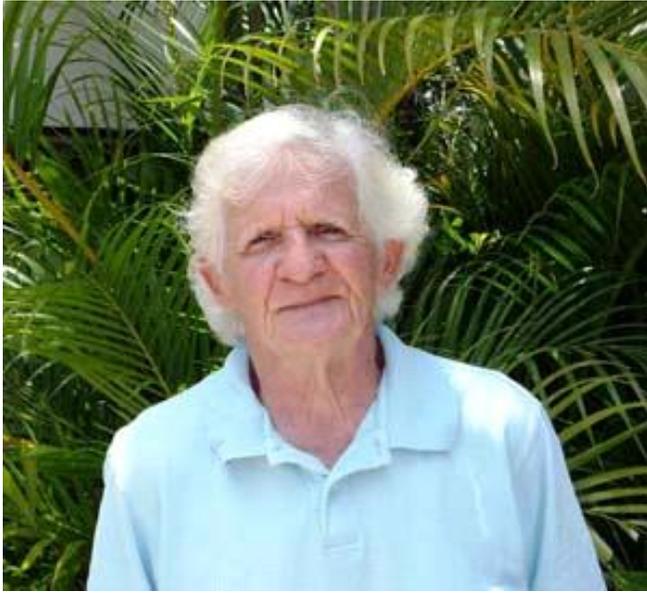
Visit the website below for more information on how you can become involved. Or call Lorna at 2446-8452 or Sylvia at 8868-1386.



## BOOK REVIEW

*Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s.*

by Martha Honey. 1994: University Press of Florida. 640 pp.



by Ron Bell

In more than forty years of public speaking, Noam Chomsky developed an acute sense of audiences. He noted, for example, how his U.S. audiences reacted to his telling how the order for the American genocide in Cambodia was transmitted.. President Nixon told his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, to begin country-wide bombing. Kissinger, the nonpareil homicidal bureaucrat, passed it on to the Defense Department as, “Everything that flies on everything that walks.”

Chomsky goes on to note that his American audiences would take in his words but very shortly afterward it was as though they hadn’t been heard. To hold in the mind the fact that America’s leaders had carried out genocide is simply too much for people who love their country. Their minds reject the awful burden of disappointment, shame, and sadness.

*Hostile Acts* adds to that burden. The hostile acts are the results of the Reagan and Bush administrations’ efforts to undermine Costa Rica’s fragile democracy, remilitarize the country to create a southern front aimed at destroying Nicaragua’s leftist Sandanistas, and undermine Costa Rica’s economy for the sake of U.S. investors.

All of the vile actors were aware that Costa Rica was Central America’s only stable democracy. Yet they strove for years to smash what they so frequently claimed they were fostering throughout the world. This heinous mindset makes clear why the U.S. continues its hostile acts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lying awake, the straight-shooting retired sheriff of Cormac McCarthy’s *No Country for Old Men* muses: “There is fortunes being accumulated out there that they don’t nobody know about. What do we think is going to come of that money? Money can buy whole countries. It done has.”

In the Reagan-Bush era the buying was hot and heavy in Costa Rica. The well-heeled purchasers—the CIA, State Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development--had no trouble finding willing sellers. Fortunately, with the end of the war in Nicaragua (which the U.S. was trying to prolong), and thus the end of the need for a southern front in Costa Rica, the buyers lost interest. Also the leading buyers were banished.

The efforts to dismantle the “social and economic achievements of the ‘Central American exception’ are instructive and saddening,” Chomsky wrote. To we who have chosen to live here it is also worrisome to realize the ease with which so many Costa Ricans were corrupted. As we stand now in the period of super-corruption by Mexican and Colombian drug lords, can we realistically expect today’s Tico leaders to do any better than those who betrayed their country in the eighties?

Richard McCall, chief aide to Senator John Kerry in the late 1980s, “stressed that Costa Rica has been able to maintain democracy because its public institutions have created economic and social stability.” McCall argued further that the “Reagan and Bush administration officials seemed to regard democracy ‘as just holding elections’ and ‘gave no thought to the long term implications of what they were advocating down there [in Costa Rica].”

The anticommunist myopia of the American operatives, in the words of one Costa Rican politician, was to push his country toward becoming “just another right-wing, politically pliant, economically dependent banana republic.” Beyond doubt there were many in Washington and the boardrooms of the U.S. who would have welcomed just such a circumstance.

“Their eyes focused on distant goals,” Honey writes, “the ideologues and implementers of [the New Right’s] policies acted with a proselytizing zeal and arrogance. They had little concern or respect for the national character, history, and traditions of Third World countries such as Costa Rica.”

Not all Ticos were fooled by the U.S.’s hypocritical posturing. “By the mid-1980s, many Costa Ricans were convinced that the Reagan administration was strong-arming their country into re-creating an army; but by the end of the decade this had not happened. Washington was checked in part because the perceived threat from Nicaraguan and internal leftists was too minimal to sway Costa Ricans from their deeply held antimilitaristic traditions,” Honey notes.

While standing firm for antimilitarism, Ticos were being betrayed by large segments of their news media. “Covertly ... the CIA and contras built the network of press collaborators by putting certain Costa Rican journalists on their payroll. ... One editor said he personally knew at least eight journalists, including three ‘top journalists,’ receiving monthly CIA stipends of about \$300 to \$500.” Other journalists told Honey of more newsmen who were selling out their nation’s fragile democracy.

But some reporters refused to sell out. “A number of local journalists who refused to toe the line were fired, forced to resign or marginalized.” The manufacture of consent to militarization and economic dominance by the media owners was obvious to anyone familiar with press manipulation. The doctored reportage played upon the traditional anticommunism of ordinary Costa Ricans with reports claiming Sandanista attacks on their homeland.

What a bitter pill for Americans to swallow, all the hypocritical despotism of our representatives, their betrayals under the guise of democracy and international friendship. Still, Costa Ricans have gotten off easier than most other Central Americans: they have never suffered the terrorism of U.S. marine invaders.

No doubt, however, all the fine reportage of *Hostile Acts* has gone in one ear and out the other of those who don’t want to recognize that the unparalleled prosperity Americans enjoy has a hideous foundation. The moral rot that fertilizes empires is evident on every page of this courageous and highly informative exercise in truth-telling in the face of greed for power and ever-expanding control.

Anyone interested in Costa Rica’s relations with what was fast becoming the world’s only superpower would find *Hostile Acts* a superb but saddening account, sad because of the unwillingness to recognize the hostile acts upon which our affluence rests.

*Ron Bell is a psychological counselor based in Rio Grande, Atenas.*

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office consultations  
telephone consultations  
referrals to specialists



EMT Jorge Morera Sanchez

check ups  
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### Contact Info

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Additional pictures:

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*Ron Bell @ 2446-1257 (Rio Grande, Atenas)*

**[greciaron@gmail.com](mailto:greciaron@gmail.com)**

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