

# International Reforestation Project Takes Root

By Sam Jacoby

Nica Times Staff

SAN JUAN DE ORIENTE – Arbor Day doesn't come only once a year for New York native Michael Judd.

Judd spearheads the Urban Roots Initiative, an organization that plants trees and provides ecological and nutritional education in urban communities in Nicaragua and the United States.

In the lush tropics of Nicaragua, it may not be immediately apparent that there is a lack of urban greenery. In fact, in most cities here, the lack of road and building infrastructure is more noticeable than the lack of foliage.

Yet around the artisan town of San Juan del Oriente, 15 kilometers south of Masaya, some of the finest trees are disappearing.

The town's industrious artisans, who turn out thousands of beautiful ceramic pieces each year, find fuel for their kilns on nearby hillsides. As the firewood supply is depleted, artisans are forced to go farther afield, clear-cutting trees and destabilizing the hillsides of the surrounding area.

Judd ultimately hopes to end that deforestation by planting a permanent sustainable woodlot for the artisans. That way, ceramists won't have to skulk into the nearby reserve of Laguna de Apoyo to look for fuel.

While that ambitious goal is still in the pipeline, Judd is focusing on smaller-scale projects.

The Urban Roots Initiative, through a larger organization, Visión Mundial, last week donated a thousand trees to the nearby community of Pecoya and planted another



Photo courtesy of Michael Judd

*The Gift that Keeps on Growing: Michael Judd of 'Urban Roots' is helping to reforest the artisan towns, known as the 'Pueblos Blancos,' one tree at a time.*

300 in the popular artisan and nursery town of Catarina. There are other plantings planned.

In San Juan del Oriente, a tiny brigade of machete-toting students is cutting down shrubbery in a schoolyard to prepare the steep slope for mango and avocado trees.

The planting itself, a group project, focuses on education by preaching environmental sustainability and good nutritional practices. Judd hopes that the harvests from the mini-

orchards will make their way into the bean and rice lunches that the schools dole out daily.

The Urban Roots Initiative plantings take place on publicly accessible land, and the group works closely with local governments to coordinate the projects.

Judd stresses the amount of cooperation that goes into each planting, noting that a given project might involve three or four different layers of local government assistance.

Luckily, there are other conservation groups operating in the Laguna de Apoyo area as well.

A Spanish-funded group, Amictlan, works closely with the Urban Roots Initiative to pinpoint problem areas and to help navigate the thicket of municipal politics.

The organization is still new, but Judd hopes his efforts, however small, will foster the seeds of sustainable agriculture and agricultural education in the area. ■

## CALENDAR

\*First time in Calendar. Listings are in chronological order. E-mail Calendar submissions to [esabo@ticotimes.net](mailto:esabo@ticotimes.net) by 11 a.m. Monday, five days prior to date of publication.

### Managua

**\*Concert:** Instrumental band Staccato plays classic rock and jazz, Fresh Hill Bar, next to Military Hospital, July 28, 8 p.m., \$3 cover.

**\*Reggaeton Concert:** Popular Puerto Rican reggaeton group Calle 13 and Nicaraguan band Zona 21 rock the reggaeton, National Baseball Stadium 'Denis Martínez,' July 31, 8 p.m., ticket prices \$11, \$16, \$27.

### León

**Night of Romance:** Friday nights at vegetarian restaurant CociArte, live acoustic music and candlelit dinner, 6 p.m., north of Iglesia El Laborio. Also, CociArte has 'Jazzy Chess Sundays,' live jazz and organic coffee with open chess matches.

### Niquinohomo

**\*Patron Saint Festival:** The birthplace of Gen. Augusto Sandino is celebrating its patron saint festival with cultural events July 26-28. Niquinohomo is one of the "Pueblos Blancos" outside of Masaya.

### Granada

**Charity Biker Tour:** "First Annual Jimmy Three Fingers Wanted Dead or Alive Charity Motorcycle Tour," prizes, models, July 28, X-Tasy Bar, 552-8115.

**Kids' Camp:** Entertain your kids at Camp Granada, a 2-week program of volunteering, crafts and play activity. Weekday mornings, for approximately 5 hours. For more information, contact: Sharon Danley at 814-4791, [sldanley@yahoo.com](mailto:sldanley@yahoo.com), or Tavid Dobson, 809-6955, [tavid@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:tavid@hotmail.co.uk).

**Live Music:** Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. Hotel Casa San Francisco, next to Convento, 552-8235.

### Tola

**\*Surf Tournament:** The final leg of the National Surf Circuit will be held July 28-29 at Popoyo Beach, home to the country's most famous surf break, north of San Juan del Sur.

### Jinotega

**\*Vernacular Music Fair:** Day-long music



Photo courtesy of Dreamworks LLC / Paramount Pictures

**More than Meets the Eye:** Optimus Prime and his Transformer friends are in Managua theaters this week. Call theaters for show times.

festival in the northern community of El Coyolito, in the municipality of La Concordia, Jinotega. Polka music and more, July 29.

### Chontales

**\*Campesino Fair:** Local farmers gather for annual fair, Central Park Juigalpa, July 28-29.

### Managua Theaters

\*Alhambra Bello Horizonte: 244-1889.

\*Cinemark Metrocentro: 271-9037.

\*Cinemas Galería: 276-5065.

\*Cinemas Plaza Inter: 222-3828.