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Dear Family & Friends,

Honoring & serving are mutual experiences with our Nicaraguan ohana. We give thanks for the privilege of being together each year!

Mil gracias to our donors for allowing us to represent your loving kindness. We remember you when we celebrate all the happenings, including the start of the construction of the school in La Carreta.

Together let us look for ways to survive the drought and severe heat.

With peace & abundant blessings, to all.

Charlotte & Daniel

“Let the Children Sing!”

“Let the Children sing!
May they raise their voices,
So that the world may hear; May
their voices unite & reach the sun,
To make the world hear; . . .
for in them there is truth.”

(Jose Luis Perales)

There was a lot of joyful noise at Day Camp this year! Every one of the 50 children (and young adults) with their caregivers learned this song (and others) accompanied by sweet guitars of the Martinez Family, the Rencos Band, and the Los Laureles Trio, in between their water play/therapy! Even with a drought occurring, Sergio Escorcia, owner of the Finca San Ignacio, made sure there was enough water in the pool—to the delight of the campers and the volunteers. While temperatures in Villanueva ranged in the high 90’s (F) or higher, the trees and the pool kept the environment at the Finca at least 10-15 degrees cooler.

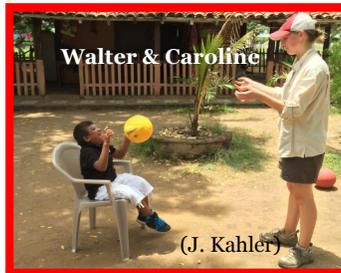


(Photo: J. Kahler)

As years pass, parents tell their friends or neighbors, who also have children with special needs, about

their experience. Their advocacy added another 10 children to our roster this year; and they promise others for next year!

We were also blessed with more volunteers than ever, specifically for the camp: 6 from Hawaii, 2 teens from Seattle, plus 7 from Villanueva, in addition to the musicians and 8-member wind and percussion band. It amazes us how the talented camp chef, Juanita Pineda, always has more than enough to



(J. Kahler)

feed the crowd, whether 42 show up, or 64! No one went home hungry!

In addition to the sports and creative arts activities, the camp

affords time for parents to support one another, deepen their friendships and learn new ways to improve health. For example, a simple, available resource to supplement their meager diets of beans, rice, tortillas, and cuajada, is with Marango greens & beans. Most people know the plant, but only now are learning its nutritional value.

A significant change in this year’s experience was having the Ministry of Education allow Prof. Yessenia Hernandez to work along with us during the entire 2 weeks. (She was recently named Coordinator/Education Specialist for all the children with special needs in the Municipal schools.) She is energetic, compassionate, and committed to the children and their parents. Alleluia!

A Giant Leap into Inclusive Education for Villanueva

Although Nicaragua signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities soon after it was adopted in 2006, implementation has been a slow process, especially in rural communities like those of Villanueva. Having a dedicated teacher already has had positive effects on a group of deaf students we know from our Day Camp. The 8 teens and their parents met with Yessenia at camp to plan for advanced sign language classes, which will be taught by Yessenia and Juan Ramon, a sign language resource person. Classes had already started at Nueva Jerusalem Primary/Secondary School and the 4 deaf students who study there, along with the teachers of most grades. Now, their parents are included once a month, starting August 6th.

Parents are welcomed oftener, if they wish. Four other students (and parents) will travel from Las Pilas, Rincon de Garcia, and Colonia XX to take advantage of this learning opportunity. **(9/10 update: There are 8 more deaf students from other villages who are attending the weekly classes!)**

Significance of inclusion, examples:

- 1) For Ivania (20 yrs. old, from Las Pilas), it means she can begin her secondary education, even if she has to sacrifice time and transportation expenses to get to Nueva Jerusalem.
- 2) For Exmin, who dropped out of Fifth Grade in his village because the teacher and he were not able to communicate, it is a new life. His home is 9 miles from Nueva Jerusalem. But with his parents' supportive care & a bike which was donated by a friend in Hawaii, he attends classes daily. His teacher is tireless in assuring that he and Exmin understand each other in sign language. Great hope for a young man who is intelligent & loves new learning!
- 3) For Israelito, who loves music & is blind, it is a similar story. He started primary school last year, but became frustrated because he could not read and write like his classmates.



(photo: J. Kahler)

Prof. Yessenia, (center front); Juan Ramon, (tallest, back row); 7 deaf students and 2 family members

Yessenia's patient teaching and a whole set of resource material, including Braille books, teaching aides prepared by Liz Ohta of Maui, & a Braille writer and cane, donated by other friends, have ignited new hope in this charming 10-yr-old boy. His immediate challenge is to develop the small muscles of his hands so he can distinguish the Braille signs, & write with the Braille writer. He has the "stick-to-it-ivity" to do it!



(Photo J. Powley)

Yessenia & Israelito at El Platanal School

Volunteer's Corner (by Marilyn Wright, MD)

This was my first experience with a Somos Ohana Nicaragua mission; I was enthusiastic & ready to explore a new system of health care. I had worked with Hispanic communities in CA as a provider of Mental Health for 25 years, but nothing prepared me for the experience in Nicaragua. Clearly, previous Somos Ohana volunteers have paved the way for the level of trust in Villanueva that I had not experienced elsewhere; I was welcomed almost immediately. Within hours of my first day in the community outreach hospital, I was seeing patients with common complaints: PTSD, Generalized Anxiety, Major Depression, Chronic Pain, & Primary Caregiver Burnout.



With a limited formulary for medications, the treatment plan quickly boiled down to supportive therapy, mindfulness, education, & faith. In a community where resources are scarce, I was honored to be received as a clinician who [I felt] had so little to offer. In retrospect, our [US] "advanced medical system" has lost sight of the value of a listening ear, a gentle touch, and even a hug.

Mental healthcare needs in Villanueva are vast, and continuity of care is almost non-existent. What is available is an abundance of opportunity, given a network of medical residents, community outreach workers, & a local Peace Corps volunteer who refers to weekly classes & support groups.

When I arrived in Nicaragua, I saw the fractured infrastructure, the garbage, and farm animals in the streets; but I left seeing the colors, the trees, butterflies, and smiles/hugs. I lived within a welcoming family & a strong community working together for a better future. I left feeling welcomed by the land, the community, and the love of God. "Vaya con Dios!"

La Carreta Secondary School: Becoming a Reality!



It took 3 years of meetings, letters, phone calls, & fundraising on our part; and similar efforts of the Delegate of the Ministry of Education (MinEd) & Mayor Juan Gomez for weekly trips to Managua to various federal offices to clear the land documents from the original owner, through the Municipality of Villanueva, and into the domain of MinEd. And it's done! On July 28, we celebrated the "breaking of ground" for the new school! With short notice, 30+ representatives of the communities involved showed up: including the Mayor, Delegate Maria Dolores Espinosa of MinEd, Director Carlos Meza, some parents, future students of the school & 3 representatives of Somos

Ohana Nicaragua. After the blessing, the Mayor, Delegate, & Director spoke of their visions for the school & partnership with all the donors of Somos Ohana. We ended the event singing "Que Canten Los Ninos" (Let the Children Sing!) by Jose Luis Perales. Here are some of the lines we hope express the potential of this *inclusive* school for the teachers, children, & families who bring it to life:

***"I sing so that they will let me live . . .
I sing so that the garden will be green;
And I so that the sun will not be wiped out.*** ***"I sing so that my voice will be heard;
And I in order to see if I make you think;
I sing because I want a world that is happy. . ."***

News Items in Brief

1) Changing the Website: We are deeply grateful to the Enoki family of Seattle who voluntarily designed & managed the S.O.N. website for the past 9+ years, with great success. With new innovations, the website will be developed by other generous volunteers. The expected opening date is in late October. Check us out under the same domain name: www.somosohananicaragua.org.

2) Other topics to be addressed when the new site opens: a) Drought Mitigation through Preventive Education; b) Marango to Replace Micro-Nutrients; c) Bikes & School Supplies; and d) Artisanal gold mining in Northwestern Nicaragua.

Somos Ohana Nicaragua

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Visit us on FB: [Somosohana Nicaragua](#)

Somos Ohana Nicaragua is an all volunteer organization called to cooperate with groups or individuals seeking to improve their lives. *If you would like to become involved as a volunteer, please write us at Flav1@hawaiiantel.net, or call 808-572-9898.*

Help us Build the High School in La Carreta:

Join us for Lunch @ Tante's Restaurant: \$20

October 17, 2015



**Tante's Restaurant in Kahului
100 Ka'ahumanu Ave.
October 17th, 11:30 AM-2:00 PM
Silent Auction & Nic. Crafts
Part of the profit goes to Somos
Ohana Nicaragua for the school.**



Your donation helps ~150 students learn skills & values that will prepare them to build better futures. Gracias!

For \$20 luncheon tickets, call 572-9898