



IGNITING A SPARK OF HOPE

Inside this issue:

- Learn to Swim: Save a Life 2
- Potable Water for Rincon de Garcia 2
- Supporting Education: More bikes & Books 3
- In Search of the Perfect Family & Cow 3
- Opportunity to help 4

Dear Family/Friends,

Our 5 weeks in Nicaragua were invigorating and blessed. Each year, we carry your loving kindness in many forms to our brothers/sisters in Nicaragua. They, in turn, teach us about hope, about living simply, about caring for family and the environment, about forgiveness, courage, sharing, and gratitude for life. These are the gifts we bring back to you, our valued partners. We are interdependent.

With loving gratitude,
Charlotte & Daniel



What if you couldn't walk by yourself, if you sat in a wheelchair all day, every day for 5 years, because you suffered a debilitating stroke in your early adulthood? What if you lived at the end of a long, mud and rock road where even horses have trouble navigating? What if your health care system had no one to teach you how you might rehabilitate yourself? What if you never had the opportunity to go to school, even before your accident?

Then, one day in 2010, a man (Jim Kahler) from a distant country comes to visit you. Hearing your story, he shows you and your family a few simple exercises to strengthen your muscles, suggesting that doing these exercises might help you to walk again, independently. You might be able to care for your physical, personal needs on your own. You may be able to be responsible for feeding the chickens, and other chores. If you put your efforts into doing the exercises, with your family's help, what would you have to lose? Manuel Garcia Narbai made the choice for a better life! When Jim Kahler arrived at Ma-

nuel's home this year, the man was walking independently! The wh/ch is out of sight, and Manuel is feeling more alive! When asked to explain the awesome change, every family member said: "Thanks to God"! Amen!

Jim Kahler's Story:

I am a volunteer and Board member of Somos Ohana Nicaragua. I pay my own travel and room and board to live for a month in Villanueva, a small town in Northwestern Nicaragua. I have been volunteering for 5 years as a physical therapist for children and adults in Villanueva and surrounding villages. Every interaction takes place in people's homes, in Spanish; even my evaluations and notes are written in Spanish to leave with the medical teams responsible for those villages. This is still a challenge, but every year it becomes a bit easier; the people are very open, forgiving, and friendly!

You might ask, 'Why do I go back?' Because the people need and deserve a physical therapist, and because the people are so kind and beautiful in spirit. Because the people do their home program, and they get better! As a physical therapist in the United States, I am used to a compliance rate of about 10% of people who continue their exercises when they are not with their physical therapist. In Nicaragua, the compliance rate is about 90%. I am almost always able to instruct several interested family members or friends in the exercises; and the patients have the support and assistance they need to continue when I am gone. The improvement I see year after year is enough to keep me returning. Someday, we hope to have a local person trained to take my place."

LEARN TO SWIM: SAVE A LIFE !

Marie White, a first year volunteer from Faith Family Fellowship on Maui, is an energetic, certified swim instructor with a great sense of humor who has coached Special Olympics teams. She was a “natural” to teach the Los Pipitos children and young adults safety while having fun in the water.

We planned to use the Villanueva River that runs the length of the town. However, with daily rains, the river was too deep, swift, and murky. Solution? Sergio Escorcia, the owner of a finca outside of town with a pool, graciously loaned it to us for 6 consecutive days! 20 children with their parents each had at least one morning of instruction and quickly learned to let go of their fears. New friendships were formed, some learned to swim, and all had an unforgettable fun time!

Marie is planning a 2-week camp for next year at the finca; and Sergio has approved the use of the pool already!



POTABLE WATER FOR RINCON DE GARCIA

This year, we partnered with Amigos for Christ (a large non-profit agency from Georgia) to build the solar-powered water system in Rincon de Garcia. It made good sense because while we could build only a small system which would serve the secondary school and approximately 70 nearby families, they have the financing, technology, staff, and volunteers to add to the community’s input. The newly

designed system will serve the secondary school and 97 families not only with potable water, but also improved toilets and showers for each family. While we were in Nicaragua, we participated in 3 community meetings and 2 more with the engineers, in the first and second stages of development: choosing the “Comites de Agua Potable”, choosing a site, and forming the work crews. The Comites de Agua Potable are responsible for forming the neighborhood work crews for every stage of development, and learning the standards for maintaining the systems, including collecting the monthly fees, after the system is in place. The groups we met were energetic, capable adults with lots of enthusiasm for the project! (See photo.) We all hoped to see the water flowing by the time we left in August, but the first site was rejected because the ground water had been contaminated by gold mines that functioned early in the previous century. A new site was chosen, and drilling began the week after we left Nicaragua. More photos next year!



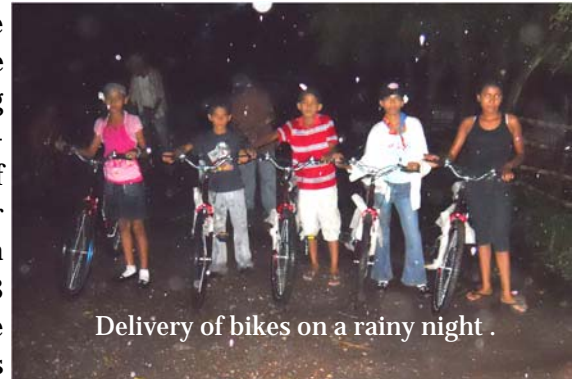
Comitè de Agua Potable

Next year we will have photos!

Supporting Education: More Bikes & Books!

Thanks to our donors, we were prepared to buy 10 bikes for the youngsters coming from Mayocunda, a village 15 km. from the regional secondary school in Rincon de Garcia. But on arrival, we found that there were 8 more students who were walking (or hitching rides on trucks on a lucky day!) from villages of nearly equal distance, but from other directions. Besides, the cost of bikes increased from \$80 last year to \$91 this year, even after haggling with the shopkeepers! Fortunately, we had a few extra \$ for “unforeseen expenses” and could satisfy the dream of all 18 students. It couldn’t have happened without you! The increased student attendance from these distant communities signifies a new appreciation for the value of secondary education.

Prior to the present, parents were satisfied if their children could read, write, and do basic math, but now they want their children to learn more, to be prepared for a world in which they need more knowledge and skills to make a living and realize their potential. Another component of the increase in student matriculation is that some of these communities only recently have received adequate primary schools from the government. The youngsters now entering secondary school are the “first fruits” of those schools. These achievements are cause for celebration!



Delivery of bikes on a rainy night.

THANKS TO TEACHERS OF KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS (Maui) & GEORGE MANTHALA, JR. SCHOOL (Brockton, MA) for their generous donations of 102 books, composition books, pencils, pens, dry



Prof Fatima, 2nd/3rd Grade

Mayocunda School

erase markers, colored pens, and crayons for 4 pre-schools, 3 primary schools, and 1 secondary school! When you see the faces of children (and teachers) light up with gifts we sometimes take for granted, know that your time, sacrifices, and efforts to raise these funds were definitely worthwhile! You greatly enhanced the concept of improving the quality of education for our “Ohana” in Nicaragua. (Because of baggage restrictions, some materials were bought in Hawaii, and about half were purchased in Nicaragua, supporting their economy.)

IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT FAMILY & COW

When friends asked us to buy a cow for a needy family, we thought, “How do we choose from among the many needy families we know?” The family: had to have children who would benefit from improved nutrition; own enough land for pasture; have knowledge of how to raise a healthy cow and calf. Requisites for the cow were: young, healthy, tame, first time to give birth to a calf, good milk producer, and able to sustain the limited diet of the dry months. The cow became a cooperative project!

After choosing the family, they were interviewed by the Brigadistas, a volunteer group of 2 nurses and 2 health educators, who explained the requirements for receiving the cow: that they were willing to give the first calf to the oldest daughter who was due to give birth to her third child; & during the months of milk production (June-December), they would give a small monthly donation of 50 cordobas (about \$2) to help feed the rural women who give birth at the Casa Materna in Villanueva.



Victor Escalante & Family

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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.*

Eat Pizza: 10/04/11! Help Build a Pre-school!

Thirty-one pre-school children of La Esperanza are learning in the living room of their teacher, Estela Mendez Andrade. This is a temporary arrangement because their original classroom with a dirt floor and zinc roof was destroyed by strong winds some years ago. The community has asked for help for 3 years. We promised to raise the funds; they will provide the manual labor. **We trust you will help us make their dream a reality in 2012.**

La Esperanza has 59 homes, and 291 inhabitants, including the children. They have 2 advantages: 1) they have experience working together to install a solar-powered water system (financed by a non-profit group from Canada), and to build a rock road into their community; 2) new water spigots save many hours of fetching water to mix cement.

**Flatbread Company in Paia
89 Hana Highway
October 4th 5:00-10:00 PM
Silent Auction & Live Music
Part of the profit of each pizza
goes to Somos Ohana Nicaragua
for schools**



POST SCRIPT:

Follow up: Mayocunda's Primary School repairs were successfully completed in 2010, as was the construction of Rancho Pando's Pre-school. Attendance is increasing, and both buildings serve the communities for multiple functions. .