

SOMOS OHANA NICARAGUA

CHRISTMAS LETTER 2018

PEACE~ LOVE~ JOY~ FAMILY~ FORGIVENESS~ GRATITUDE

Dear Ohana & Friends,

The season's commercialization may be distracting, but we believe that the "only true joy on earth is to...enter by love into union with the [Christ] Life Who dwells and sings within the essence of every creature and in the core of [all] our souls." (Thomas Merton)

Our visit to Nicaragua this year (Oct. 27 – Nov. 19) was different because of the lingering sense of unease remaining after the political/social unrest that occurred between April – August. However, our Ohana is resilient; and they count on their Faith, Families, and Communities to continue working towards their life goals in solidarity and justice. ***Mil gracias for your shared confidence and generosity in helping our brothers and sisters improve their lives, one day at a time.***

Programs Supporting Health:



Because of the unusual timing of our visit, none of our regular volunteers from Hawaii and Villanueva were able to assist with a Day Camp this year. Instead, we tried to visit as many of the families as possible who have children with special needs.

We have attached photos of: 1) The Centeno/Ayala Family, (at left) has been challenged with health issues for many years: their young adult son has Down Syndrome; their grandson was diagnosed with microcephaly at birth; & the father of the family, Alcides, suffered a stroke in recent months. Their compassionate care, patience, & daily commitment in faith is beautiful to witness. The local Health Clinic had not been able to procure a wheelchair for their father who is unable to

walk or talk. That was their only request of us. We found one, through the kindness of another family who exchanged this adult-sized wheelchair for a smaller stroller that worked perfectly for their young daughter with cerebral palsy. We all felt blessed that day!

2) ***"We shall overcome!"*** Two women who are recovering from chemotherapy found new energy by responding to a need for daily bread in the community of El Obraje, a village about 1½ hours away by bus from Villanueva. The former baker left the village, opening an opportunity for the women. Victoria and Ana formed a cooperative of 6 women to start a new bakery. They have the skills to build the artisan oven, and some already are skilled in bread baking. They asked our organization to help them purchase the materials for the oven and enough raw ingredients for the first batch of bread. They had carefully prepared their budget which included all the labor and basic ingredients that they would provide. How could we refuse?! For a modest investment, the ***"Fe y Esperanza Bakery"*** is a go!



Victoria Cruz & Grandson

Programs: Supporting Education

1) The students who are hearing impaired attend classes at the secondary school in Nueva Jerusalen.



They are standing with their Professor of Sign Language (Josepha Vallejo) behind the computers they received from the Bertschi School (in Seattle) to improve their IT skills. They were introduced to basic computer skills last year during their days at Day Camp, but none of them have personal computers at home. Two of the students are scheduled to graduate in December; they plan to seek jobs with local businesses. They were enthusiastic about being able to include computer skills on their resumes! Gracias to Bertschi and the persistent encouragement of the teachers in Nueva Jerusalen!

2) The Saga of Water for the Instituto Augusto C. Sandino in La Carreta:

In January, it will be 2 years since we contracted with Amigos for Christ for a water system to serve the needs of the Instituto Augusto C. Sandino. Since then, the school's personnel, the students, and their parents have "made do" with rain water (when available, during the rainy season: May through late November), and water from artesian wells shared by their generous neighbors. Most of the delays were due to repairs that the new (used) drill needed to be done in the US, then more delays shipping the drill from the US to Nicaragua. Earlier this year, the water team finally reached La Carreta. They persisted through weeks of tough drilling, mostly through blue rock, and were rewarded with clean, potable water!

Because of their commitments to several communities, the water team finally arrived in November to install the electric pump, make the connections with pipes that were in place since construction of the first 2 pavilions which opened in 2016. They kindly added hand-washing stations outside several classrooms to encourage conscientious hygiene. We expected the final connections to happen on November 17th, before we returned to Hawaii. A "*Celebration of Water*" was planned; besides the students, school personnel, and parents, the community and other guests were invited. It was a joyous celebration, and all shared in the large cakes and special "marango" (moringa) tea.

Alas, we didn't get to see the big gush of water we expected; there is an electrical problem, related to the power of the nearest transformer. Keep posted for the next, hopefully successful, announcement!

Meanwhile, we have signed the contract with Engineer Marvin Abad Valle to start the construction of the third wing of the school by January, 2019. The La Carreta community is looking forward to having a teachers' room, a library, and a kitchen/cafeteria! **Mil gracias** for "hanging in there" with our Ohana in Nicaragua! We could not do this without the personal caring and financial support of **All** our donors.

Feliz Navidad, and abundant blessings be yours throughout 2019,
Charlotte & Dan, and all members of the Board of Directors



Future Leaders of Nicaragua



Wood Stove for La Carreta



Celebrating water connections



Connecting pump to well



A work of art produced by teachers & parents' cooperation from fallen tree. (El Platanal School)