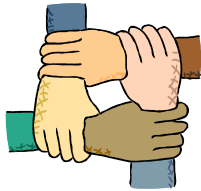


The Plan Grande Dos Post January 2012

News from the Nicaragua Community Partnership of the Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery



We are communities of people from St. Louis and Plan Grande 2 from different cultures, sharing the same vision of partnership. We cultivate understanding and acceptance of our similarities and differences, working for justice, sharing joy, hope and the message of the Gospel with our partnership. We do this following Christ's example to love and care for one another. *(Mission Statement, created 22 May 2004)*



Many Hands Make Light the Work! 2012 Summer Work Delegation

Our 13th annual summer delegation to Plan Grande 2 is scheduled for July 21-29, 2012! Based on your requests and interests, in conversation during our 2011 trip we agreed that in 2012 we would initiate a "work project" based on needs identified by the community. After members of the PG2 leadership committee surveyed residents of PG2 and discussed the idea with both CEPAD and with us, the decision was made to construct cisterns—known to our friends as *pilas*. These cement enclosures, along with improved guttering systems on roofs, will allow for more efficient rain collection and, most importantly, easier access to water. The community has identified a need for 46 pilas! How many we can actually build will depend on the funds we raise--\$110 each--and the number of willing hands we bring with us. **Informational Meeting at WGPC on Saturday, February 25th from 9-10:30am – RSVP to pg2nicaragua@gmail.com.**



Portrait of a Scholar

Nolvia Lissette Lanza Briones graduated from secondary school in 2008. Following commencement, with the support and encouragement of the leadership in Plan Grande Dos, Nolvia was accepted into an intensive teacher training program sponsored by the Nicaraguan government. She currently teaches primary grades at the local school and is working toward becoming a certified teacher by participating in additional training on weekends. Nolvia is the mother of handsome 2-year-old Anthony, and represents one of many successes in Plan Grande 2 and with our NCP scholarship program.



Gracias a todos!



The Nicaragua Community Partnership Committees, both here and in Plan Grande Dos, offer our sincere thanks to those individuals and congregations whose contributions not only help to continue the success of our Secondary School Scholarship Program, but whose donations also made possible the October visit we enjoyed with our Nicaraguan friends here in St. Louis. Fully 100% of contributions made to the the NCP support our work; no administrative fees are involved. Donations can be made by sending your check to *Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy*, 2236 Tower Grove Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110-3596, with NCP in the memo.

Update from CEPAD: Rains of 2011

Rains that began in September caused widespread disaster, damaging the fragile economy of Nicaragua. There were at least 1,600 homes destroyed and 249 kilometers of roads damaged, affecting more than 134,000 people. The government says it will take about \$3.2 million to respond to this emergency in its first stage. Our friends in Plan Grande Dos report that while some area roads were destroyed, much has been repaired, and that their bean crop did not suffer as much as that of others living in low-lying areas.



Speakers Available!!

Interested in pulpit supply, or otherwise hearing about this partnership mission, our scholarship students, or what it's like to be part of a summer delegation to Plan Grande 2? We have passionate people who will gladly share their experiences with your congregation during worship, fellowship or Sunday School! Contact the Steering Committee at pg2nicaragua@gmail.com.

Report from the 2011 Summer Delegation

“Tiny, but Mighty” was the theme for the summer delegation to Plan Grande #2 in July, 2011! Barbara Willock, Andy Loth, Harriet Hall and John Castagno represented the Nicaragua Community Partnership and the presbytery during the 10 day visit. The community welcomed this delegation with typical warmth and enthusiasm. In addition to the recurring goal of this mission—to learn more about the lives of Nicaraguans and to further build our relationship with the community of PG2—additional specific goals for this year’s trip were met: updates on the current scholarship students and follow-up on the graduates, review of the scholarship process and documentation, and beginning plans for a work project to be accomplished in 2012.



Webster Groves PC member John Castagno with PG2 youth

Additional highlights of the trip included: a baseball game between our friends on the Quilali Buffalos (in 2nd place!) and their league rivals from neighboring San Juan de Rio Coco; “Ciné La Reforma” (movies projected on a sheet!); making tortillas with our women friends and shelling beans with the men; meeting with scholarship students and their parents to celebrate their commitment and encourage continued support and participation; practicing English with eager youth; working puzzles, playing Twister, drawing with sidewalk chalk, reading books; and making “God’s Eyes” from yarn and personalized visors with over 50 enthusiastic “designers”. In spite of being a tiny group, the delegation made a mighty impact in the community!

The Nicas *Finally* Made It!

If you’ve never attempted to coordinate a visit to the States by a group of rural villagers from a developing country, you probably don’t realize that it is a process fraught with difficulties that most of us would never imagine. For instance: one might *think* that the first step would be in securing a passport. However, before securing a passport, one must have the necessary documentation, including a birth certificate—something not easily obtained by those born in a place like Plan Grande Dos. This is among the reasons that the visit from our Nicaraguan friends had to be postponed from May until October. Even having passports

doesn’t guarantee passage, as we learned: during an interview at the American Embassy, officials must be persuaded that travelers have good reason to return to Nicaragua, which resulted in denial of a visa to one of our guests (a later interview, followed by interventions on behalf of this young man by both CEPAD and the Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery, resulted in his receiving the needed tourist visa).

Finally, on September 30, Juan Luis, Telma, Oneyda and Francisco arrived for their ten day stay in St. Louis—a visit that would take them from comfortable beds in suburban homes to Hopeville, the homeless “tent city” on the riverfront. They spoke—before the Presbyterian Women, at churches, with youth—and were spoken to—during visits to elementary, middle and high schools. Women baked an apple pie from scratch; men worked out at a gym. They saw “urban farming” from field to farmer’s market, and criss-crossed the area from Grafton to Farmington. At the Missouri Botanical Garden they met with native Nicaraguan Olga Martha Montiel, VP of Conservation and Sustainable Development; Eric Miller, Director of Zoological Operations, formerly Director of the Zoo’s WildCare Institute, which



Apple-picking at Eckert’s in Grafton

oversees the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve in Nicaragua (and WGPC member), gave our guests a personalized behind-the-scenes tour of the St. Louis Zoo. As much as was possible during their short visit, our friends were exposed to a cross-section of our lives in St. Louis—culturally, socially, geographically, and spiritually. They returned to Nicaragua, no doubt exhausted, but with a wealth of new experiences and understanding.

Visits from our Nicaraguan partners, while costly and requiring a considerable amount of effort on behalf of both ourselves and our guests, are a part of the warp and woof of the tapestry of our partnership, helping us to recognize our interdependence and our need for mutual transformation. Our lives and our faith are enriched in unspeakable ways when we share the intimate details of our daily living with one another.

The Plan Grande Dos Post was compiled and edited by Kathie Sherman, who thanks Harriet Hall for contributions.