

This newsletter is our longest one of the year and in it we try to give you more of a feel of what is going on in Nicaragua and with us... so we hope you will find this enlightening.

With all the disasters all over the world, **little Nicaragua** (about the size of North Carolina) **has born the effects of three hurricanes this season** so far. What has this meant for our projects?



processing organic coffee at El Porvenir

El Porvenir, the coffee cooperative, lost more than half of its coffee crop. This is their cash crop. They were looking at a good harvest this year. Then with all the rain the coffee berries starting dropping to the ground. The good news is that we have buyers for all the coffee that they have salvaged. In fact, this year we have more buyers than coffee, so we are collecting samples from other small coffee growers to see if we can sell their coffee as well.

El Porvenir also lost more than 20% of its grain crops (beans and corn). These grains feed the members of the cooperative. We have one organization offering money to help tide them over until next harvest. The folks at El Porvenir had more rain in a few weeks than they did during Hurricane Mitch, where they were in the epicenter. In Nicaragua, there is no government equivalent of FEMA.

Three cooperatives are negotiating with us to sell cashews to Just Cashews in New Mexico. All three cooperatives are totally owned by women.

We have exported four containers (40,000 pounds per container) of sesame so far this year. We have contracts for four more containers but we have no idea how much of the sesame was ruined in all the rain. It reminds us a great deal of Hurricane Mitch, because growers then were expecting great crops, only to be indebted for years after Mitch hit.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) passed in the US Congress this summer by two votes. Then several months later it passed here in Nicaragua by twelve votes (the Sandinistas voted against it as a block). Again the question is, "what will this mean for our projects now that it seems inevitable?" We are seeing some effects already.

CAFTA will eliminate all quotas for the Fair Trade Zone (the Women's Sewing Cooperative). As a business they enjoy much of the benefits, and yet as astute women they see the dangers as well, and so still oppose the agreement.

They have been working hard. They have just finished one container of t-shirts for the Presbyterian Church USA (23,000 shirts) and they have raw materials for two more containers of clothing: Mission Playground and Maggie's Organics.

In 2005 their production has doubled from 2004 and their sales have increased by 40%. Because they have a larger volume of work they can lower costs, which in turn increases the larger orders.

The cooperative has added six new permanent members bringing their total to 17, while employing 53 people. Also Becca has been working hard to finish a study to let people know what has gone into this project so that it can be recreated in other places. When it is finished we will put it on the website. It will be published around the New Year.

But with the good news, the bad news is they have no water during the day and they have to run their generator more and more as water and electricity are being rationed. **This is leading us rapidly to the conclusion that it is time to rely less on the grid and produce our own energy.** We have a great technician, Bob Matthews, who is helping us. The estimated price for the long run is about \$64,000, but considering that our electric bill is often \$1000/month it doesn't seem like so much.

Basic needs like water and electricity are being rationed to poor areas while the wealthy water their lawns and air-condition their homes. The people in Nueva Vida have been without water for over a week. They took to the streets and *at least* got an answer to when their pump, which serves over 11,000 people, would be fixed: *by the New Year!*

Ergo, our clinic has no water. We have to bring water in from other sources. With our last medical delegation, the fire department brought tanks of water out to us (for a price) and the water was dirty (not good for a clinic). To add to their reluctance



unloading container of raw material



project description interviews in process



filling water containers from tanker



photo: Mike Todd

surgeon working at El Porvenir

to return in the future, the firefighters were a little scared of all the neighboring people who also needed water and were a bit aggressive.

A medical delegation from a Methodist Church in Anchorage, Alaska, came and threw themselves into the work heart and soul: an **ob/gyn; two family practice physicians; a surgeon; and a 4th year medical student** who was a Bucknell graduate and had gotten her parents (the church's pastors) interested in our work. All of this work was done with the stress of little water and one afternoon of no power.

They also went up to the El Porvenir community, which lives constantly with little water and no power. The family physicians saw about 50 patients. The ob/gyn saw about 10 and the surgeon did minor surgery on five people. We worked out of the school. The

community was so grateful for the day, but even more so for...

The veterinarian and two assistants who had gone up for five days to tend to their many animals. Two of our long-term volunteers helped them with translation and with the animals. They also helped the Alaskans keep their spirits up with their kidding around. The vet taught two members of cooperative how to do treatments on the animals. They saw 40 horses, 70 head of cattle, 18 sheep, 40 dogs, and saved a lamb at birth.



photo: Kati Simeon

vaccinating cattle

Before the Alaskan delegation, the Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church, South Carolina, group came in October to get the "women's clinic" more ready to be used as a clinic. They tiled, hung drop ceilings, made pantries, hung lights, and fans. Without them it would have been difficult to utilize that many doctors.

Now the dental office is ready, thanks to the SC folks and all our long-term volunteers. All we need is dental equipment and a dentist, but the chair is operating!!!! The office is really pretty.

At the writing of this newsletter, the doctors are planning to go on strike. They are asking for 149% pay raise that will raise them to the standards of other Central American countries. Nicaraguan doctors make between \$200-300/month (base) while in other CA countries doctors start out at \$500/month. Not too much to ask...

In 1998 the doctors went on strike for a pay raise. Some of the doctors who were instrumental in pushing for the raise were then black listed. Unfortunately, all the doctors who strike this time may risk losing their jobs with the public health service, because CAFTA wants public health eliminated. What will this mean for us?

We anticipate an increase in the number of our patients because they will not be able to go to the public clinics. Our own doctors will have to live on our salaries alone as the strike drags on. Our clinic has started seeing war victims so the patient load is already increasing without the strike.

The Ciudad Sandino Chapter of Disabled War Victims (from the Contra war in the 80's) now receives support from the clinic. The Alaskan delegation examined and measured six or seven for prosthetic limbs, gave out wheelchairs, and crutches.

We are working with the war victims on several projects to generate employment: making Raggedy Ann dolls, a used clothing store, and employing the healthier ones in the Concrete Construction Materials Cooperative.



disabled veteran being measured

In Nicaraguan politics the traditional right and left have made

pacts that do not seem to be in the best interests of the people from the perspective of many around us. They seem to want to keep the status quo and keep other more popular people from winning offices... limiting the political system to a two party system where both appear beholden to the powerful. And the powerful are not so interested in helping small businesses. What does this mean for our projects?

Regarding the spinning plant that will spin organic cotton into yarn, the Inter-American Bank is willing to grant the women \$175,000 for technical assistance, but they still refuse to loan the funds to build the facility and buy the equipment without us co-signing the loan and putting our other projects in danger. So we are looking elsewhere. There is hope with an Ecumenical Council out of Holland. Cotton growers in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, as well as the women, are anxious for this to go through.

This is to give you a little insight how one thing impacts another. We hope you can see the hope and the difficulty involved in all the projects. **But you help us to continue and deal with all the ins and outs, and for that we are so thankful.**

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Ciudad Sandino, MGA, Nicaragua



César, founder, advisor, & one of the directors

The CDCA is made up of many, many people. You know a bit about the “gringo/gringas” that work here, but not much about our wonderful staff of nationals. We got our magnificent volunteer coordinator, Eric, to take head-shots and to get quotes from them. He asked them to tell you something they thought was important for you to know. So here are the lovely people who keep this work going.



Rogelio, construction genius & bus driver



Margarita, cook, hospitality & Spanish tutor

Josue: “Each day the construction work with these gringos gets better. I work with North Americans of every age and background (but the young gringos are so big!). The job is interesting, and different, every time. How perfect, no?”



Enrique, bus driver & mechanic



Josue, construction asst. & volunteer liaison

Dr. Avila: “Thank you, amigos. With your great help, we are able to improve the health of many people here in Ciudad Sandino.”



Aurora, asst. housekeeper



Jorge, afternoon doctor

Lab Tech Mario: “God bless you my North American friends, today, and always. Even though I don’t know you personally, I know you through your work, and through your large and generous hearts that you have had for this Medical Clinic. We have received much support from all of you, and I admire your gestures of solidarity and cooperation. I want to personally ask you to continue your support without forgetting the teachings of Christ. So my friends, stay firm and steady, always growing in the works of God, and knowing that your work in him is not done in vain. God bless.”



Henry, clinic medic



Danelia, clinic daily administrator

Raul: “I work with the foundation as an agronomist, and one of our chief needs at the moment is help in the marketing and purchasing of organic peanuts.”



Raul, Nica/Cuban agronomist

Dr. Jorge: “It gives me much happiness to see the enthusiasm of all of you, and our community is very glad because of it.”

Every single other employee:
“Umm, yeah, I’ll get that quote for you tomorrow...”



Wilfredo, morning doctor



Yader, student & asst.mechanic



Nubia, asst. cook



Saul, tractor & animal expert, & all around dear



Conchita, clinic doña



Mario, lab technician

The Community has had a hard couple of months being short-staffed. Pat and Kathy left the 23rd of September to go on their fall speaking tour on the West Coast. They have had a good trip we hear, thanks to all of you that have helped them along the way.



JUBILEE HOUSE COMMUNITY
“You shall not oppress one another for I am the Lord your God.” —Lev. 25:17

Then Sarah learned on the 29th of September that her mother fell and broke her hip and needed 24-hour care. So she hopped on a plane to be with her mother, who considering her Alzheimer’s and hip injury, is doing remarkably well. Sarah returned the day before the Alaskan group arrived.

Also the day the Alaskan group arrived, we hosted a shower for Becca and Paul’s baby and had a great time with about 45 people! Volunteers have jumped in to help in so many ways: tutoring the kids in French or homework; decorating; helping to cook; doing various construction jobs; cleaning; and helping with delegations. They have been so valuable.

Of course it hasn’t eased yet...Mike and Kathleen are going to California to talk to an International Rotarian Conference before Kathy and Pat return. So Sarah will have Coury, Daniel, and Joseph alone and she, Becca, and Eric will have the office. But again we have friends and volunteers anxious to help and the boys can help in the translation area.



photo: John Campbell

Left: Eric holding up pharmacy shelves... note the look of determination on his face.

Right: Matt holding up a mare’s tail during a prenatal exam. Note his look of joy at a job well done.



photo: Kate Simeon

REFLECTION...

Advent comes and we bring out 20-year-old banners, with holes all in them, but very important to us. The first Sunday the HOPE banner goes up. It is a map of Central America with a rainbow originating out of Nicaragua. I think that banner has the most holes in it!

It was interesting when one Alaskan doctor asked our speaker, Mark Lester, "Do you see any hope for the future for Nicaragua?" Mark laughed and said, "How long have you been here?" It is the way so many of us feel after living here many years. Many US citizens came to Nicaragua because there was such a sense of hope here and now the hope is gone. It has left a deep chasm of poverty, loneliness, and violence. Saul lives in a remote rural community and he was beaten up, tied up, and robbed along with others. Not much sense of community any more. So where can hope survive?

in Community
in Empowerment
in Tenacity

and in People who care and are kind.



On the second Sunday our PEACE banner goes up with a dove and the words "shalom" and "salaam". People seem so afraid of each other now. People are afraid that a brown man with a larger nose and a turban and curly hair might blow them up... when probably he is just a dad with a sweet daughter waiting for Daddy to pick her up and give her a nose rub. Where can peace survive?

in Respect (of people, religions, races, cultures, and countries)
in Tolerance
in Elimination of fear
and in People who care and are kind.

On the third Sunday our JOY banner goes up with a Chinese dragon and bells. The older I get the less joy I pass around. The Alaskan vet said she didn't know how they would have made it up at El

Porvenir without our volunteers, Matt and Mike, who are nuts. I watch children follow Matt and Mike around and adults immediately smile because they *are* nuts! When it seems so cold, dark, depressing, and lonely where can joy survive?

in Laughter
in Silliness
in Music

and in People who care and are kind.

On the last Sunday our LOVE banner goes up with a Caribbean woman with a baby. We are Harry Potter fans. Dumbledore, the headmaster of the wizarding school, tries so hard to teach Harry that LOVE is what Harry has that will defeat evil...not the knowledge of all the magic spells. How does one defeat an enemy? Martin Luther King, Jr., said... make the enemy your friend. The Christian Scriptures say... "God so loved the WORLD". Love will bring hope, peace, and joy...so where is love surviving?

Deep in us all
Around us permeating everything
Waiting to be brought forth in joy and pain
and in People who care and are kind.

Where is hope?

In you and me

Where is peace?

In you and me

Where is joy?

In you and me

Where is love?

In you and me

We are the answer.

Merry Christmas! Happy Hanukah! Happy Kwanza! Happy Winter Solstice! Happy New Year! Mostly **thank** you for being those who care and are kind!

--Kathleen

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- A donation (see below) to contribute to our work. Your gift gets acknowledged with a card to the receiver. It's perfect for those who really need nothing, because it gives to those who need so much. It is a gift that says you care on many levels and it acknowledges that they do, too. Just note your donation online as an Alternative Gift *and* include the person's name, address, and the giver's name in an [emailto: jhc@jhc-cdca.org](mailto:jhc@jhc-cdca.org).
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- For a minimum gift of \$50.00, our hand-thrown mug. Please specify right-handed or left-handed & allow 6 weeks for delivery. Request via [emailto: jhc@jhc-cdca.org](mailto:jhc@jhc-cdca.org).
- T-shirts from the women (*see box on right*)
- Coffee from the cooperative at El Porvenir (*see box on right*)
- "Come On Down," a resource of childrens' sermons by Rev. Bob Murdock, whose sale proceeds are shared with us (www.SermonsForChildren.com)

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www.ethicalgoods.com
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www.MissionPlayground.com

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