Twenty years ago the Jubilee House Community moved on-site to Nicaragua and began the work that we had started with César Fajardo the year before. My! Have we come a long way since 1994!

For our 20th year in Nicaragua we have big dreams*:

- We want a third building at the clinic because we have outgrown our space… we need space for health promotion trainings, for an x-ray room, an ob/gyn exam room, a clean room for minor surgeries, and a third dental room well as other needs.
- We want to help COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative, get the newly leased sesame processing plant not only up and running, but operating as a world class facility.
- We want to grow the Vida Fund, to provide farmers capital to plant and harvest.

BUT we are low on funds for these dreams. One of the people that stood by us when we ran shelters in N.C., and through all the years we have worked here in Nicaragua, is helping the work again… this donor is giving a challenge to you. He will match your gifts given between now and 31st of May!

Our first agriculture project, lo those many years ago, was organic sesame. It began with the dairy cooperative, our then lessees. (The CDCA now owns the house and lot.) Together we grew 100 acres of sesame… it was sold to Once Again Nut Butter (OANB) with whom we had been in contact through Jeremy Thaler, its owner, during 1993, the year before we moved.

This March we had another visit from two representatives, Lloyd and Kim, of OANB, now a cooperative. Lloyd looked over the newly leased sesame processing plant as he continues to be a support to COPROEXNIC. COPROEXNIC was started to give all the lone voices of farmers a collective voice, in order to negotiate better prices, run the processing plants like the sesame plant and a cotton gin, and help with all the business aspects of marketing, shipping, finances, etc. Around 3,000 growers are a part of the cooperative now, and they have five staff members. All 2013 organic crops of sesame, peanuts, and coffee have been processed and shipped. We are finishing up with organic cotton.

During our twenty years, Nuts to You has joined OANB in the arena of ethical businesses helping COPROEXNIC by negotiating with farmers face-to-face and providing support, as has Maggie’s Organics (organic cotton), and Their-Bucks Coffee and Building New Hope (organic coffee).

Maggie’s Organics was instrumental in helping us begin the world’s first worker-owned free trade zone, a cut and sew factory, as well as developing the world’s first certified clothing line that is both organic AND fair trade from crop to consumer.

Their-Bucks Coffee helps El Porvenir, the coffee cooperative, by sending back their profits from the sale of the coffee as well as loaning them capital and helping them with specific needs. El Porvenir had a good crop last year, located on a mountain-top near the Las Casitas volcano.

*We have a blog (jhc-cdca.blogspot.com) where for the last couple of months we have focused on our goals for 2014. You can go to the site, read the blogs, and also sign up so that new blogs will come into your in-box automatically… the blogs are short and expand more on the work, Nicaragua, the poor, and reflections on development work.
Speaking of volcanoes, Nicaragua has been having earthquakes and aftershocks. As I write, so far Nicaragua has had 12 earthquakes and well over a thousand aftershocks. Things seem to be quieting down, Gracias a Dios, but there was/is a real fear that the string of volcanoes that run up and down the western side of Managua will erupt and the fault line that runs under Managua will shake harder, longer, and shallower, and cause a huge disaster… like the 1972 earthquake that leveled 541 city blocks.

According to NicaNet, there have been 2 deaths (due to heart failures). We’ve also received word that one of the new mothers group, Marta Elena Ruiz, age 23, died during a c-section being performed when an earthquake hit. The baby boy, her first and now only child, survived. We don’t know how much of her going into septic shock was caused by the earthquake itself but the family feels it is directly related… it is so sad.

Besides deaths, there have been at least 41 people injured, 1,585 people evacuated, and damage to 32 hospitals and health centers and 3,700 homes. Specialists have come from many Latin American countries, the U.S. and Japan to monitor the seismic activity, the volcanoes, and Lake Managua as its waters recede and warm.

Anticipating a natural disaster reminds us of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, when 12,000 flood refugees were moved to a permanent resettlement camp down our dirt road, set up in bare pasture land less than a mile (1km) from the CDCA. We provided lots of emergency aid like identifying leaders and setting up ways that the people could prioritize their own needs: one of those needs was health care. Before Mitch, we hosted medical brigades of 1 to 3 doctors and nurses in rural communities 3 or 4 times a year. After Mitch we had the help of many medical people, and we began a relationship with students and professors from Bucknell University (Lewisburg, PA) which developed into building a clinic in the camp named Nueva Vida, New Life.

In 2001, we moved from a temporary clinic we had run for ½ years to a newly built clinic with a half-time doctor, a volunteer nurse and nurse practitioner, and three other staff… an interesting note: the day we moved into the clinic, the building withstood the shaking from the Salvadoran earthquake.

Now we host medical volunteers in our own clinic that has two buildings which we are quickly out-growing. We have on staff a full-time nurse, dentist, dental hygienist, dental assistant, administrator, health promoter, four other members, and a radiologist (who was the doctor mentioned above). We also have on staff a part-time general physician, pediatrician, orthopedist, clinical social worker, and a lab technician. And our volunteer delegations come almost monthly to help work on projects and achieve goals identified by the staff and community.

For a week in February, we hosted a volunteer dentist, hygienist, and assistant from ORPHANetwork. In March we had the help of a doctor with the Bucknell Brigade (BNB), a class of nursing students from Boston College, and a group from Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC) with two dentists. All dental volunteers assist the work in two very important ways:

1) to see children from the feeding centers run by ORPHANetwork, because our current staff cannot see them all - 1,200 plus children; and
2) to see more complicated cases than our staff can treat. We would LOVE to have at least one volunteer dental crew to come help one week per month… except December. Know any dentists?

The group from Winthrop taught a class on nutrition and went out to the feeding centers and taught 270 children about oral hygiene and gave out toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, and pamphlets that were donated by the Ciudad Sandino Rotary Club.

The Bucknell Brigade painted the clinic. They also cleaned, painted, and repaired the outside of the sesame processing plant… all very much needed… while their doctor, Steve, saw patients in our clinic and at El Porvenir, the coffee cooperative, where he saw 25 patients in 1 ½ hours!
The Boston College nurses saw patients, did home visits with our nurse and health promoter, and taught classes for our lay health promoters on health care in later life, kidney problems and prevention of cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer kills more Nicaraguan women of reproductive age than any other cause. One of our current goals for 2014 is to start a See and Treat program to detect and prevent cervical cancer in our area. Nicaragua has the highest mortality rate from cervical cancer of any country in the Western Hemisphere. We received a grant from Christ Episcopal Church (Charlotte, NC) to start this program and we asked in our last newsletter for a cryotherapy gun and colposcope… and a retired doctor in Georgia responded by donating the equipment! We will start training in May!

Another of our goals is to help adolescent girls look at options they may have for their future and give them something to hope for. Nicaragua has the highest rate of teen pregnancies in the Western Hemisphere. Read our blog about it (http://jhc-cdca.blogspot.com/2014/04/combat-teen-pregnancy-with-hope.html). For Mother’s Day you can honor your mother with a gift… and it can be matched… to help these girls.

When our first delegation came back in 1994, each morning over breakfast we would ask, “Well what would you like to do today?” We had no phone for the first four years AND until 2003 all volunteers and delegations stayed in our home which also served as the office.

Now we have a dorm for volunteers. We have volunteer coordinators who volunteer with us for a year. We have the organizing of a delegation down to an art. We have an office, with phones, cellphones, internet, computers, etc. So much has changed. Our work has grown tremendously… that there is no way we could not do what needs doing without…

- Our Nicaraguan staff of 25
- Volunteers like Maria, our current Volunteer Coordinator; Laura, Jean, and Alice, clinic volunteers, who have just left; and Leah who just arrived… and
- YOU! Never, ever forget YOU are an integral part of this work.

JHCommunity:

Speaking of YOU… many of you have taken care of our folk as they travel the U.S. and Europe… and we say a heartfelt thanks to you.

Sarah has been gone for almost two months now speaking from S.C. to Maine. Her trip has been fruitful and needed in more ways than fundraising. She was able to help my (Kathleen) parents as my dad was hospitalized; help her daughter, Jessica, during a time when her family was sick and company came; help find out how to get our son, Joseph, tested again for ADHD; and many other personal and work related problems that arose… just having her there in the U.S. has helped so much.

Becca, Paul and their girls are traveling in Ireland seeing friends and family and in Germany seeing Paul’s brother and family. Becca has spoken in Ireland. Besides work they have seen a castle, went to Switzerland accidentally (by leaving the airport on the wrong side!) and have basked in the warmth of family.
Reflection:

Old stories keep creeping up when we ponder all the memories of living here in Nicaragua for 20 years. It is a wonder I stayed... bringing a 5-year-old, Coury, and a 1½-year-old, Daniel, into a scorpion infested house with no furniture or screens. We lived next door to a gross slaughterhouse. I spoke no Spanish and the boys were vomiting and having diarrhea all the time from the flies that swarmed in and around the run-off from the slaughterhouse.

Mike came home and settled me down. Then Pat and Kathy came home and all started looking for the snake, to give me peace of mind... as if that was even possible! After 30 minutes they found the little garden snake and took it to a hole in the table into the boxes of books we were storing underneath.

One day when all were away but the boys and me, I saw a snake in the fruit basket. I have an irrational fear of snakes... though - I have to say - living here, the fear has lessened... anyway, I freaked! I placed both boys on chairs so we could all watch for the snake that had disappeared through a hole in the table into the boxes of books we were storing underneath.

The next day Henry, who now works in the clinic, and was then volunteering with us doing odds and ends, helped me take the books outside to look through them. In the books I found two scorpions and... a snake skin.... That SNAKE had been LIVING in MY house WITH ME! Then I really did freak... I said in English loudly, “That’s IT! I’m going home!”

Henry understood enough that the next thing I saw was him with a caulk gun... “Don’t worry, Angelita (my nickname here), I will plug up every single hole.”

You have no idea how ridiculous and sweet that was... Ridiculous... because in a house with no screens or solid doors... caulking holes was useless. And Sweet... because he was willing to help me cope. If the roles had been reversed, I might have thought, “You, crazy white lady, where do you think you are? Look around you... do YOU see comfort and security? THIS is our everyday life! Look at what YOU live in as opposed to my home with a dirt floor... you, crazy white lady.”

Over the years, this has become home... more of a home than anywhere else I have lived as an adult. Over the years, time and time again Nicaraguans patiently teach me how not to be a crazy white lady and ease difficulties for me, like the concern César gave me when I miscarried.

I can’t imagine too many people from wealthy countries being so patient with foreigners living in their land... Nicaraguans have taught me acceptance, patience, and wisdom. Not a bad lesson for 20 years, no?

On a final note: If you are able and willing to give beyond monthly pledges, THIS is a great time because your gift will be doubled! Just mark on the rip off form...I want my gift to be matched. If you are giving on-line, just designate your special gift to be matched. Remember YOU are instrumental in this work... and look how far we have come!

Yes! I want to help support the work of the Center for Development in Central America.

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $___________.

◊ This gift is especially for the Matching Challenge, designated for ____________________ (if desired).
◊ This gift is my regular giving, designated for __________________ (if desired).

This Mother’s Day, I would like to give to “One Mother to Another”, to the Nueva Vida Clinic in honor of my mother, to help teenage young women. I am giving this Matching Challenge gift of $____________. [ ] Online [ ] Check enclosed

PLEASE NOTE: In order for your mother to receive her gift card in a timely manner, please email her name and email address, and your name to: becca@jhc-cdca.org. You can either note your Matching Challenge designation online for your mother, or send in a check designated “Matching - Mother’s Day”. (see http://jhc-cdca.blogspot.com/2014/04/combat-teen-pregnancy-with-hope.html) for more information.

I would like to receive an electronic newsletter instead of paper at this email address:

Note: you can also give online via http://jhc-cdca.org/donate-now/
Mail to CDCA, c/o Peggy Murdock, 352 Carly Ln, Rock Hill, SC 29732-7750.
Please include your correct name and current address information from the newsletter label to avoid duplications!