Twenty years ago, one might have found Mike and César in a sesame field pretending they knew what they were doing as they encouraged our neighboring cooperative to grow organic sesame. Now, one will find Mike, Becca, César, and COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative, learning how to operate a sesame processing plant, taking calls from Paraguay regarding sesame, running to meetings with the government and the electric company, and dealing in muchos, muchos dólares.

During this year’s growing season, we are working with farmers, together with COPROEXNIC, while we are in a drought. El Niño, along with on-going climate change, has caused a drought in Nicaragua (more on this later). Meteorologists predict that the rains will start in September, but will not be as plentiful as usual. Most farmers have missed out on the first part of the rainy season (May-July) and if predictions are correct, they will have to wait until September to hopefully start growing a crop for the second half of the season…which means only half of the crops MIGHT be grown this year.

Together with COPROEXNIC, we are making progress on refurbishing and getting the sesame processing plant ready to run with greater efficiency. Volunteer delegations continue to go to the plant to work: painting, cleaning, and learning about the plant, while we continue:

- to negotiate with the electric company to get the power turned on (we are using a generator as we wait),
- to look for more funds than the Vida Fund currently has to get this plant operating profitably, and
- to work to get the government to extend the plant’s leasing contract for another year.

Assuming that it rains, we will process all the organic sesame that is grown in Nicaragua at this plant, while the organic peanuts will be processed in one of the world-class plants in Nicaragua. Assuming all goes well, we estimate 3 ½ - 4 million dollars in sales! If the rains do not come, then we will import sesame from Paraguay to be processed here.

Though Nicaragua is experiencing its worst drought in 32 years, there has been no famine, the World Food Programme declared this month. The government is doing a good job of feeding children in all the public schools, handing out food baskets in areas most affected as well as buying imported rice and beans to not only give out, but also to sell at below-cost. The price of beans has more than doubled since January and food costs, according to the canasta básica*, have risen over 13% just since January. Though there has been no famine, people are suffering. We need rain.

* The canasta básica, basic basket, is the cost of the basic needs of a family of four. The 13% increase only takes into account basic food items.

Twenty years ago we hosted just a few delegations each year in our home. Since Hurricane Mitch in 1998, we’ve had more and more. Since our last newsletter written in April, we have hosted nine delegations:

- Solvang Rotary Club medical (Solvang, CA)
- Bucknell University Alumni Brigade (Lewisburg, PA)
- 3-week class from Bucknell University
- Colorado State University (Fort Collins, CO)
- St. John’s Methodist Church (Rock Hill, SC)
- St. Gregory’s Episcopal Church youth (Long Beach, CA)
- East Tennessee State University Public Health Class (Johnson City, TN)
- Christ Church youth (Summit, NJ)
- Lake Oswego United Church of Christ (Lake Oswego, OR)

Photos: Far left - CSU painting clinic
Left - Christ Church with Pedro and Lucas
Top right - St. Gregory’s making block for 3rd clinic building
Bottom right - BNB pouring clinic sidewalk
Twenty years ago the health component of our work consisted of the occasional medical brigade that would go into the rural communities surrounding us and the barrios in Ciudad Sandino. They brought medications in suitcases and went forth to see as many people as they could, to give the best care possible without any tests or equipment. Brigades would come and build the occasional school, feeding center, and health center.

We continue to have doctors and other medical professionals come and volunteer. We also continue to use the brigades to work on projects like paving sidewalks, painting in the clinic, and starting the process of making building materials for …drum roll…

Our THIRD clinic building!!! We estimate it will cost about $60,000 for the materials; most of the labor will be volunteer or done by our own staff. It is exciting and so much needed.

We need more room to offer services to women. The Tennessee class taught and helped our health promoters survey Nueva Vida to find out how many women have ever had PAPs (a test to examine cervical cells for cancer). They surveyed 1,117 women, ages 14 to 95 years (95 years old!).

With the survey they handed out pamphlets on the importance of regular PAPs and stated that our clinic would be offering free exams every Tuesday. Over 100 women came on the first Tuesday!!! In the six weeks following the survey, we have done more PAPs than in the first 6½ months of 2014… and in those months we had the services of three medical volunteers who did lots of PAPs.

Added to the increased interest in PAPS, a gynecologist also returned in May to teach our doctors how to use the equipment that was donated to us to be able to offer See and Treat therapy, a procedure developed to treat the beginnings of cervical cancer, and which is approved by the World Health Organization. We need more room, and more nurses, doctors, and volunteers.

With all the delegations lately we have had lots of help in the clinic. Besides the manual labor provided by the delegations, many have also brought medical professionals. We have had:

- two dentists
- a dental assistant,
- a midwife,
- an obstetrician/gynecologist,
- a teaching doctor,
- an epidemiologist,
- an internist,
- a cardiologist,
- a cardiologist technician,
- two family practice physicians,
- an optometrist,
- several nurses, and
- several public health professionals…wow!

That’s a lot of help… see why we need more space?

These volunteer professionals allow patients who need special services to see those specialists. For example the cardiologist saw 80 patients a day. He did EKGs and used our ultrasound machine to check out hearts.

These people also teach us. For example the midwife told us about thin straws to check uterine cells for cancer…something simple but unknown to us. The optometrist taught Becca and Pat tricks of using our own eye equipment more efficiently. The dentist told us that we needed stronger suction in our dental rooms.

They frequently continue to serve as resources to us long after they have returned home. One example is the epidemiologist who is helping us develop a plan for addressing the needs of our HIV positive patients.

These professionals frequently work outside of the clinic proper. They do home visits, which is great, because our doctors and nurse are swamped. They go up to El Porvenir, the remote coffee cooperative, and see patients. One dentist is the dentist for El Porvenir.

We are grateful for all their help and we need more and more help. We can always use specialists. It would be wonderful to have a gynecologist come for a week every two months to see our more complicated cases and just to help us “catch up” on the backlog of women needing services… or funding to pay the salary of a part-time ob/gyn.

We need volunteer dentists coming one week per month and a third dental room to help us address the growing needs. So far in 2014, we have seen almost twice the number of dental patients as we did in all of 2013.

Our health promotion has grown immensely this year. We have held 61 trainings on 23 topics with 1,900 attendees, which is one of the more important reasons we need a third building. The areas we use now are the patient waiting areas or under trees… no privacy. If you look at the building floor plan, the large area will be for health classes and support groups. And speaking of support groups…
Becca and Jessenia, our health promoter, have started two new support groups:
- One for mothers who now have toddlers… the ones who are no longer “new” mothers, and
- One for pre-teen and teenage girls whom many of you supported in May with donations given in honor of your mothers.

The teen group is doing really well. They named themselves Las Lobas or She-Wolves. We have been taking them out of Nueva Vida to talk to women who have made a life for themselves, such as the women at the Fair Trade Zone, the sewing cooperative and the world’s first worker-owned free trade zone that we helped start. They have gone to movies, which they had never done before, and they have ventured farther from home than ever before. These are girls living in poverty with a future of limited options, or so they’ve thought… until now.

Many of you responded to our matching gift challenge in May and we have been able to breathe a bit easier thanks to all your generosity. We thank you.

Twenty years ago we moved onto a plot of land with this gutted house that was owned by a dairy cooperative and started the on-site work of the CDCA. We paid the cooperative rent by paying the electric bill for the whole cooperative and we worked to help them stay afloat by growing sesame (remember Mike and César in the sesame field?) and other projects, but the co-op collapsed. They gave us first bid on the property, we sent out a fundraising plea, and through gifts bought the land.

More than 6 years ago, a woman, Yelba Carvajal, sued to take the land and again we sent out a plea for people to email the First Lady of Nicaragua, to get her to intervene. Many responded and after too much time, money, and energy, we won the court case. Yelba is now suing us in the Ciudad Sandino courts and - we think - it will go to court soon… and once again, too much time, money, and energy have been spent on this, but hopefully it will be settled again in our favor… soon and permanently.

Twenty years is a long time and not so long, too. The needs are great and without all YOU have done to help, we still would be standing in a sesame field dreaming….

JHCommunity: The Community was saddened at the deaths of two influential people in our lives:

Jeremy Thaler died on the 6th of August. Jeremy and his wife, Connie Potter, founded Once Again Nut Butter which was the first buyer of our organic sesame. Jeremy believed deeply in worker-owned businesses and passed that passion along to us. In our early years he came to Nicaragua several times a year helping farmers learn what it takes to grow organically and trying to foster cooperatives. We can honestly say that without Jeremy, we would not have an agriculture project such as we do. And to the memory of Jeremy, we dedicate this newsletter.

Jan Lindsay died on August 13th. Jan and his wife, Pam, founded GoCare (a Rotarian-backed project) here in Managua to work in the area of education for people of all ages. Jan invited Mike several times to come to California to talk to the Rotary International conference about poverty… thus began a friendship. Jan was an “evangelical” Rotarian and his enthusiasm encouraged us and others in our area to start a Rotary Club in Ciudad Sandino, one the likes of which has never been seen in Nicaragua. Our Club, though made up of professionals, is also made up of poor professionals, and when the powers-that-be took two years to charter our Club, it was Jan who coached us through the process. Both Jeremy and Jan were principled, dedicated, and will be missed… and we are grateful for their influence in our lives and work.

Pat and Kathy made an emergency trip back to Florida when their mother, Jill, was hospitalized. Jill is at home recovering well. Kathy is now back in Nicaragua with us and Pat is staying in the U.S. awhile longer to give Jill support as she heals completely.

Sarah is doing another speaking tour during September in Florida, trying to broaden our base of support. If you live in Florida, look for her schedule at http://jhc-cdca.org/how-to-help/upcoming-speaking-opportunities/. She will also spend some time with her daughter and family.
Reflection:

Becca wrote a very good blog in July titled *Why No Nicaraguan Children.* It is an excellent essay on why, in the influx of refugees Central American children into the U.S., Nicaraguan children are not among them. I recommend you read it.

I also want to point out to you an excellent article by Aviva Chomsky, *The United States’ Continuing Border Crisis: The Real Story Behind the "Invasion" of the Children.*

There are many issues around the response of the government of the United States and many of its people regarding the children crossing the border:

- Immigrants vs. refugees
- Corrupt Central American governments… and yes, they are still propped up by the U.S. government as they have been for over 100 years
- Drug trafficking
- Gangs
- Democrats vs. Republicans

So many issues being bandied about and yet - in reality - the only issue that exists is: do we welcome the stranger? … the child? … OR do we not? That’s it. Simple. Clean. Do we or do we not?

If we side with not welcoming them, then let’s quit insisting that we, the United States, are one nation under God… because in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, *hospitality is foremost.*

Protecting the poor, the widows, and the children is *paramount* for a nation under God. Jesus said, “Let the children come unto me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these.” Matt 19:14

People frequently ask us why we like living in Nicaragua. Well, this is one reason. Nicaragua *does* welcome refugees. Let’s face it, people fleecing their poor countries have to be mighty desperate to come to Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. But they do come and are coming and Nicaragua, more than any other Central American country, affords them more access to their social safety nets - such as they are.

What does that say when the second poorest nation is receiving refugees while the richest is turning the children away? What does that say about the soul of the richest nation?

The leaders of the Nicaraguan government, who are not perfect by any means, understand what it means to live under dictatorships, death squads, terror, and horror, and they translate that understanding into action by welcoming others who are living it now.

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### Why Would You Send Your Children on Such a Dangerous Journey with Strangers?

Mine are grown, and the only reason I would send them thousands of miles away, riding on top of trains, would be if I thought… no, if I KNEW… they would die if they stayed. Do the people in the States who debase this “crisis” and advocate deporting the children *really* believe in their hearts that Central American families love their children less than they love their own?

Frankly, the only actual crises are the crises in the nations from which the children come… not in the U.S.

In Honduras, the city of San Pedro Sula has more murders per capita than any other place in Honduras, which has more murders per capita than any other country in the world. During July alone, in this small country, 87 children and teens were murdered, some tortured, and the vast majority of the culprits were not found.

And this is where the first nine children were deported to… San Pedro Sula. Depending on accounts, 5 or 7 of the nine were killed soon after landing. Killed. We, the U.S., sent children back to be murdered. Does this mean that the deportation will stop? No, it does not.

Choosing whether or not to welcome these refugees is easy. Choosing whether or not to deport these children to die is simple. This is not a complicated issue… we are not in muddy waters here, folks… it is clean issue, because there is really and truly only one right place to stand… with the kids… we need to stand with the kids.

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

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $ for (designation if desired)

☐ I would like to receive a cookbook

☐ I would like to receive an electronic newsletter at email address:

☐ please send instead of paper ☐ please also send a paper copy

Please note: you can also give online via http://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 address information from the newsletter label to avoid duplications!