The **organic agriculture** cooperative, COPROEXNIC, has set the goal of having a world-class sesame processing plant in five years! The first step completed was to obtain the lease for the sesame processing plant from the Nicaraguan government for another year. COPROEXNIC is trying to get the lease guaranteed for the next three years.

The second step was to hire Javier Ayala, a specialist in certification processes, as Technical Coordinator. The third step was to restructure the Board of Directors and establish regular meetings.

Even with two years of drought, farmers have harvested their crops, such as they are. COPROEXNIC is struggling for funds to pay farmers for sesame. While they have obtained the funding to buy peanuts, working with lending institutions takes a great deal of work and often does not get results.

Two additional notes: (1) El Porvenir had a low coffee harvest also due to the lack of rains. (2) Raúl Martín, COPROEXNIC’s agronomist and general manager for 16 years, retired.

The ground was broken for the third clinic building! All the posts and blocks that volunteer groups have been working on for the past two years are starting to make a building! The Bucknell Brigade (Lewisburg, PA) worked hard while they were here in January.

We desperately need the training facility of the third clinic building to give our groups space and privacy to meet and share. Marta, our nurse, working with Amber, a Belgian midwife volunteer, have split our growing new mother’s program into two additional groups. We now have 35 first-time pregnant women attending the groups! This group had already been divided into groups of pregnant women and mothers with infants a year ago.

Marta and Amber visit pregnant mothers and mothers with infants in their homes to check on the babies and talk to the moms. They are also training health promoters to maintain this program after Amber leaves.

Our chronic care patients are also being separated into more groups so that care can be more consistent. When Cassie visited, a family practice physician volunteer and our new daughter-in-law (see below), we started working more closely to identify the patients that need more help in taking their medications, and also identifying what medications they are actually taking, and how they are actually taking them (sometimes other than as prescribed).

We have had the services of a nurse practitioner, Colette, who with our health promoter Jessenia visits and evaluates these patients in their homes. Our general physician, Elizabeth, is continuing this process. We are hoping to get our patients the consistent care they need and also cut down on wasted medication costs.

Las Lobas (She-Wolves), the pre-teen and teen girls program, sent two girls to a four-day Girls Leadership Camp. This is monumental for these girls. Las Lobas are now attending a class called Doctors about biology and genetics as well as having fun activities.

We are happy to also have the services of 4 other volunteers: Ian and Joe, our volunteer coordinators; Dylan, who helps with home visits;
and Joseph, our son who is developing skits to teach important facts to our chronic care patients.

In November and December, fundraising events on social media raised money for family planning and for the babies and moms programs. Despite receiving almost one fourth of our 2015 receipts in December, the CDCA continues to suffer from lack of funding.

We are taking steps to increase our revenues in 2016 and cut costs. We are accepting more delegations and have increased per diem charges for our groups. At the Nueva Vida Clinic our patients are contributing more towards the costs, though it still adds up to a small percent of the cost in running the clinic. We reduced our staff by two and hope to be able to keep all other staff members. The international staff still hasn’t received their stipends for 12 months (they are living on the social security that a few receive). We need your help.

If you can give, please do. If you can give more, please do AND if you have any ideas please write and let us know (jhc@jhc-cdca.org); we are open to all suggestions.

JHCommunity:

The Community with family and friends celebrated the wedding of our son Coury to Cassie Iutzi on the 21st of December in Managua. We had a great time! Five days following the wedding, we also celebrated when Claudia Saballos said, “yes” to our son Daniel’s proposal of marriage. It was good way to end 2015, with two positive events in addition to having family home.

Our family members home were Joseph, Tiff, Jessica, Elliot and Charlotte (adult children and grandchildren) and Cassie’s family also were with us. We all celebrated the wedding and the holidays.

The Mohally Renk family spent Christmas with Becca’s family in cold Idaho filled with snow, skiing and making a snow bride and groom to send a photo to Coury and Cassie. We were glad to have Paul, Becca, Eibhlín and Orla home again to welcome the New Year, as well as good friends, Nora and Becky.

During the holidays we sorely missed the presence of Peggy, Kathleen’s mother, who had a series of strokes in November. Peggy’s health is a concern for all of us but especially for the Murdock family who has undergone a series of unfortunate events in 2015. We ask for your prayers for her recovery.

For years, Peggy has been an amazing volunteer, receiving the JHC’s donations and being our point person in getting checks deposited (and worrying when not enough checks were coming in!), mailing in honor or in memory cards, etc. We are grateful to now have another volunteer, Donita Miller, stepping in to take over this important role. PLEASE note the change of address (see rip-off form and return envelope) for future donations, and if you give through automated checks then please notify your bank or foundation.

On Jan. 6th Henry Carcache or “Maestro” as we called him, died. Maestro was one of our first employees and our first mechanic. Maestro was a mechanical genius. One day he came asking for an old toothbrush and, using the tip of the plastic handle, created a brace for part of an engine.

Years later, after the Vieja (Old Ambulance) was washed away in a flash flood, filled with mud (the engine was packed with dried, hard mud), bashed, broken windows…Maestro came to work, shook his head, said, “Give me some time, I’ll get it working.” We still drive the Vieja.

He worked with us for a decade until he retired. He had Alzheimer’s. If he’d had the educational opportunities that many of us have had, I think he could have gone to MIT. We were lucky…so lucky…to have had him. To Maestro’s memory, we dedicate this newsletter.

Center for Development in Central America

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REFLECTION:

Recently I’ve been having a difficult time focusing and functioning. I know part is recovering from my own health trauma that began last June, part is grief (I lost my father and brother within two months of my release from the hospital), and part is worry (my mother is Peggy who had the strokes mentioned above). I feel bruised, beaten and spent. If I’m asked to deal with a conflict or problem I feel hit all over again. My tenderness is really like a bruise. You know when you have a bad bruise — unnoticed now hurts. Over and over you are reminded that you hurt.

During this time of Lent (those who are not Christian, please bear with me), I understand more intimately the level of “spent-ness” and dread that Jesus must have felt before going into Jerusalem. I live each day just waiting for the other shoe to drop. I also feel like I cannot give one more part of me to anyone.

What I don’t understand is how Jesus continued on into Jerusalem knowing what probably (and did) await him. Me? If I could I crawl in my bed and stay there, I would…no contest.

After all the healing of the sick, giving his all to others, teaching how to heal the world and to love the poor, and beating his head against a brick wall over and over again…after all that…he climbs on that donkey and rides forth.

The courage he must have had is overwhelming. I lack that kind of courage. I’m a coward.

The love he must have had to make that choice is also overwhelming. I lack that kind of love. I love conditionally.

The faith and hope that he had to be able to get on that donkey, believing that in the end all would work out, is too overwhelming. I lack faith and hope. I believe in what I see and my hope – these days - is in small supply.

I know that I am forgiven for all these lacks…lack of courage, lack of love, lack of faith, and even lack of hope…I’m forgiven. I know that with that forgiveness is the call to quit – in my mother’s words - throwing myself pitiful parties…though I probably will continue for a while longer, if I’m being truly honest.

What I cannot fathom amid my grief, my worry and my bruised soul is: how do the poor get up every day? Really…how do they get up? Their grief and worry are so much greater than mine. Their souls are beaten.

It is painfully clear that if we follow the one who got on that donkey…if we follow the teachings of the prophets…if we want to be decent human beings…

We HAVE to end poverty. It is time for that level of pain to stop. Now.

-Kathleen

2015 Year End Summary

2015 was a difficult year for our staff and us. Because of the many losses and hospital stays, we were seriously short-staffed for most of the year – and yet many were still served. This is a compilation of how we served. The numbers represent real people – mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters.

- COPROEXNIC, with our help, exported 28 containers of sesame, all but one were organic… 1.2 million pounds! (8 times as much as 2014)
- Together, we exported 13 containers of organic peanuts... 572,000 pounds (a little more than half of 2014)
- Together with El Porvenir, we exported 28,500 pounds of organic coffee to two buyers (again, less).
- No cotton was grown due to the drought, which is also why there were less peanuts and coffee... (sesame grows well with less moisture)
- COPROEXNIC received the lease for the sesame processing plant, employing 52 workers (more than twice as many as 2014)
- The sesame plant continues to undergo tremendous renovations to make it a world-class processing plant.
- Through the Vida Fund we were able to make loans of $992,064 in 2015.
- Loan payments and interest received in 2015 was $1,071,296.
- Becca and Mike participated in two Agora Partnerships conferences. We also worked with Agora for a year in developing business plans and looking for investors for our agriculture programs.
- Mike represented Nicaraguan growers at trade shows in Germany and the Netherlands.
- We hosted different groups of buyers from Once Again Nut Butter, Their-Bucks Coffee, and Multiple Organics, as well as meeting with buyers in the U.S.
- In the Nueva Vida Health Clinic, we treated 9,939 patients. These patients were seen by four part-time physicians (orthopedist, general, ob/gyn, and pediatrician), a full-time radiologist, and volunteer physicians.
- 291 visits in patients’ homes provided better treatment.
Because of a 5-year grant we were able to hire a half-time ob/gyn. To address the high rate of cervical cancer mortality she takes PAPs and biopsies and she also does Loop electrosurgical excision procedures and cone biopsies.

Our radiologist performed 1,795 ultrasound exams on 1,469 patients. We also did 365 EKGs.

We also obtained a new echocardiogram machine from a cardiologist who volunteered one week with his Rotary Club. He and his tech did 189 tests.

We gave out treatment and medicines for 20,802 conditions and diseases.

We did a survey and study in the Nueva Vida barrio to have a better understanding of type 2 diabetes. Over 5 days, 1,435 individuals were surveyed and 1,163 received blood glucose testing.

Our chronic care program now has 145 patients, including 77 elderly patients. They come for monthly check-ups, medications, and monthly meetings to learn about diet, exercise, taking their medications properly, and giving each other support. Most have type 2 diabetes but we also have hypertensive patients and patients with Parkinson’s and thyroid issues.

Pat, our part-time counselor, saw 181 clients... 50% were from the ages of 6 to 12 years. 26% of the problems presented were family problems and another 26% were behavioral issues.

Our laboratory completed 5,020 tests in the clinic for 1,664 patients and we did at least 2,000 additional tests outside the lab. We sent out 503 PAP tests to be read by a pathologist. Our lab tech retired, and we hired a young woman with whom we are very happy. With designated money, we were able to buy a new microscope.

We continued our program with ORPHAnetwork to see 1,200 children twice a year in our dental clinic.

Our full-time dentist, hygienist, dental assistant, and volunteer dental professionals saw 4,270 patients (52% were under the age of 12 years). They performed 6,050 procedures. Of those procedures: 56% were preventive care [cleanings and sealants]; 25% were restorative care [fillings]; and only 9% were extractions… this is amazing for Nicaragua!

Our dental staff continues to teach patients the importance of good oral hygiene. They also gave 25 classes to 2,968 children in feeding centers.

Our one-morning-a-week eye correction clinic saw 281 patients and gave out 416 pairs of glasses. A volunteer optometrist helped for one week and was frustrated because customs held up his equipment.

Our family planning program offers free, consistent birth control for women that stayed from 3–22 days.

We hosted 13 delegations that stayed from 3–22 days.

We hosted over 25 volunteer medical, dental, and public health professionals in the clinic, plus 3 classes of students in medical professions.

Three speaking tours encompassed 8 states in the U.S. for 106 speaking engagements, making many new contacts as well as renewing connections with long-time supporters.

We developed 3 social media fundraisers for the clinic, family planning program, and the growing new mothers and infants program.

A volunteer, Pablo, made a wonderful video, Manic Mondays (http://jhc-cdca.org/files/ManicMondays.MOV.mp4)

We hosted 19 groups from other organizations based in Nicaragua, speaking about and showing them our work.

We hosted 8 individual volunteers from a week to just shy of one year.

The courts ruled in our favor against Yelba Carvajal, who was trying to take the CDCA’s property. As we understand it, she now cannot sue for our property again.

Once each quarter we sent out over 8,000 newsletters with more than half going by email.

We were able to reduce expenses by 7.5%, however our receipts fell by 31.5%.

Our number of on-line recurring donations increased by 6%, monthly giving we can count on! And online donations can now also be received in Euros. NOTE: Your gifts are extremely important! More than three-fourths of our cash donations continue to be $100 or less.

JHC-CDCA Spring Speaking Tour:
Sarah will be speaking from the Carolinas to New England, from 8 March – 22 May.
Please invite her to speak, or find her close to you: http://jhc-cdca.org/how-to-help/upcoming-speaking-opportunities/

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)

For a minimum gift of $35.00, you may request Grits, Greens, and Gallo Pinto, our unique and versatile cookbook.
☐ I would like to receive a cookbook

For a minimum gift of $100.00, two items from Slightly Twisted Spoons.
via SlightlyTwistedSpoons@jhc-cdca.org
☐ I would like to receive an electronic newsletter at this email address:
☐ please send instead of paper ☐ please also send a paper copy

Please note: you can also give online via https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/jhc-cdca or scan here: And you can give online here in Euros.

NEW 2016 ADDRESS - Mail to:
JHC - CDCA, c/o Donita Miller, 420 Longhorn Dr., Rock Hill, SC 29732-8886

Please include your correct name and address information from the newsletter label to avoid duplications!