The roof is almost complete on the third clinic building!!!! AND a donation to finish the entire building is in-process from an anonymous donor… HIP! HIP! HOORAY!!! Kathleen, who is healthy, keeps introducing the clinic to groups by saying, “I really want this third building done before I die.” Yay! It looks like that will happen!

If you want to contribute to make the finishing touches you can contribute and Buy-A-Block… (http://jhc-cdca.org/buy-a-block-progress/).

Our first delegation of the year, the Bucknell Brigade (Lewisburg, PA), worked hard getting the roof to where it is today. Following that Brigade, we had a delegation of older than college age people who worked equally hard to pour the supports for the last of the roof and to extend the plumbing trenches the Bucknell Brigade began.

The second group was comprised mostly of 3 congregations: North Anderson Community Church Presbyterian (SC), Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran (IL), and Unity of the Blue Ridge (NC), with participants from 5 different states. We require that our delegations have at least 12 people and these churches individually could not get the minimum, so they joined together for one big group of 21 people. It was a real testament to see how these people learned from each other and grew closer, while it was fun for us to see old friends and make new ones.

Working with these groups was our new Volunteer Coordinator, Andrea. We said good-bye and many, many thanks to our last year’s VC, Autumn, in December. Andrea joined our staff in January. She is our first Nicaraguan VC and we are extremely fortunate to have her skills and her input.

One 2018 goal for the Nueva Vida Health Clinic is to help our chronic care patients, especially our elderly patients, take their medications correctly. Endrina, a Belgian pharmaceutical intern, is working with our health promoter, Jessenia, to explore and implement a plan and we are asking delegations to bring pill organizers with them to give to these patients.
Carolin, a German clinic administrative intern, catalogued everything in every room of the clinic so that we started the year organized and knowing who is using what and where it is. She is also closing files on the computer for patients who have not returned in 5 years…the second January brigade helped us discard these files to make more room in our file cabinets. Unfortunately, Carolin’s time is coming to a close.

We welcomed Lydia, a global health and family practice physician from the U.K, to work with our staff on a project we are still trying to flesh out.

We love having volunteers from all over the world who come with different perspectives and a willingness to learn from Nicaraguans. They enrich the life of the clinic.

**Our patients offer the beautiful experience of graciously allowing volunteers to enter their homes and see what their world is like.** This is a gift of untold value to volunteers whether they realize it at that moment or later. Home visits are done by most of our doctors, by our nurses, and our health promoters. We have started requiring that all volunteer physicians do home visits at the start of their time to understand just a bit what patients can and cannot do to get well.

During the Bucknell Brigade, Cassie, our daughter-in-law, served as their doctor (which meant we also had our son, Coury, and our grandson here as well). Cassie and Jessenia took students into the homes of our chronic care patients.

Cassie not only is a good doctor, but also an excellent teacher. She opened the eyes of many students as to WHY diabetes is so hard to control and so prevalent in poverty conditions.

**The Nicaraguan farmers had good organic sesame, coffee, and peanut crops until...** Nicaragua had extremely unusual, heavy rains in December when the crops were supposed to be drying in the fields. After November, the only rains we usually get are what we in the South called “spitting”…light drizzles, IF we get that. This year we got downpours of as much as 2 inches in a couple of hours over several days. The sesame processing plant is operating but the crops are coming in slowly.

The sesame processing plant is operating but the crops are coming in slowly. This is also true with peanuts…they are going to a different plant slowly and we anticipate they will be processed in April.

COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative, is waiting for a working capital loan from another organization that was expected to arrive earlier. “We need just one more paper…” sigh.
Speaking of funding and finances… the JHC-CDCA ended the year paying all its bills and salary checks except to those of us who live in the intentional community. **Seven of us on stipend have not been paid for 9 months now.** We always make sure that our Nicaraguan staff are paid. In the past, we have always been able to make do with our Community finances (the intentional community shares a common purse), but we, 11 of us now, have been living on four peoples’ Social Security checks which are small due to each of us making $5,000/year for decades. We need your help to broaden our base of support… to inform us of any grants you think we might be able to apply for… to encourage donors to increase their gifts…and …well… any ideas you can come up with are welcomed.

**We were honored to be selected to take over the Casa Ben Linder in Managua.** Casa Ben Linder was operated by the Ecumenical Committee that was started in the 1980s as a response to the invasion of Grenada and the Contra War. It was U.S. citizens living in Nicaragua who bound together to say loudly and publicly to the U.S. government that they were not in danger so “don’t invade Nicaragua using us as an excuse.”

The Casa was named after Ben Linder who was murdered in 1987 by the Contras while developing a small hydro-electric plant to generate electricity for the remote village of San José de Bocay. Mike and Kathleen met him about a month before he was killed when they led a delegation into the war zone of Bocay with Witness for Peace.

Padre Miguel D’Escoto housed his foundation for many years in the Casa Ben Linder and it was that foundation that invited us to Nicaragua in 1993 to work in Ciudad Sandino. We feel very attached to the property.

Our vision for this place is to restore all the beautiful, powerful murals that have slowly deteriorated over the years; to set up a museum that teaches people about the Insurrection, the Revolution and the Contra War and their costs in Nicaraguan lives, not just Ben’s life; to make it an AirBnB guesthouse for travelers who want a different kind of experience; to be a place to host events; and to have a café to bring in funds for operation and maybe, if successful enough, to raise funds for other projects.

The JHC-CDCA is not diverting funds away from our existing projects to Casa Ben Linder, so Claudia, Becca, and Paul are looking for other sources of funding including personal loans. Our first volunteers were our dear friends Nora and Becky who started the lucha by planting pretty flowers and greenery. Casa Ben Linder has housed two guests at the time of this writing.

Claudia, the manager, is researching possible avenues of how to restore the murals as well as everything that is needed to bring the property up to being an even more beautiful place than it once was. Paul is creating designs for beautiful wood furnishings for the rooms and Becca is – for now – overseeing it all…soon, it will be handed over to Claudia.
JHCommunity:
Claudia, married to our son Daniel, joined our Community! And because we are cretins and forgot to celebrate Daniel joining last year, we threw a low-key party for them both to show how excited we are!

Over Christmas the Murdock/Woodard clan went to California. Our daughter-in-law Cassie, being the newest doctor in her clinic, had to work Christmas Day. Earlier in December Daniel and Claudia went to see our daughter Jessica and her children in Massachusetts. Claudia is Nicaraguan and had never seen snow, and the weather cooperated for her.

Peggy, Kathleen’s mother, also went to California and we went to see the redwoods which was one of her dreams. Even bouncy grandchildren were awed by the giant trees.

While we were away, the Mohally Renks and the Floerkes celebrated Christmas here in Nicaragua in a quieter-than-usual atmosphere. They rested over the holidays.

Daniel’s restaurant and bar has a building now. Our last delegation had fun eating there after their day of work and play.

Reflection:
“In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot.” – Czesław Miłosz (Polish poet who lived through the Holocaust)

When actresses finally spoke out about Harvey Weinstein’s sexual abuses, it was like a pistol shot heard through the halls of power throughout the United States. Even I began to remember the groping, inappropriate language, the time of having to pleasure a guy so he would not rape me, having my skirt yanked off at school by a 16-year-old boy when I was 12… the shame I felt of when I did not stay silent and the shame of when I did.

Our friend Nora commented on the meeting when Pres. Trump made the comment about “shit hole nations,” how angry she was at the Democrats and Republicans in the room who said nothing until they left the room. NO ONE in the room looked at Pres. Trump and said, “That is inappropriate” or “That is racist.” They waited until leaving to report it to the news so that the comment could become fake news and be ignored.

Elie Wiesel, writer, theologian, and Holocaust survivor said, “Silence encourages the tormentor,
never the tormented.”

How many women experience men tormenting them because we stayed silent? Did my tormenter date rape others? Did my molesters grab other women? Did those women deal with the abuse better or worse than I?

When we have people in power who are taking us down paths that are wrong, are we complicit by staying silent?

We look back at Nazi Germany and wonder how…HOW…could “good” people look the other way? Make excuses? Deny reality? STAY SILENT? How?

And yet I find myself making excuses for the counselor teacher who called me - a Seminary student learning about clinical pastoral care - “an old whore” in my final evaluation, because “[I] would give and give of [my]self to others.” My mentor, Karin, was offended, but young, naïve me was not. I later learned that I was not alone with his carelessness and chauvinism.

Abuse is not limited to women…nor it is limited to sexual abuse…abuse comes in all forms. Bullying in school…children learn to stay silent…and parents teach them to “just get along.” We excuse the abuse of racism over and over again. We stay silent. What our nation collectively continues to do to people of color is insidious as much as it is insane.

We excuse classism time and time again. We participate in the ugliness of blaming the poor for their poverty. Gandhi said “Poverty is the worst form of violence.”…not “poverty is the worst form of self-inflicted violence.” And yet when our law-makers call single moms and struggling families the “takers” while padding their pockets and their donors’ pockets….we stay silent.

We excuse imperialism…back to the “shit hole nations”…what if all the people in those nations spoke out loud and clear and told their stories of how they struggled to be free of dictators who were puppets of the Empires of the ages and were beaten down again and again and again? “But where would the world be without the ‘Great’ nations to hold little nations in check?” We allow ourselves to believe and stay silent.

We excuse and stay silent, from the colleague acting inappropriately to the President of the United States acting inappropriately.

“Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting accordingly.” –Mahatma Gandhi

The first verse of our national anthem says, “O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave.”

We need to be brave. We need to end our silence for children, women, the poor, the people who are different from us, for the poor nations of the world like Nicaragua, for the oppressed like those you help here. We do not want to be remembered in history with the big “WHY” we did not speak up.

The reality is we have no voice unless we use our voices.*

*Kathleen

*I apologize to Rick Riordan for the paraphrasing of his quote…I could not find it to quote it correctly nor cite the book it was in.
2017 Year End Summary

Below is a quick summary of all the work that your gifts helped accomplish. Please take a few moments and see what your gifts have done and imagine all the children, mothers, fathers, teens, the elderly...all the people YOU have helped. We know that 2017 was a year of hurricanes (Nicaragua had one), earthquakes, fires...one disaster after another. We know that sometimes it all seems too much and there is nothing we can do to make the world a better place, but your gifts DO help make the world a better place for Nicaraguan families. When we are generous, goodness blooms.

♦ COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative, with our help, exported to two buyers 704,736 pounds of organic sesame... worth $719,371!
♦ Together, we exported to three buyers 413,800 pounds of organic peanuts... worth $420,657.12.
♦ Together with El Porvenir, we exported 23,250 pounds of organic coffee. All mentioned exported crops were mostly grown in 2016.
♦ COPROEXNIC received a three-year lease for the sesame processing plant, employing 32 workers.
♦ The sesame plant continues to undergo tremendous renovations to make it a world class processing plant.
♦ Through the Vida Fund we lent out $556,485 in 2017.
♦ Loan payments and interest received in 2017 were $471,264.
♦ We hosted different groups of buyers, including one from Once Again Nut Butter, to consult about a tahini processing plant in the future.
♦ Much of our efforts have been towards broadening the pool of financing for COPROEXNIC and slowly, financing is getting a bit more secure.

♦ In the Nueva Vida Health Clinic, we discovered through another NGO’s survey, that 80% of the residents of Nueva Vida preferred our clinic!
♦ In the clinic, we treated 11,111 patients by our four part-time physicians (orthopedist, general, ob/gyn, and pediatrician), a full-time radiologist, and volunteer physicians.
♦ 1,438 visits in patients’ homes provided better medical treatment.
♦ Our a half-time ob/gyn took not only PAPs, but also biopsies, performed cryo-therapies, conizations, and pre- and post-natal care.
♦ Our family planning program offers free, consistent birth control for 279 women and 9 men...very important with Zika. We began offering birth control implants lasting 3-5 years. We put in 117 implants and 18 IUDs which is in addition to the 279 women, and we provide birth control for about 50 women in a remote rural coffee cooperative.
♦ Our radiologist performed 1,658 ultrasound exams on 1,365 patients. We also did 325 EKGs.
♦ We gave out treatment and medicines for 25,498 conditions and diseases.
We held block meetings and then did a survey on what the residents of Nueva Vida thought was their biggest need... sewage treatment of both black and grey water. We are researching how to get this for about 1,200 families.

We treated 140 patients monthly through our chronic care program. Besides their check-ups, lab work, and medication, they also attend monthly meetings to learn about diet, exercise, taking the medications properly, and giving each other support. Most have type 2 diabetes and/or hypertension.

We hosted a volunteer plastic surgeon who did 57 minor surgeries in our clean room.

Our part-time counselor saw 405 clients working on an average of 2 and a half different issues in each session... most were family problems and behavioral issues.

Our laboratory completed 6,411 tests in the clinic for 1,788 patients. We also do weekly-to-monthly glucose checks as well as urine tests when patients are checked in. We sent out 417 PAP tests to be read by a pathologist.

We continued our dental program with ORPHANetwork to see children in Nueva Vida, and have expanded to include children in their feeding centers from 8 other places.

Our full-time dentist, hygienist, dental assistant, and volunteer dental professionals saw 5,630 patients (48% were under the age of 12 years). They performed 14,115 procedures. Of those procedures: almost 46% were preventive care [cleanings, fluoride and sealants]; 26% were restorative care [fillings, etc.] and less than 6% were extractions... this is amazing for Nicaragua! We started a new treatment that halts a cavity from growing until it can be repaired.

Our dental staff continues to teach patients on the importance of good oral hygiene in the clinic, in the public schools and in the above-mentioned feeding centers.

Our one-morning-a-week eye correction clinic expanded to three mornings with the help of a volunteer health promoter. The clinic saw 523 patients and provided 670 pairs of glasses (20% were custom-made glasses). Four visits for vision checks were made out in communities.

We gave out wheelchairs, canes, handicapped toilet seats, crutches, etc. to 76 patients.

Our community outreach and health education included the following:

⇒ Continued the new mothers’ group and included classes on pregnancy, labor and birth as well as family planning, providing 97 talks/classes with a combined attendance of 2,375 women; a group of mothers of 0-1 year babies; a group of mothers with toddlers; a group of pre-teen and teen girls to build self-esteem and give options for the future other than being a teen mother; a boys’ group to build a sense of responsibility and self-esteem as well; a support group for parents of children with asthma; a support group for the LBGT community; and continued a support system for patients who are HIV positive.

⇒ We received another grant to give our 30 lay health promoters a small monetary gift of appreciation each month for all that they do. We maintained the nebulizers and first aid kits in the homes of these lay health promoters, and these services helped 6,764 children and 6,764 adults totaling 13,528 people!

⇒ We held an average of 25 health trainings on various topics of diabetes, sexual health, family planning, etc. for groups up to 40 attendees!

⇒ We received our final papers from the Ministry of Health as an approved Health Clinic.
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.  

Send your request via email to: SlightlyTwistedSpoons@jhc-cdca.org

For a minimum gift of $500 for Third Clinic Building construction, a tile honoring the giver will be placed in the finished building.  Tile to read:

Please correct / add my contact information as follows:

I would like to receive an electronic newsletter at this email address: ___________________________  ☐ send instead of paper  ☐ also send a paper copy

Paper address correction / addition: __________________________________________________________

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

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

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

- We hosted 14 delegations that stayed from 3-22 days.
- In July we moved our delegations to a small hotel/NGO in Ciudad Sandino for a more Nicaraguan experience.
- We moved our cramped office quarters into the volunteers’ former sleeping area.
- We hosted over 25 volunteer medical, dental, and public health professionals in the clinic, plus 4 classes of students in the medical profession.
- We hosted 7 individual volunteers from a week to a year.
- Three speaking tours encompassed 9 states in the U.S. with 98 speaking engagements, making many new contacts as well as renewing long-time supporters.
- We developed 3 social media fundraisers for the growing new mothers and infants program, the boys’ group, and our budget (we ended the year technically in the black, but the 7 international members of the staff of 31 people did not receive their stipends for 9 months).
- We were chosen to receive and manage the Casa Ben Linder in Managua in order to restore the murals and run a museum, remembering the fallen of the Nicaraguan wars and the benefits of the Revolution.
- Once each quarter we sent out over 15,000 newsletters with about half going by email.
- Our on-line recurring donations increased by 48%!
- New donors gave 19% of our cash contributions, and we received more gifts in euros.  NOTE: Your gifts are extremely important!  More than three-fourths of our cash donations continue to be $100 or less.

Sarah will be speaking 3/13 – 5/30 in the Northeast (NC to ME).  Please invite her to come speak or go to where she’s speaking.  Email Sarah@jhc-cdca.org.  Her online schedule is here: https://tinyurl.com/spktrip