Dental patients are lining up as early as 3 AM to come see our dentist. Due to their cut-backs, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health has closed all dental services in Ciudad Sandino. **We need volunteer dentists and hygienists to come help!**

The East Chapel Hill Rotary Club (NC) sponsored their second dental delegation with us. In four days they saw 435 patients and did 1,043 procedures without their equipment!* They got their equipment out of customs the day they were leaving so they were able to leave their wonderful donations with our dental clinic staff.

Not only did they see dental patients in our clinic...mostly children...but they went into homes as well. They taught parents how to care for their kids' teeth (including babies) and they put silver diamine fluoride on cavities to halt the cavities from spreading. They also brought computers and tablets for several rural primary schools. Along with the 10 temporary dental stations they set up, a plastic surgeon did minor surgeries on 39 patients in our clean room (including removing a 10cm lipoma).

The third clinic building’s floor has been poured! Well, except for the radiology rooms, because we are waiting to see what we need for x-ray equipment, etc.

A medical delegation from Georgian Court University (Lakewood, NJ) made as one of its morning goals the assembling of reinforcement framing for the concrete flooring in the new training room. In the afternoons, they shadowed doctors and our lab technician, worked in the pharmacy, and did well-child visits in the public schools with Lydia, a volunteer doctor from the UK.

As Lydia is finishing her time with us, she is helping us develop a plan to continue doing well-child visits once every six months in the Nueva Vida public schools. She has been identifying malnourished children, illnesses, and conditions that should be monitored.

**Lydia and her fiancée put WiFi in the clinic!** They are part of a company in the UK developing software for clinics and hospitals. They have obtained good virus programs for our computers and a program that will set up a log-on questionnaire for our patients to help us gain more data to use for grants as well as send health information to the patients.

Many, many Nicaraguans buy inexpensive smartphones and use them as a means to keep in touch with families using the free WiFi in the parks or on the buses, as well as using their phones as small computers. In Nicaragua you can receive calls for free and easily buy minutes...as few as 10 minutes...in many stores.

The Bucknell University Brigade (Lewisburg, PA) and Post Oak High School delegation (Houston, TX) poured the concrete floors. They mixed all the cement and poured buckets of concrete while smoothing the concrete before it started setting. Heavy and hard work.

The Post Oak group met with teens from the Nueva Vida

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*The process for getting donations exonerated and medical/dental volunteers approved by the Ministry of Health is now an 8-week process (and this does not include weeks when the Ministry of Health is on vacation). Please keep this in mind when volunteering as a physician, nurse, or dentist, or when bringing donations into Nicaragua.
high school and helped with Los Leones, our boys’ group of 25 -30 boys. Volunteer Becca Wheaton does an amazing job with them teaching them Brain Power activities, tai chi, cooking, etc. She needs help but – we think – it will take some more funding. (For Father’s Day you can give a gift in honor of your dad or other dads you know to the boys’ group. Scan here or go to http://jhc-cdca.org/helpfd-html/)

The Bucknell Brigade, like all our groups, learn while they are here. Some students went with Lydia to the schools, others went with their doctor, Steve, for home visits or worked in the pharmacy, while most poured floors. A unique aspect of the Bucknell brigades is that upon returning, they raise tens of thousands of dollars for the clinic!

Overlapping with the Georgian Court delegation, we also hosted the Boston College nurses during the mornings for a week. They are a well-organized group of nursing students. While some checked patients in, others worked in the pharmacy and did home visits. Their graduate nursing students saw patients under the supervision of their professors. On their last morning with us, they did various trainings for our health promoters who always look forward to their presentations.

As you can see, our volunteers do lots of home visits. Why? Medical people visiting in the patients’ homes can get a more realistic idea of what is feasible care and what is not. Teaching is easier in the home. They also see problems that might be missed.

Our pregnant moms and new mothers with their infants receive a great deal of these home visits and need more. Not only do doctors and nurses go to these homes, but the life-line of the clinic to the community, our health promoters, visit in the homes as well…which is why for Mother’s Day if you want to honor your mother or any mother, you can give a gift to ensure we expand and continue this program. $25 pays for 5 pregnant moms’ visits and $50 pays for 10 new mothers’ and infants’ visits. (Scan here or go to http://jhc-cdca.org/helpmd-html/)

COPROEXNIC, the organic agriculture cooperative, struggles with financing constantly. Financing with banks in Nicaragua is a nightmare. Unless you deal with the banks here, you could never imagine the hassles and limitations they impose.

Organic peanuts are being processed in April and we have insurance to guarantee their shipping which is so important, and which we have not been able to afford it in the past. With COPROEXNIC, we hosted a new peanut client who is increasing the acreage for planting peanuts. We also hosted two buyers from Once Again Nut Butter to meet with the sesame farmers.

The sesame processing plant’s electrical system was upgraded and the electric bill spiked from $5,000/month to $15,000/month! Until this spike was addressed with the government which leases the building to COPROEXNIC, and the electric company, the plant had to shut down for two months. It is now running again processing sesame seeds.

Organic, shade-grown, bird-friendly coffee from El Porvenir was loaded in April to be shipped to Their-Bucks. Paul, serving as a representative of Their-Bucks, took his mother with him to oversee the loading.

COPROEXNIC has been approached about growing organic cotton again, but this time they are requiring up-front capital from those who want the cotton instead of finding funds on their own. As Mike said to the interested parties, “With funding all things are possible.” Note the above paragraph about financing.
Saúl López retired after more than 20 years of working with us. As a farmer, he started working in the early organic sesame fields, then driving our tractor for the growing sesame project. After the need for a tractor ended, he became the groundskeeper for the CDCA. We miss seeing him each day and appreciate his years of service.

Accepting a piece of property needing lots of care requires time and funding, but Casa Ben Linder is making progress. We’ve hosted some Airbnb guests who don’t mind roughing it. The plumbing to the buildings is done but the bathrooms are still in the process of being remodeled ergo “the roughing it” part.

The Ranchon…the big covered area…is being used for self-defense classes for Las Lobas, our teen girls’ support group, and for talks by other non-profit organizations. Plans for puppet shows, other events, and a 31st anniversary of Ben Linder’s death (April 28, 1987) are in the works.

Ben was an engineer from the state of Washington who was murdered by the Contra along with two Nicaraguans, Sergio Hernández and Pablo Rosales, while working on a hydroelectric dam to bring electricity to a remote region of Nicaragua. The first room to be finished soon - is named the Pablo Rosales room.

Our dream for Casa Ben Linder is for it to be a place of gathering, learning about the Nicaraguan Revolution and the Contra War, and a place of beauty. Gardening is making the place prettier and hammocks are hung, but a main focus is on the murals. We are contacting the original artists to come and restore the beautiful murals already existing. (http://jhc-cdca.org/projects/casa-benjamin-linder/)

JHC Community:
Our two newest members of the Community, Claudia and Daniel, are expecting their first child!

Currently Sarah is in the States speaking about our work, mainly in the Northeast. She and we were extremely excited to receive a new, used donated van through volunteers in Tennessee, the same volunteers who helped get the CDCA its yellow bus that we used for years!

Eibhlín started secondaria (7th – 11th grades) while her sister, Orla, is in her last year of primaria (6th grade). Nicaraguan schools start their new year in February. The girls, along with their parents, have enjoyed having a visit from their Irish family…Paul’s mother, brother and family.

Pat is finishing up her continuing education hours for her clinical social work certification, while Kathy is beginning to phase out being our administrator/bookkeeper. Kathy, who turned 69, will be looking at other ways to work with the CDCA. We are also thrilled that Diana, our current head of housekeeping, will be assuming the administrative role and a volunteer, Bill Arnold, is helping us streamline bookkeeping for a local accountant to assume that role in the future. Diana is learning English and how to drive, in preparation for starting in July.

REFLECTION:
I frequently get emails or comments about being too political in my reflections. Some don’t see what talking about the U.S. government has to do with our work. “Your work would get much more support if you only wrote about the good news in our work and world,” many say to us.

Part of our work is education. In a group discussion with Post Oak High School delegation, a girl asked, “What do you see is Nicaragua’s greatest challenge?” Pat said, “Poverty” as Daniel said, “Global Warming.” Both are correct and have their roots in politics and economics. How can we respond to issues that face Nicaraguans without addressing poverty and climate change?
I would like to receive an electronic newsletter instead of paper at this email address:

Name & Address: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Our clinic patients are poor…extremely poor. Our farmers struggle with droughts and floods. Food prices are constantly going up while the Nicaraguan government has lost most of its aid that came from Venezuela and ALBA, and may soon lose international loans due to the NICA Act in the U.S. Congress, which will veto any international loans coming to Nicaragua.

The follow-up question to Nicaragua’s greatest challenge was “What is the greatest impediment to the Nicaraguan government helping its people?” Daniel answered quickly “Foreign intervention.”

And he is right again.

The U.S. government has a horrid history here in Nicaragua of when the Nicaraguan people have tried to make things better, my country intervenes. Historically the U.S. sees Nicaragua not as a sovereign nation but as someone “in [our] backyard.” (Pres. Reagan’s actual words during the Contra War).

My nation has propped up dictators here, waged war, issued blockades, and interfered in elections. My nation continually stands as a threat if Nicaragua decides to really govern itself (most recently the NICA Act).

Remember that with the loss of funding, the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health had to make cuts to dental care in Ciudad Sandino. Remember also there is NO WAY that any non-profit or even many nonprofits can meet the great needs in this country of mostly poor people.

Food subsidies, medications, hospital budgets, dental care, psychological care, education, agriculture help…the needs here are enormous and my nation keeps trying to limit funding to a government that is doing more for the poor than any neo-liberal government before them and the dictators before them.

I tell people visiting our clinic, “I went to Seminary. I am not a medical person.” What I learned in Seminary was critical to my life and my perspective. In Leviticus…laws are established for a new nation and most are about caring for the poor and oppressed. The prophets criticized and condemned their nation, Israel, for not caring for the poor and oppressed. In the gospels Jesus taught about social justice, peace, the poor, the sick, the oppressed more than he ever did about being a savior to individuals.

Globally the poor and oppressed are crushed under the heels of the powerful and the rich’s heels using economics and politics. We may lose donations and support, but if even one person…ten people…100 people…change the way they use money and their voices, then we make lasting changes.

-Kathleen

This Mother’s Day, give a gift in honor of your mother to expand and continue home visits to pregnant women and new mothers. $25 pays for 5 pregnant moms’ visits and $50 pays for 10 new mothers’ and infants’ visits.

We will send your mother a beautiful e-card telling her of this gift in her honor.
Go to: http://jhc-cdca.org/helpMD.html

This Father’s Day, give a gift in honor of your father by supports the boy’s group as their healthy growth is encouraged.

We will send your father a beautiful e-card telling him of this gift in his honor.
Go to: http://jhc-cdca.org/helpfd.html

Please note: email your mother or father’s name and email address with your name to becca@jhc-cdca.org so we can make sure the card gets to her/him in time.

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

Enclosed please find my tax-deductible contribution of $_________. Designation (if desired)

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

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

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

Name & Address: __________________________________________________________________________________________

Mail to CDCA, c/o Donita Miller, 420 Longhorn Dr, Rock Hill, SC 29732-8886.