



PRONiCA

News from Nicaragua

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Life after Loss

Jessie Rubin, Los Quinchos Volunteer and Fulbright Scholar

In October 2006, the Association Los Quinchos suffered a major loss when 22-year-old Juan Carlos Lanzas took his life. For the last 13 years, Juan Carlos lived and then worked with the Quinchos. The last four years he worked six days a week in Managua's streets handing out food, treating wounds, and leading street children to the intake shelter. On Sundays, he ran a soccer league he founded for children living on the streets. His loss was devastating.

Since that tragic time, the Quinchos have re-energized and rebuilt, gathering strength from new projects, goals, and friends.

In April, Los Quinchos began infrastructural improvements to the La Chureca project. La Chureca is Managua's enormous trash dump where many people scavenge for food and recyclable goods to sell. The Quinchos serve lunch to 40 children who live and work there. Before renovation, there was only a small kitchen and two picnic tables at the tiny site. Now there is substantially more sheltered space, refurbished tables, and a new room for food storage.

Previously, lunch was served only five days a week. Thanks to generous donations by Cele Meyer and the Central American Fund for Human Development via ProNica, children now eat six days a week. The quality of food has improved as well with big plates

of meat, yucca, and salad with rice, beans, and cheese. Some Quincho workers have gone as far to say that the kids in the dump may eat better than the boys at El Filtro, the Quinchos live-in drug rehabilitation project in Managua!

The Quinchos also increased activities offered to the residential children in San Marcos. In June, art classes began in a renovated house. The building is called the Casa de Barrio (Neighborhood House). A talented young man, fondly known as "Chino," teaches art classes twice a day, three times a week.



Chino grew up in San Marcos attending school and playing with the Quinchos; he has a particular fondness for the kids. He has only taught for a few months, but already some children display impressive talent!

Casa de Barrio also houses a new library filled with children's books and reference texts. Doña Ivania is the library caretaker and after-school tutor. She is wise, patient, diligent, and caring – a true gift to children who attend a faulty public school system.

The children of the wider San Marcos community also make good use of Casa de Barrio. They are free to use the books from the library and Chino teaches

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ProNica's mission is to assist in the creation of programs by and for the Nicaraguan people, recognizing that these need to be self-help projects initiated by Nicaraguans which hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are on community cohesiveness and economic development, training in non-violent procedures, health, education, agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. Education of those who seek information or to be of service is part of our mission.

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My Corner

by Barbara Mahal
Committee Co-Clerk

I write about one of my favorite ProNica projects. This one involves women and chickens.

After hurricane Mitch in 1998, ProNica

provided funds for hens, roosters and chicken coop materials. A veterinarian from ASODEPA, a livestock production co-op in Achuapa, trained village women to raise chickens, increase the quantity and improve the quality of chicken and eggs.

Each woman within the group pays back hens and a rooster from her growing stock. The remaining chickens and eggs are for their family's consumption or sale. The women meet as a group and develop policies about the project.

The village chicken co-op still functions. Each year more women begin chicken production. This project empowers women and this is what I like about it.

The ProNica DVD depicts the chicken co-op among other projects. To see for yourself, order yours and share with friends.

Hasta la Vista

ProNica DVD

ProNica offers a DVD documenting our various project partners in Nicaragua.



Australian filmmakers Alica Ford and Nathaniel Wills, who volunteered their professional expertise, created this 15 minute DVD which poignantly brings to life the stories of Nicaragua and ProNica.

To order yours,
send \$10 each to ProNica stateside office.

<--- Note new email addresses

Quinchos from page 1

art classes to non-Quincho students on the weekends. Chino is also interested in organizing more activities that Quinchos and San Marcos youth can enjoy together. He is planning a sleepover at one of the Association's sites so all his students can get to know each other better.

In June, Los Quinchos celebrated their 16th anniversary. The party lasted an entire day and included group games, an exhibition of all the artisan crafts made by the kids, a clown show, dance and music performances by Quinchos children, and a late-night dance party for teenage Quinchos and friends.

Many supporters of the Quinchos attended the party, playing with the kids and applauding performances. If it was not for such support, Asociación Los Quinchos would not be what it is today.

That is why the generosity and friendship of ProNica means so much to the Quinchos. Through tragedy and change, consistent support gives strength. If nothing else, strength is what the Quinchos need to grow and overcome the many obstacles to realize their mission: "nunca más un niño en la calle" (never again a child in the streets).

Thank you, ProNica, for all you have done and continue to do. ❧

Paying Attention

Becky Cluxton

Two days ago I returned from a 10-day ProNica-led Friends Witness Tour in Nicaragua – my first visit to a developing country. While the Sandinistas were pursuing their revolution against Somoza in the 1970s, while Reagan's Central American policy was being applied toward the destruction of every improvement the Sandinistas built in the 1980s – I was focused on being a mother and farm wife in Ohio. I was not paying attention.

Over the last few years as I completed a long-delayed history major at Wilmington College, I started to pay attention to world issues. When sociology professor Neil Snarr prodded me to consider this trip, I became intrigued by ProNica's supportive role in helping a variety of service agencies founded and directed by Nicaraguans. I said yes, and wondered what I was getting into.

Our small group of three did not participate in a work project; our emphasis was on learning Nicaraguan history and culture and visiting the projects ProNica supports. Lillian Hall's personal experience during the war and her long-term commitment to solidarity with

the Nicaraguan people make her a compelling tour leader. I was thoroughly impressed by her generosity as teacher and interpreter.

In our visits to the Acahualinca women's clinic, the many projects within the Los Quinchos program, the farm cooperative and model farm in Achuapa, Martin Luther King School in Managua, and clinics in Achuapa and San Ramon, I was struck above all with the discernment, creativity, energy, flexibility,

and determination of the founders, directors, and staff. They are remarkable individuals working with uncertain budgets, sometimes forgoing their own modest salaries for months at a time.

ProNica's role in providing some continuity of support is vital, although the directors' skillful networking brings major donations and expertise from varied international sources as well.

The story of the women's sewing cooperative in Nueva Vida is similarly inspiring. With support from the Center for Development in Central America, a group of women displaced by Hurricane Mitch borrowed money to construct

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a building (with their own labor) and purchase machines for a cooperative. Set up as the world's first worker-owned Free Trade Zone, they compete on equal footing with the foreign-owned sweatshops whose profits are neither shared with workers nor kept in the country. What courage and persistence in a culture which has historically limited women's role to childbearing, cooking, and laundry!

We learned that Nicaragua is not fundamentally a poor country, but rather it has been impoverished by corruption, exploitation, and war. I thought about how the effects of poverty are similar in poor rural and urban areas of the U.S., but the degree of poverty and illiteracy in Nicaragua is so much greater – and worse than it was in the 1980s. The disparity between the wealthy and the poor is widening everywhere that profit-driven private enterprise economic models predominate. I had a jolting vision of Nicaragua's plight extended to vast portions of the world, under such models.

What can I do now? Share what I saw and learned, certainly. Keep paying attention. Contribute financially. Lean on my government representatives to shift U.S. policy toward greater international cooperation and more progressive economic models.

Nicaragua was both an inspiration and a cautionary lesson for me. As our plane lifted from the runway in Managua and I saw the beautiful volcanic range and green fields recede, I realized I now have an attachment to the country that will not go away. ✕

Friends Witness Tour

October 1-10, 2007

Learn about Nicaragua culture, economy, history

Visit ProNica Project Partners

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Experience it yourself



Wedding Congratulations

to John May and Stephanie Pau.
Guests donated through the Ido
Foundation to ProNica Project
Partner, the Martin Luther King

School in Managua. John and Stephanie visited the
school on their honeymoon.

Former ProNica volunteer Miia Suokonautio and
her new husband Chris Benjamin celebrated their
marriage by directing donations through PayPal.
Project Partner Los Quinchos benefitted from Miia's
volunteer service and these celebration funds.

Thanks to all for your thoughtful generosity.

If a wedding is in your future, consider charitable
donations to ProNica. We ensure your donations
further the goals of the project partner you select.

General, unrestricted donations support those projects
with the greatest current need. Contact the stateside
office for details. ✕

In Memoriam

Ken Kinzel 1954 – 2007

With deepest sorrow we mourn the
recent death of Ken Kinzel, stateside
coordinator 1999 - 2004.

In 2006 Ken moved to Nicaragua to build
his dream of an eco-tourism resort. Ken's
decision to live in Nicaragua came out of
his love of the land and people.

Ken was an avid reader, excellent cook,
professional photographer and devoted
gardener. He loved cats, good music,
cooking for friends and getting his hands
dirty.

ProNica Holds in the Light those touched
by Ken's life, especially his family. ✕

Web of Life

Lillian Hall, Managua Coordinator

Visitors who ask about ProNica are always impressed with the amount of work we accomplish, especially considering that the Managua office is one person. ProNica supports a dozen projects, sponsors delegations, operates Quaker House, sponsors presentations at the Ben Linder House, and meets journalists interested in learning about Nicaragua. The secret to our success is networking, both with the Nicaraguan organizations we support and with international visitors and organizations. My job as Managua coordinator is to bring people together and multiply our efforts.

The end result is that ProNica, despite being such a small organization, pulls resources from many directions. In popular lingo, we get a lot of bang for the buck.

Every person is important whether on the giving or receiving end. As we give, we are enriched. Our lives are woven together with those we help. The

Nicaraguans are our teachers. Not only do they teach us about community organizing and development, they teach us how to be compassionate and generous, how to engage in solidarity, how to laugh in the face of adversity, and how to question our own lives and privileges. We owe them a great deal for such important life lessons.

One never knows what may come from a simple interaction. For that reason, I never miss an opportunity to meet people and show them Nicaragua. An example: While Suntara Loba was a student with a New York City delegation staying at Quaker House, she was moved by a couple of ProNica-supported projects. From that one visit, Acahualinca Women's Center has received international financial support. Suntara's family operates the Levinson Foundation

in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which recently awarded \$20,000 to ProNica for the Acahualinca Women's Center. If fate hadn't brought Suntara to Nicaragua, these women would have a much harder struggle to keep their clinic running in one of Managua's poorest neighborhoods. It's remarkable the effect one person can have.

Another example is that of Cele Meyer and her many contacts. Involved in the Dekalb Interfaith Network of Illinois, the Central American Fund for Human Development

and the Schooner Foundation, she has galvanized efforts to provide vital support year after year to the Los Quinchos association for street children. Through her own amazing networking, Cele raises funds to provide six meals a day for 45 children at the La Chureca dump, and underwrite salaries for psychologists

who work with the ex-street-children. Through Cele, ProNica is known to these other organizations. She, like Suntara, provides an essential link which strengthens ProNica's web of support.

From a letter in November 2005, hundreds of women throughout Nicaragua received life-saving medical care. After learning about ProNica from a Quaker friend, Dr. Taylor in northern California inquired if I knew any clinics which could benefit from the services of her organization PINCC (Prevention International: No Cervical Cancer). ProNica served as a bridge between PINCC and the Acahualinca Women's Center, the Achuapa Natural Medicine Clinic, and the Women's Center of Mulukuku. I helped coordinate their first visit in May of 2006. They return every six

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months to work. Once they met the project partners and learned the lay of the land, these women took it from there.

Not only do PINCC doctors treat the local women, but they also train Nicaraguan doctors and nurses. On their most recent trip in May 2007, they donated a cryo-therapy set and nitrogen tank to the Acahualinca Women's Center and trained two female doctors how to use it. At the Women's Center in Mulukuku, they donated a LEEP (loop electrosurgical procedure) machine and trained a doctor to use it. The women's center is going to now have the means to treat dysplasia in their mobile clinics in that remote area of central Nicaragua. PINCC also traveled to Achuapa in western Nicaragua and in one and a half days saw forty-nine women who traveled by horse, bus and foot.

Had Dr. Taylor not written that one letter in 2005, and had ProNica not been here to serve as that vital link, perhaps none of this would have happened and women from Achuapa, Acahualinca and Mulukuku would have died from preventable causes. One short letter and one response. So simple and, yet, the implications are enormous.

The list goes on. Centre College students visited and then raised funds for the Los Quinchos. Brides and grooms suggested donations to ProNica instead of wedding presents. The ripple effect is far reaching. One positive action multiplies. As author Edward Abbey once said "sentiment without action ruins the soul." We will never know how many souls in both countries have been touched by ProNica's work. Thanks to all of you in so many corners of North America, and beyond, who are part of this beautiful effort. ✕

Casa Materna Loses Midwife

Kitty Madden

On a calm morning during Semana Santa (Holy Week, Easter) Cecilia Torres Hernandez prepared tamales with her daughter Josefina. As rural midwife and community human rights leader, Cecilia had attended pregnant mothers in the town of La Dalia just the day before.

Suddenly, Jhonny Gutierrez, the ex-companero (partner) of Cecilia's daughter Nohemy, burst into the house in a rage. He had been drinking and confronted Cecilia who had entered a legal claim against him for paternal support. Suddenly, Gutierrez pulled out a long dagger and savagely stabbed Cecilia to death and seriously wounded Josefina as she defended her mother.

Network of Midwives and Human Rights Advocates
As midwife in her home municipality of La Dalia, Cecilia, age 53 and herself the mother of 11 children, was part of the Casa Materna's network of rural midwives including more than 370 women from 5 major municipalities. Since early 1992, these midwives have helped identify mothers with high-risk pregnancies who would benefit from the services of the Casa Materna and of the Regional Hospital in Matagalpa city. In the 1990s, Cecilia and others also received training as human rights promoters.



As members of the Ana Lucila Northern Women's network, they worked fearlessly in their prospective communities to advocate for the human rights.

The Casa Materna Mary Ann Jackman has welcomed over 11,925 mothers and newborns since October 1991. Outreach to and follow-up of these

mothers without the assistance of such dedicated midwives would be impossible. With funding from midwives of Switzerland, the Casa staff continues to provide ongoing education for this strong network of midwives here in the region. As with Cecilia, it is not unusual to find that the women called to "catch the babies" of their sisters, daughters, cousins and friends, also become outstanding community leaders.

Cecilia's savage death deeply saddened and outraged the women of the north who have gathered together on various occasions protesting the fact that her murderer was still at large even two months after her death. The memorial held in Matagalpa after her death was attended by more than two hundred women.

After Cecilia's death, the relatives of the accused killer of Cecilia continued to threaten her daughter and other family members. More than two months after Cecilia's murder, Gutierrez was finally apprehended by the police in the remote northern community of Agua Zarca, El Cua where he had been in hiding since April. He confessed to the crime and it is hoped that the threats against Cecilia's family will cease.

There were 20 femicides in Nicaragua since January, three during Easter break, including Cecilia's murder. The women's network is demanding that "the police take radical and energetic action to investigate these crimes and prevent further escalation."

Birth Without Borders

In late May, representatives of the Casa's network of midwives, together with Casa staff, participated in the Midwifery Today International Conference for Midwives, Birth without Borders, held in San Jose, Costa Rica. It was a great opportunity for exchange among midwives from the United States, Mexico, Panama and other Central American countries. Plans are to deepen these connections as the Casa's Network of Midwives also grows stronger in the affirmation of their important work. And, yes, the Casa group also shared with others the story of their sister midwife/human rights advocate, Cecilia Torrez Hernandez. Had she lived, Cecilia would have attended.

With Gratitude

As always, the Casa staff gives thanks for the support of ProNica that helps to cover costs for tubal ligations, medicines and basic utilities for the daily operation of the Casa. We are grateful, too, for our ongoing connection with Lillian Hall here in Nicaragua and have appreciated past visits of ProNica staff and friends. All are welcome to come and see for themselves this vital work on behalf of women and families that you of ProNica support.

Cecilia Torrez Hernandez,
Presente! Presente! Presente! ✕

Good News!

The Levinson Foundation awarded \$20,000 for the Acahualinca Women's Center to further their work in providing health education, free pap smears, diagnostic testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and tubal ligations for those who choose them.

Thank you, Levinson Foundation.

Melissa Christie, Eckerd College volunteer intern in the stateside office last spring, researched and wrote this successful proposal. Her first grant-writing effort brought forth great rewards. Melissa experienced Nicaragua with an Eckerd College delegation in 2005 and learned first-hand the difficult conditions these remarkable women work under and the life-saving services they provide to poor women in this blighted neighborhood. Their dedication impressed Melissa enough to write a dynamic proposal.

Melissa graduated from Eckerd with a BA in Human Development in May and plans to continue working with children and families in community and hospital settings. She has future ambitions to dedicate her service to community health and development on the impoverished island of Ebeye in the Marshall Islands. Her successful debut in grant writing ignites promise for the future, both for her personal goals and for ProNica.

Thank you, Melissa. ✕

Stateside Update

Davida Johns

This newsletter was created on new software that also allows online versions for internet access. As of press time, kinks still challenge. Hopefully, visitors to our website will find virtual newsletters soon. Check us out. Reaching new generations of peace and social justice minded people is our goal. Meanwhile, Tell others about ProNica. Share this newsletter. Recycle.

*The life I touch for good or ill will touch another
life, and that in turn another, until who
knows where the trembling stops or in what far
place my touch will be felt.
Fredrick Buechner*

CASA
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