



PRONiCA

News from Nicaragua

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New Library

Lillian Hall, ProNica Managua Coordinator

For many, many years Jeanne Nash of Fort Collins, Colorado made and sold crafts to buy books to send to Nicaragua via M-bags, large US Postal System sacks for sending such things by boat. Thousands of beautiful, colorful and well-chosen books were sent over the years. Every ProNica-supported library benefited from Jeanne's individual efforts. This is a testimony to the major impact one person can have.

When the US Postal Service suspended M-bag service to Nicaragua, Jeanne was only temporarily thwarted in her efforts to support our libraries. Getting in touch with individual travelers, she sent small packages of books with them to hand carry to Nicaragua. Apparently, she still has piles of books in her living room waiting for willing couriers.

In spite of these shipping setbacks, Jeanne continues to support the libraries – this time with a major cash donation of \$8,000. Wanting to make a big impact on one library, instead of dividing the money between several, the Los Quinchos Casa del Barrio Library in San Marcos was chosen after much careful deliberation during several months.

The Casa del Barrio is a brightly colored, red-tiled roof building where a variety of cultural activities, including dance, marimba, and painting are taught. It was renovated and supported by another long-term supporter of Los Quinchos, Italian author Francesca Caminoli, who has been selling the paintings of her deceased son Guido.



Children love books

The library, housed in one of the Casa's rooms, is available not only for Quinchos children, but also anyone in the community. Until recently it had only a small collection of books, most of which were sent by Jeanne Nash herself. The only table was borrowed from the art classes.

The library will greatly benefit from this massive injection of capital

which will permit the purchase of more tables and chairs, bookshelves, books, maps, magazines and games and will pay the librarian's salary for a year.

In April, Casa del Barrio coordinator Doña Ivania Garcia and young former-Quincho librarian Francisco Martinez, went with me to Managua's largest bookstore to start buying books and other supplies. Words cannot express their excitement to be able to choose anything they thought would benefit their library. They were like kids in a candy shop.

see **Books** on page 3

News from Nicaragua

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ProNica Board:	Herb Haigh, President
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Other Contributors:	Gloria Vidal
William Gosnell	Samantha Oulavong

ProNica's mission is to assist in creating and sustaining 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.

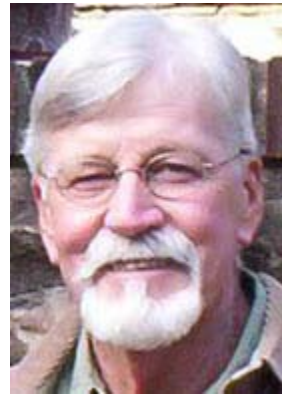
ProNica's priorities are on community cohesiveness and economic development, training in non-violent procedures, health, education, agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. Education of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

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua. The work is accomplished by an international core of dedicated volunteers who seek to embody Quaker principles of consensual decision making and action and respect for that of God in every person. This service project arose out of a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond to that concern in practical and constructive ways.

ProNica Stateside Office
130 Nineteenth Avenue Southeast
St. Petersburg, Florida 33705-2810
www.pronica.org, stateside@pronica.org
727.821.2428

El Centro de los Amigos
Apartado 5391
Managua, Nicaragua
managua@pronica.org
011.505.266.0984

Quaker House Managua
011.505.266.3216



My Corner

by Ed Hotchkiss
ProNica Board Secretary

As food prices soar around the world, it is estimated that basic staples such as rice and beans have increased an average of forty percent since mid-2007. Nowhere is hunger more visible than in La Chureca, the dump in Managua, Nicaragua.

In St Petersburg, Florida I am an advocate for the homeless and low income. My introduction to ProNica opened my eyes to the overwhelming degree of poverty in Nicaragua. Becoming an active member of ProNica allows me personal involvement in the struggle to help alleviate hunger and poverty on an international level.

In La Chureca, families actually live in squalor amidst the mountains of debris. Children sift through the garbage seeking scraps to eat or some item to sell.

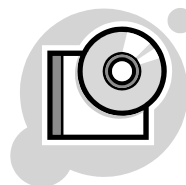
At Los Quinchos, a ProNica project partner, these children eat one healthy meal each day.

In a country where forty percent of the population lives on less than one dollar a day and seventy-six percent on less than two dollars a day, I realize just how important this daily meal is to these children.

A recent World Bank study revealed that the increases in food cost and scarcity of food has gotten much worse in countries around the world. None have been affected more than Nicaragua. Whether it's addressing the problems of homelessness here locally, or assisting the hungry children of Nicaragua, I am very grateful to ProNica for giving me this opportunity to serve others in need.

Peace. ☐

ProNica DVD



One DVD with two segments.
First about all ProNica projects;
second about the beauty school.
Send \$10 each to ProNica.

Their first priority is a complete set of textbooks for K-12. Nicaraguan schools do not provide them and they are too expensive for families. Standard teaching practice is for teachers to write lessons on the blackboard and children to copy everything – a major time consuming process. Having all the required textbooks on hand at the library will enable not only Quinchos, but all students in the local community to study and do their homework. Without a doubt, this will certainly enhance their learning and, hopefully, increase their probability of success.



Doña Ivania buying books for the new library

Fomenting a general love of reading is also a major interest. Doña Ivania taught for 30 years. Francisco is one of the few young men who loves to read. Thus, many novels in every reading level were also purchased.

slowly, in good Quaker style. But surely, but we already see the joy and excitement in the children as they visit their blossoming library.

All the money hasn't been spent. We are proceeding

Thanks, Jeanne!!! ☐

ProNica Board of Directors

ProNica Board of Directors consists of five members. Three are named by the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and two are selected by the ProNica Committee. Directors serve three-year terms. Each year one or two members rotate.

Muchas gracias, retiring members

Barbara Wolfe and Barbara Mahal have served on the Board of Directors since ProNica's incorporation in 2002. Barbara Mahal has also served as co-clerk. Their dedication and guidance have inspired the ProNica committee to reach higher to achieve our goals of respect and empowerment of the Nicaraguan people.

As you move into Emeritus status, the ProNica committee graciously thanks you both for your generous service. We look forward to your continued involvement through sub-committees and leading the way for the rest of us.

Bienvenidos, new members

ProNica Committee welcomes new Directors. Secretary Ed Hotchkiss works with a homeless advocacy organization in St. Petersburg, has served on various committees and writes My Corner column for this issue. Director Tim Fogarty is a University of Florida professor, has served on ProNica committee, and has traveled to Nicaragua for 20 years. We look forward to your service and guidance. ☐

History

Four Eckerd College volunteer interns in the stateside office interviewed some of ProNica's founders to compile an early history. If you have experience or memories to share, send to the stateside office. ☐

AVP

Alternatives to Violence workshops are commencing in Nicaragua. Generous donors contribute funds that allow participants to travel to workshops and learn skills to avoid conflict and reduce violence. ☐

New Volunteer

Gloria Vidal

“Have fun, but don’t get married,” my dad advised as we hugged in the Seattle Airport. Obviously not one to become so easily attached so quickly, I giggled and reassured him that when I return in August, I will bring only my luggage and a suntan. Although, after six weeks, the strength of my love and attachment, not only to Los Quinchos and all of the wonderful people I’ve met, but to Nicaragua itself, surprises me.

My first memorable day in San Marcos was a Saturday morning at the Cultural Center. As I neared the Center, I heard loud salsa music, marimbas, and children playing and laughing. Stepping inside, I gained my first real impression of Los Quinchos. I found a magical atmosphere through the lively sounds and the brightly colored murals that cover the walls. As I stood on the steps soaking in the beautiful details, smiling children from all directions boldly approached me with hugs and questions. I was automatically accepted into the Los Quinchos family, and soon was seated on a bench with several children gathered around, sharing our interests.

When they learned that I love to dance, they pulled me toward the dance class. I’ve always enjoyed and felt proudly proficient at dancing, so I tried out my classic moves. When I looked around, I realized that all of the girls, even the youngest, far surpassed my skills. It was then I realized how much there is to learn on Saturdays.

After dance class, I was lead to the art studio painting class. In contrast to the energetic dancing, the art studio was more serious and calm. I watched children, big and small, concentrating on their creations. I was amazed at the quality of their work in that little studio. I’m positive that my elementary school art classes, taught by college-educated art instructors, never produced such exquisite and creative pieces as those made by eight-year-old children that day. I left the

art studio inspired and promised myself to attend art class every week. I aspire to their level of creativity.

Every Saturday I return to learn and laugh with the children. This happy time is such a special part of my experience. It is when we really laugh together, learn from and teach each other. Saturdays will be one part that I will miss when I leave.



Gloria with Yahoskas

A common question my new friends ask me, the foreign visitor, is “Will you marry yourself to

Nicaragua?” – as in, to remain indefinitely. With a smile, my common response, “Everything is a possibility.” At this point, remaining in Nicaragua is not part of my plan. My first priority is to finish my final year at Haverford College.

As my August departure creeps closer, my remaining weeks will pass as quickly as my time here already has. Sooner than I like, I will be sitting in the Haverford library appearing to intently read some anthropological article. In reality, I will be reliving a moment or dreaming about my wonderful time in San Marcos, Nicaragua. □

2008 Summer Delegations

During the summer months, three college delegations will experience Nicaragua. In May, nine Haverford College students will study Spanish for one week; spend two weeks of formal presentations, site visits, and service; and volunteer with several ProNica project partners for eight more weeks. In June, University of Florida brings fifteen students for two weeks. In July, Washburn University brings fourteen students for two weeks, including the Achuapa International Music and Solidarity Festival. We’ll share their stories in the September newsletter. □

A Juggler's Cup Runneth Over

William Gosnell aka 'Memo'

As an Alaska fishermen, I work seasonally. This allows me extended vacations to work with disadvantaged children. Every year around this time I make a bus trip through Central America. I've visited the Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City four years. This year, I visited La Asociacion Coordinadora para el Desarrollo in San Salvador. And I found El Centro de los Amigos in Managua, Nicaragua. Lillian Hall, ProNica Program Coordinator, introduced me to Zelinda Roccia of Los Quinchos. And, now...

My Cup Runneth Over

My first experience was at the Quinchos facility in La Chureca. My interaction is simple - recreation. I play and teach at the same time to stay engaged with the *chavalos*. The youngest just want to be held. Much of the time I would notice that I was holding a child but had no memory of picking them up. They just appeared in my arms. I do tricks and clowning. Any 50-year-old *gringo* who flaps his elbows and clucks like a chicken is certain to bring down the house. Easy.

I also teach juggling. I start with nylon scarves that float and are easy to catch. We throw scarves and do fun things like clapping before catching them.

With the older *chavalos* I taught beanbag juggling. I was really impressed at their skill level and how hard they worked. I also learned a new word, '*mira!*' ('look!') I only had six beanbags (Now five. I offered a ransom of 20 cordobas for its return. So far, no takers. I was prepared to go as high as 50 cordobas.)

Next, I showed how to make beanbags out of balloons filled with rice: Remove stems from round balloons. Snap them over sandwich bags filled with rice. Repeat at least four layers. They readily made their own. I look askance at that type of beanbag, because the balloon layers come off and present a hazard to babies. But these kids live in the dump! A stray balloon fragment is a drop in their ocean.

At the Los Quinchos facility at San Marcos, I worked three days. The kids there were a little older and a lot cleaner. In one class, I showed them the scarf throwing described above. I like to ask, '*Como se dice...?*' (How do you say...?) and then touch my shoulders, or toes. The kids love to shout the new word to teach the *gringo*.

I would throw a scarf and catch it on my various parts: elbow '*codo!*' head '*cabeza!*' knee '*rodillas!*' foot '*pies!*' tummy '*estomago!*' For the finale, I leaned over, said '*Como se dice?*' and slapped my behind. With great glee, they shouted all the words they knew for the part we sit on. When I caught a scarf there they really came unglued. What a joy it is to work with these kids.

I went to La Finca, the farm where the younger boys live. I showed one of the staff how to sew beanbags out of velour, which I provided. I also taught some serious ball juggling to some talented older boys from Granada.

I believe in the power of continuity. If I work a facility and say, 'I'll be back next year,' I will. It means a lot to these kids that someone will share time with them over a period of years, even if the time is short.

To those who criticize what I do, calling it band-aid work, I say, 'Sure, it's a band-aid, but every band-aid is applied with love, and enough love will solve the problem.' A professional clown I know goes to refugee camps every year. He says, 'Be part of the solution.'

Political and economic changes only happen when there are enough people like you and me who care. You can expect to hear from me next year – same time, same place.

Peace. □



future juggler

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Images from La Chureca, Managua's Landfill

Samantha Oulavong, Graphic Arts Teacher

As a teacher, I travel during school breaks to give photography workshops with marginalized children. My non-profit organization is LOVE, Lens Of Vision & Expression. I worked with La Chureca children while I was in Nicaragua during December 2007.

During the week-long workshop what I remember most is how affectionate and willing to share their world these children were. They have changed my view of the world.



Wilfredo photographs La Chureca

Even as the children were very rough with each other, the affection I received was priceless. I received so many spontaneous hugs amid the chaos that is La Chureca.

Among the many children was David, who joined,

then quit, then rejoined the workshop. He is a natural, knowing what images to capture. His photographs are amazing. One day I saw him with two other boys waiting by the entrance to jump onto the next garbage truck entering the dump. La Chureca residents try to claim the refuse as theirs, for payment. It is their only means of survival, but my maternal instinct wants children his age living and laughing like my nieces and nephews here in the States.

In spite of my translator's reluctance to risk my expensive equipment to theft, we crossed the road. We learned that he was waiting for us outside the dump because he was eager to use the camera. I wanted to cry from guilt and the pure joy that they would walk two miles to meet us.

The images by these children who live in such horror are truly inspiring. Their photographs will be exhibited in the Palacio de la Cultura in Granada in June, 2008.

View more at www.lensofvisionexpression.org. □

Reproductive Freedom

Sixty women and four men in Acahualinca have received the gift of permanent birth control. Since February ProNica sent \$4,500 for tubals and vasectomies. These families are now able to concentrate their limited resources on their existing children's needs, such as food, housing, health, and education.

In poor countries where basic necessities are difficult to obtain, birth control is a luxury. Multiple births wear a mother's body down. Mother's deaths, from complications of childbirth, is a tragedy for the remaining children, especially when fathers are absent.

In 2006 the Ruth Hyde Paine Fund for Women's Health was created in honor of ProNica's most dedicated committee member. Ruth's passion for families was always foremost. You can contribute by marking your check 'RHP' or 'tubals.'

And, on behalf of the women and their families, thank you for your generous support. □

Funding

Perhaps the economic cycle slows, but needs still exist. Some large organizations have reduced, or entirely eliminated, 2008 funding. ProNica will continue to support our project partners, even if only with our personal presence, in solidarity. Our operating expenses are small so that most donations go to projects.

As you enjoy your summertime activities, please remember ProNica's project partners in Nicaragua. □

Origami at Los Quinchos

Gloria Vidal, Volunteer

Every so often, the Los Quinchos program in San Marcos receives visitors who bring unusual and intriguing gifts and skills to the children. In April, Los Quinchos received a very special treat. Aldo Marcel of Esteli joined the children in their beautiful new library for a weekend of fun and invention.

Shortly after I arrived, I met Aldo, a quiet and gentle man. The conversation had drifted to an unfamiliar-to-me subject until, out of the corner of my eye, I glimpsed a beautiful pink rose. When I held the flower, I was stunned to realize that it was paper! It seemed



so real. As he pulled different paper objects from his backpack – another flower, a hummingbird, a boat, a stand for the boat – I learned Aldo is a talented origami artist. ‘Talented artist’ fails to describe Aldo’s extraordinary genius. Never have I seen such beautiful origami creations.

Most amazing, Aldo is self-taught. His genius is internationally recognized and he receives invitations to origami conferences. I knew immediately that his workshop would be a success.

Aldo arrived on a Friday and set up in the new Casa del Barrio library. The Cultural Center houses space for visiting guest activities such as this workshop. The library also provides books and maps –

standard items in US schools and libraries, but rare in Nicaragua.

Just as I thought, Aldo’s origami workshop was a hit. As word spread, more joined the Saturday workshop. Both children and adults crowded around his table and watched in awe as Aldo explained the steps to create baskets and stars. The students were so focused on their projects, the room filled with tranquility.

I left the origami workshop feeling content. Seeing all of the children engaged in something that they found so interesting had made my day that much better. Upon arriving home, I learned just how influential the origami workshop had been.

My host brother, Juan Miguel who works for Los Quinchos, his daughter, and his nephew played with several pieces of origami which Juan had constructed in the workshop. The little nephew squealed with



delight as he moved a part of a paper hen, and it laid a paper egg. Thirty year old Juan Miguel bounced around the house displaying his new creations as eagerly as a school boy’s show-and-tell.

Watching the energetic threesome play with their origami creations, I now understand just how exciting a single piece of paper can really be. □

On the Road, Again

As we go to press, ProNica Board President and Committee Clerk, Herb and Pam Haigh will present the Acahualinca Beauty School and other ProNica projects to the Men’s Breakfast Club at Clifton Heights Methodist Church in Philadelphia.

In early June the Haighs will attend Baltimore Central Quarterly Meeting.

At the Friends General Conference Gathering in July, Stateside Coordinator Davida Johns will join the Haighs to present an Interest Group and Quaker organization discussions, sell crafts in the consignment shop, and exhibit brochures and newsletters. And...

In your Yearly Gathering, look for ProNica information. □

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130 Nineteenth Avenue Southeast
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- Visit our website for secured online donations through PayPal.
- Gift of Life - in memory of a person or celebration,
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- Name ProNica as a beneficiary in your estate planning. Contact us for details.
- Friends Fiduciary Corporation has plans for now and later giving. Contact us for details.
- Monthly gifts provide sustaining support for ProNica's Project Partners.
- ProNica coordinates volunteers, work study delegations, Friends Witness Tours for smaller groups.

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