



# PRONiCA

## News from Nicaragua

December 2012

Vol 25 No 4

Published quarterly by the ProNica Committee of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting since 1987

*Quakers in Solidarity with Nicaraguans for 25 Years*

## Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2011-2012

By Laura Hopps, Program Director, with contributions from  
Lillian Hall, Program Director Emeritus & Carmen Gonzalez, Delegation Leader

In my first five weeks as ProNica's new Program Director, what I have encountered is an organization solidly committed to the work of peace in Nicaragua—not with loud publicity and fanfare, but with the simplicity, humbleness, and constancy of walking side by side over many years and many struggles with its partner organizations.

Together with the ProNica family of supporters across North America and the globe, we are privileged to be able to water the seeds of peace in marginalized communities, supporting the work of incredibly talented community organizers and activists who, with great love, have given their lives to empowering women and transforming violence, rehabilitating street children, and advocating for human rights and for a sustainable future. In our accompaniment of these organizations in 2012, we funded 5 partner communities and 11 projects:

**The Acahualinca Women's Center** faced considerable challenges this year after losing a major source of funding when Spanish aid withdrew from Nicaragua. ProNica is an essential funding source, having provided \$29,635 in 2012. With our help, the Women's Center was able to conduct essential medical procedures for low-income women in the community, including: 1,094 pap smears, 30 biopsies, and 10 ultrasounds as well as 30 tubal ligations and 2 vasectomies.

Free HIV tests are offered to anyone who visits. Each day at the Center, the psychologist sees 10-15 new domestic violence cases. Group therapy sessions for survivors of violence meet regularly, and a variety of workshops on topics like self-esteem, human rights, and sexual health

are offered widely. The Center provides support and advocacy for LGBTQ groups, in addition to many other essential services to the community.



Acahualinca Beauty School student rolls her daughter's hair for practice.

**The Acahualinca Beauty School** will graduate 30 students on December 1st. Many of the women who attend the course are former sex workers seeking skills that will offer them alternative options for employment. This course exists thanks to our dedicated Board member, Pam Haigh, who is committed to women's empowerment and has taken it upon herself as a cosmetologist to partner with this program. ProNica provided \$4,445 in funds to keep this program as an offering for women in the community, and it continues to transform the lives of its graduates.

**The Acahualinca Library** is an essential service for youth of the community. In 2012, ProNica gave \$2,292 in support. It is impossible for most students to purchase text books, so accessing them at the library is a crucial for their studies. This year the library saw an increase in users.

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## News from Nicaragua

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### ProNica Board

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**ProNica's Vision** is solidarity that empowers and educates Nicaraguans and North Americans.

**ProNica's Mission** is building sustainable cross-cultural relationships between the peoples of Nicaragua and North America using Quaker values.

ProNica assists in creating and sustaining programs by and for the Nicaraguan people. These projects hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are community cohesiveness and economic development, non-violence training, health, education, sustainable agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. We educate those who seek information or wish to serve.

Our work is accomplished by an international core of dedicated volunteers and staff who seek to embody Quaker principles of consensual decision making and action and respect for that of God in everyone. This service project arose from a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond in practical and constructive ways.

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua.

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## Stateside Message

Melissa Ajabshir, Executive Director



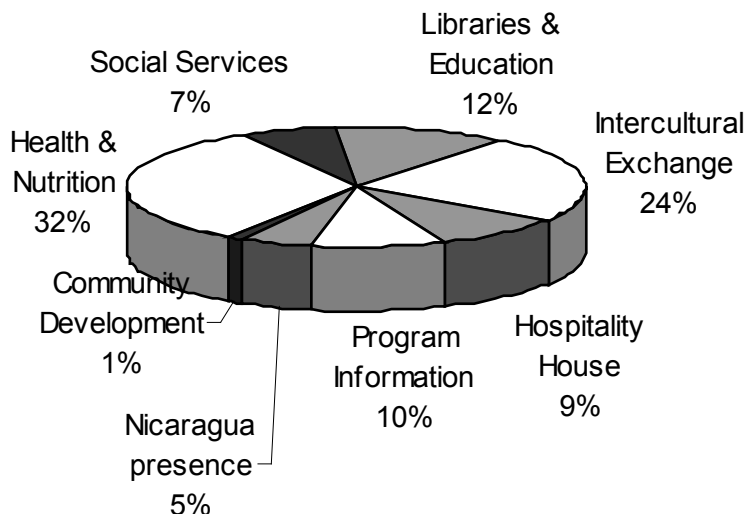
Melissa with a rural teacher who received a microloan

As I reflect on my first year as Executive Director of ProNica, what springs to mind is that enduring Quaker reminder: "Let your life speak." I can't recall a time when I've been surrounded by more people who do precisely that. Whether I talk with staff, attend to volunteers, confer with the consejo, listen to Nicaraguan

partners, greet supporters or plan with the board of directors, I am constantly humbled. It is a privilege to work daily among those driven by compassion, engaged in peace and compelled to hope. It is your collective generosity of friendship that fuels this noble little engine of solidarity in the world.

As you read the annual report authored by those on the ground in Nicaragua, you'll see the results of this collaborative effort. You'll glean the human face of struggle in the poorest nation in Latin America, and you'll read about the fortitude and innovations that are building communities and transforming lives from the grassroots up. Even in these challenging economic times, communities are being transformed and lives improved. It's the story of the triumph of the inner Light. Indeed it is our story, for as Desmond Tutu said, "My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together." Permit me to extend gratitude to each and every one of you for the threads you've sewn into the tapestry that is ProNica. □

## Project Support FY 2011-2012



Programs that promote a culture of reading and story times for children have been particularly popular.

**The Acahualinca Preschool** continues to be an essential service to the community. The students are mostly children of people who pick trash in the dump, and serve in other informal sector jobs. The preschool offers uniforms and materials for children (ages 3-6), which tends to be a major factor that enables them to learn. Teachers at the preschool are incredibly committed to their work, which they do with small salaries. They have made efforts at improving their own education. Several are studying now to complete their high school diplomas, and one is being certified to teach primary school.

**Los Quinchos Association** has continued their inspiring work of caring for the rehabilitation of street children through their programs the Filter House, with direct outreach to street children, the La Chureca children's center in the Managua City Dump where they provide meals and after school support, the Las Yahoskas girls residence, and the Boy's Farm, and several other centers.

ProNica contributed \$20,904 to their efforts in 2012, to cover food at the Yashokas's girls residence, the meal

program at La Chureca, and the librarian's salary at the Quinchos' library in San Marcos. The Quinchos library serves not only the organization's children, but is an important resource for the entire community.

**The Achuapa Library** made good use of their funds for 2012, purchasing 2 new bookshelves and repairing 3 more that were on the verge of collapse. The Library was founded in 1986, but was later forced to close. Rafaela

Valdaves helped to open the doors again in 1996 with only 56 books. Today the library serves an average of 600 people a month including children, teenagers, university students, farmers, professionals, and other community members. The collection now includes over 4,000 books, and in addition to basic library service, the library offers children's story times, writing and storytelling competitions, handicrafts, and other activities for the community.



Lunch at Los Quinchos boys' farm

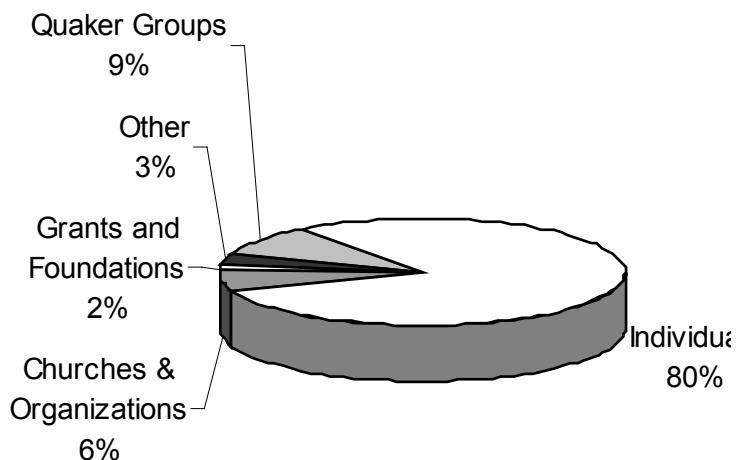
**The Estelí Library** received funding for arts and crafts materials from ProNica in 2012. Throughout

the year, they conducted more than 117 activities in preschools, elementary schools and community centers to promote a culture of reading, with 3,784 children participating in arts and crafts, storytelling, and piñatas. With the help of ProNica, the library presented three new books to the public by their Nicaraguan authors, performed

See *Annual Report* page 4

## Income & Expense Fiscal Year 2011-2012

### Income from Contributions

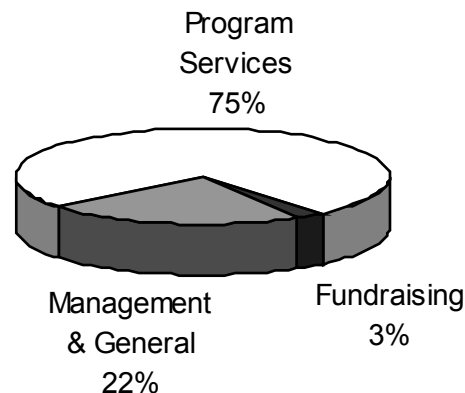


Total  
Income  
\$189,818

Spent  
on  
Programs  
\$153,738

Total  
Expenses  
\$205,099

### Expenses





maintenance on 15 computers for the computer class, and conducted 15 activities for the elderly residents of a local nursing home. Throughout the year, 17 visits with children from 17 schools in the area were given tours of the library to encourage them to visit in which 655 children participated to learn of the services available to them. Twenty-two public expositions of books were conducted in 2012 around different themes including: Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, César Sandino, Children's Week, the environment, agriculture, International Day of the Book, Worker's Day, Mother's Day, International Women's Day, and more, in which some 3,460 people participated.



The thriving Estelí Library is enjoyed by children and adults alike.

**Casa Materna, Matagalpa** received support from ProNica in 2012 for covering basic operating expenses such as utilities, medicines, and contraceptives for their family planning program. The average cost per woman per day of just under \$6, and the average stay per women at the Casa is 9 days. The Casa is struggling for funds after a main source of funding pulled out of Nicaragua. Casa Materna attends not only to the medical needs of the high-risk pregnant women who pass through their doors, but also provides education on family planning, nutrition, and a variety of other topics. Since its inception, more than 15,900 women have visited Casa Materna, which has effectively reduced maternal mortality rates in the area.

**The Centro Promocional Cristiana Paz y Vida, San Ramón** (aka Casa de los Niños) received funding for two programs in 2012: \$3,000 for a micro-loan program for women, and \$1,475 for mobile clinics offering pap smears in rural communities. The micro-loan program benefitted 7 women, many of whom are local teachers who requested funds to improve conditions in their homes or start a small business. To this day, not a single woman has defaulted on a loan, and they are steadily repaying. The mobile pap smear clinic has also been of enormous benefit to the women of San Ramón. Many of the women who pick coffee and who are out in rural zones do not feel comfortable traveling to the main town for testing. Through the Center's educational efforts and word of

mouth from women who have gotten pap smears from the Center's clinic in the past, there is high demand. In recent years, up to 80% of the tests have come back positive for a sexually transmitted infection, other kinds of infections and abnormalities, and a few cases of cervical cancer.

**The Oficina de la Mujer in Rio Blanco** received \$1,180 in support from ProNica in 2012. They coordinate broadly with local police, the district attorney, women's collectives in Matagalpa, the Ministry of Education, the news media, churches, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), civil society, Ayuda en Acción, and several other community organizations and nonprofits, to address issues of interfamily violence and violence against women. In 2012, the Oficina attended 70 cases of violence, consisting mostly of intra-family violence. The dedicated team carried out a workshop funded by ProNica, which 60 people attended. The focus of the workshop was the new Law 779 that protects women survivors of violence. While a core team of 4 dedicated women are at the heart of operations at the Oficina, they coordinate a network of

over 35 human rights advocates representing communities throughout the region who are trained to offer legal accompaniment to survivors of violence and assist survivors in accessing psychological and other support.

**The Martin Centeno Community, Rio Blanco** received \$470 from ProNica in 2012 to repair their community's footbridge, the only way to access the community without getting wet in the river during the rainy



Some of the corn harvest at the Martin Centeno Community

season. The planks are made of wood that must be replaced on a yearly basis due to wear and tear and environmental factors. The community is happy with the new bridge and safe access for the 260 residents of Martin Centeno.

**ProNica delegations** are coordinated by Carmen Gonzalez, whose joyful presence and extensive knowledge about Nicaraguan history, politics and culture is of great benefit to groups that visit. ProNica hosted a total of 6 delegations in 2012 including: Washburn U, Trinity U, U of Minnesota, Haverford Coll, U of Florida and StreetSquash (a teen organization from Harlem, New York). Our delegations focus on Nicaraguan history, dynamics of poverty in the Global South, impacts of economic globalization, as well as the strategies of grassroots organizations working for change in their communities. In 2012, delegates had opportunities to engage with grassroots leaders, experience life in the campo and urban centers with Nicaraguan families, visit with our project partners and affiliate organizations, and return to the U.S. inspired by the example of dedication to social and environmental justice.

**The ProNica Volunteer Program** had 7 participants in 2012, with 5 from Haverford College. Siena Mann volunteered with Cafe Luz in Esteli on their organic vegetable program. Jemma Benson volunteered with Casa Materna. Kelsey Bilek was at the Acahualinca Library. Paula Samelson, a Masters in Public Health student, also did volunteer work with Acahualinca, producing an excellent report in Spanish that has been of great benefit to the Center. Gabby Martinez worked with Los Quinchos. Zoe Becker was with Dorothy Granada in Matagalpa in a midwife program. Kate Page helped at the Gallery of Heroes and Martyrs. We extend many thanks to the volunteers for giving their time, talents and hearts to build friendships and collaboration with Nicaraguan communities.

**The Managua Quaker Worship Group** typically meets on the first and third Sundays of the month. Our clerk is Pat Floerke of the Jubilee House Community, who also runs the children's First Day School. Since many of the people interested in attending Meeting also have young children, the First Day School has been seen as an important commitment to creating a space that is welcoming to all regardless of age.



StreetSquash delegation visiting Los Quinchos (see story pg 6)

**The Consejo** in Nicaragua consists of the Program Director, Delegation Coordinator Carmen Gonzalez, as well as Julieta Martinez of Asociación Kairos para la Formación, Fr. Denis Herbert of Fundación para Desarrollo Comunitario, and Luis Enrique and Pedro Rafael, also of FUNDACCO. They meet yearly to consider the funding applications from partner organization. Their support is crucial, as they represent

different perspectives working on the ground in Nicaragua and offer reflections on the viability of proposals and potential issues.

**We're greening ProNica.** El Centro de Los Amigos (Friends Center) has a new worm composting system to reduce trash by as much as 40%. Quaker House has a new vegetable and medicinal plant garden with tomatoes, carrots, squash, calalás, beets, lemongrass, aloe vera, and other plants. Though our green space is limited, we plan to fill it with veggies, fruits and medicinal plants for visitors to enjoy and as a way to care for our little patch of earth.

*An Aboriginal activist group once stated: "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound with mine, then let us work together." It is in that spirit that we have engaged in solidarity these past 26 years, and it is in that spirit that we look to the future. It is our hope that together, this work will grow in commitments, love, time, and resources—growing stronger in Nicaragua and throughout the world. □*



# ProNica Family of Supporters 2011-2012 - Muchas Gracias!

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Blattenberger, Ruth	Contois, James	Eubanks, Heike & W.	Haigh, Herb & Pam	Ithaca M/M
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Bouwman, Leslie	Cook, Vaneesa	Febowitz, Jill A	Halifax Meeting	Jenkins, Elizabeth
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## Journey from Harlem to Managua and Beyond

Jennifer Bueno, Age 17, StreetSquash

In July, I went on a student service-learning trip to Nicaragua with StreetSquash (based in Harlem, New York). It was a life changing experience. It's so different to see something on television than to actually live it. We stayed there for a week and a half, and even now several months later, I still remember the impact the trip had on me.

For the first few days we lived in *Casa Cuáquera* (Quaker House) which at first felt strange because I was not accustomed to the area, but then it felt like home as the days passed. Throughout our stay in Managua, I saw more of the culture of the city and learned some of its history. It is the largest city of Nicaragua and its capital. My experience in Managua was eye opening because some of the things that occur there rarely happen here in New York City. When we went to the historical center to learn history, we had another unexpected lesson. Little kids (ages 3 or 4) begged people for money. We were all a little taken aback, and it showed us how these street kids are appreciative with the little things people give them, even just water. Carmen (our trip leader) explained to us that their parents make them go outside to ask for money so they can eat and help support their families. I couldn't believe this. My only job is to go to school. Even though I have to help babysit sometimes, I have support of my family and food and a roof over my head.

Another place we visited was Casa Materna, a home for pregnant girls and women. We learned that many pregnant women die because they didn't have the attention they needed while pregnant. While there is not a lot of community support for women, there are leaders who suggested they make a maternity house that now helps many women through and after their pregnancy. Casa Materna is also a place where pregnant women (ages of 16-40s) with complications get

Keeler, Terrill J	Mapleside Sewing Bee	O'Hara, Julia	Rumschlag, Sarah	Taylor, Ted
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Kung Pao Comedy	Miles, REbecca	Peters, Joan	Severin, Susan	Ware, Susan
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Langley Hill Quakers	Moore, Sharon B.	Pihaylic, Martha	Shea, Charlotte	Weiler, Kathleen
Lanker, Caroline	Morris, Martha	Pilgrim, Kit & Evelyn	Shwaiki, Frank	Weiler, Peter
Larson, Connie	Morton, Margaret	Ponsetto, Daniel	Sims, Sheree	Westberg, Jane
Laskowski, Carolyn	Moskowitz, Milton	Potter, Claire	Smith, Michael	Whaley, Judith
Launcelott, Janet	Mnt View Quakers	Potts, Rebecca	Snarr, D Neil	White, Alan
Lautenschlager, Thea	Mozden, Joseph	Powell, Marilyn	Snoke, Sherry	Whitman Family Trust
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to stay until their child is due. One of their goals is to reduce maternal and infant death rates. This experience was happy because of all the women that are saved at Casa Materna and sad because so many other women in Nicaragua die because they do not receive the medicine and help that they need to live.

One of the most impactful things for me was our visit to Los Quinchos, a program to take street children off the streets and to actually give them positive aspects in life. I was surprised that I saw a lot of happy faces when we got there, but learned that even though they live the way they do, they are happy. That really made me appreciate so many things in life. The boys had different stories behind their smiles. While we were there, we learned a few of their stories. One of the things we learned was that they were glue sniffers. This glue, they use as a drug that keeps them from hunger and pain. This was especially sad because most of them are at a young age going through this. Regardless, they seem to have a bright view towards the world which really brightened my eyes about many different things. No matter what, they continue to move forward and try to do the best that they can.

Another impactful part of the trip was staying with a local family the country village, El Limon. I realized that I don't appreciate things as much as I should. I saw the way they lived and acted, which was really a big surprise because they were happy and dealt with the fact that they had very little material things. Their rooms were outside, and their kitchen was practically dirt also. I could not believe that they did not have real bathrooms or running water, but I understand that they continue to build and modernize through community building. I saw so many things I haven't really seen here in the US. I am so honored I was able to travel with ProNica and experience all of these things. I plan on passing on my experience to others, and continue to grow and work hard so that I can be a part of making change in our world. □

*Casa  
Cuáquera*



José and Panchita welcome you

### **Quaker House**

Hospitality house offers travelers simple lodging in Managua. Located in a quiet residential neighborhood, convenient to shopping, banks and restaurants. Individuals, groups, meeting space, wifi, fully equipped kitchen or catering available.

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# **PRONiCA**

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- \* Volunteer, take your group on a service learning trip or join a Friends Witness Tour.
- \* Friends Fiduciary Corporation has plans for now and later giving. Contact us for details.
- \* Sign up for automatic donations, direct from your bank to ours. Contact us for details.
- \* Mail checks to the stateside office: 130 Nineteenth Ave SE, St Petersburg FL 33705-2810
- \* Visit our website [www.pronica.org](http://www.pronica.org) for secure PayPal donations
- \* Monthly donations provide enduring/sustaining support. Contact us for details.



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