



PRONiCA

December 2017

Vol 30, No 2

Working in Solidarity with Nicaragua

ProNica Restructures Nicaraguan Operations

ProNica Executive Director Yarrow Ries and Administrative Assistant Maxwell Zinsmeister visited Nicaragua in May of this year to distribute 2017 earmarked donations for ProNica's partner organizations. During the visit to Casa Materna in Matagalpa it was learned that the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health no longer wanted pregnant women to be served in private maternal homes. The government mandated women be cared for only in government run homes so after 25 years of service Casa Materna would be closing her doors. With stricter government regulations and a decline in funding due to political and economic climates in both the US and Europe, private funding for many grassroots organizations in Nicaragua was halted. ProNica herself had experienced a slow decline in financial support, given the turbulent economic environment of the last decade. It soon became clear that in order to continue to serve the growing needs of her partners, ProNica would need to restructure.

ProNica's presence in Managua included an office known as El Centro, and its dormitory style hostel and gathering place Quaker House. Nicaraguan staff included an in-country Director, her assistant, the

Quaker House housekeeper and night watchman. The office was originally intended to provide partner support and cultural exchange. It coordinated witness tours and delegations, and distributed funds to the partners. Because of increasing governmental requirements, fees and restrictions, along with declining support, it became economically infeasible to continue. The Board voted to dissolve the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and pull our physical presence out of Nicaragua. In order to close our Nicaraguan operations the Nicaraguan government mandated we liquidate all of our in-country assets.



Yarrow Ries, José Antonio, and Max Zinsmeister standing in front of the famous Quaker House mural

After failed negotiations with a number of NGOs, we executed a contract with international NGO El Porvenir (EP). The terms of the contract can be summarized as follows: EP took legal ownership of El Centro - the property is to be sold and half of the profits will go to our partner organizations.

ProNica did not have legal title to Quaker House yet our attorney was able to connect with the original benefactor and have the ownership transferred directly to EP. EP will continue to operate Quaker House and has retained our staff with a two-year contract. We are thankful the Managua Worship Group will continue to meet at Quaker House.

Annual Report 2017

Published quarterly by the ProNica Committee of the Southern Yearly meeting Since 1987

ProNica's Transformation

By Yarrow Ries

In October of 2016 ProNica Executive Director Melissa Ajanshir resigned after many years of hard work and dedication. A new director was hired but sadly on her second day of work she was seriously injured. Facing a lengthy rehab it was determined she would be unable to resume her duties. In January I stepped in as Stateside Coordinator until a permanent solution could be found. After returning from Nicaragua in May of this year the board asked me to accept the directorship.

After the board decided to close the Nicaraguan office. I created a team for the closure; Rebecca Wheaton became our Nicaraguan legal rep and liaison, Attorney Mariel Rodriguez Detrinidad and her associates took on our legal, El Porvenir and staff were there every step of the way providing support through the very intricate and difficult process.

We are now well on our way to satisfying our legal obligations. Our Nicaraguan assets are safe with El Porvenir who has contracted our beloved Quaker House staff. We have separated from the In-Country Director and closed down the Managua office. At present we are in the final accounting and will soon make application to the government to close the NGO. We recognize this is a fundamental and substantial change. Some will see it as a loss. Yes, we have lost a ProNica presence in Nicaragua but we are building a strong fundraising platform that will enable us to increase direct support for our Nicaraguan partners. Please join us in our efforts to renew our commitment to the people we have served in solidarity for over 33 years.



Meet El Porvenir

El Porvenir (EP) is an international non-profit organization that works to improve the standard of living of rural Nicaraguans through water, sanitation, health education, and watershed management projects (mission). EP has over 25 years of experience helping rural Nicaraguan communities build appropriate technology (wells, water systems, latrines, community wash stations, school hand washing stations, and fuel efficient stoves) as well as providing communities with the tools they need to manage their water, sanitation, and forestry resources. To date, EP has completed over 1,100 water and sanitation projects that now supply 160,000 people with clean water, improved sanitation, hygiene education, and watershed protection plans. EP is registered as an international NGO in Nicaragua and is a registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization in the US. In Nicaragua, EP has a central office in Managua and regional offices in Ciudad Darío/Terrabona, Camoapa/Boaco, San Lorenzo, El Sauce/Achuapa, and Waslala. Visit elporvenir.org

Moving forward it was determined the Florida based 501(c)3 would maximize its efforts and concentrate on fundraising. From now on Stateside will distribute money directly to the Nicaraguan partners through bank transfers. We expect to see a 65% reduction in overhead with this streamlined system. Rebecca Wheaton Managua Worship Group member and longtime friend of ProNica was selected to become our legal represented and in-country liaison. Rebecca is seeing us through the transition as well as establishing a network for partner support, she will be our eyes and ears in Nicaragua.

Meet Rebecca

Rebecca Wheaton originally from Tacoma Park MD lives in Managua with her husband and 4 year old daughter. She holds a BA in Human Development and Social Relations from Earlham College. Fluent in Spanish she has served as a translator and leader for several ProNica delegations. Rebecca is currently ProNica legal representative and partner liaison.



Nicas Touch the Heart

By Rebecca Wheaton

There are many things that are changing in Nicaragua but one thing seems to always stay the same: Nicaraguans touch the heart. This was very true for The Bonner scholar students from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) this January 2017. From the beginning of their time in Managua and as they engaged with the ProNica project partners throughout their trip, they each had moments with children and community leaders that were unexpected and unforgettable.



2017 TCNJ

In the mountains of Matagalpa we stayed with Casa Materna for two nights to learn of their work and the impact on expecting mothers. At the end of our visit the staff wanted to learn more about the ethnic backgrounds of the TCNJ students and asked that we share songs together before parting. There was an outpouring of emotion as we sang and shared, all smiles, some crying and all of us astounded by these women's ability to move us emotionally with their affection, songs and desire to know us and where we came from. The women of Casa Materna touched our hearts.



The children of the Los Quinchos community demonstrated their enthusiasm for play, creative drawing and communicating with warm hugs, broad smiles and endless games of *fútbol* (soccer). We shared in a series of games, a piñata and delicious cake at the end of our stay and as we said goodbye each child that spoke reminded us that our time together was dedicated to life-enrichment for everybody and that the doors of Los Quinchos would always be open to us, "*no es un adios, es us hasta pronto,*" "*it's not a goodbye, but rather, see you soon.*" Again there were tears, laughter and warm hugs as we parted. Los Quinchos touched our hearts. And so it came to be that everywhere we stopped and shared, learned and loved, our hearts were moved by the Nica way of openness, honesty, commitment and joy no matter what their circumstances.



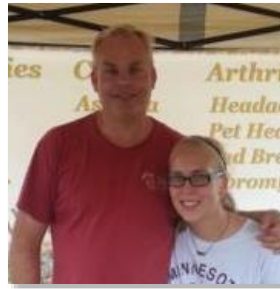
As a first-time leader for Pronica my life was also profoundly transformed by being with the students. For many of them, the experience was an existential unfolding and a time for living life at a different pace, naturally finding themselves more matured and curious about themselves as global citizens. Many of the questions they began to ask, I also started asking when I came to Nicaragua in 1996 with a delegation of students from Earlham College, a small Quaker school in Indiana. Many of TCNJ students felt at home while they were here and spoke of returning to seek out work and have a different life trajectory than expected of them in the States. My life living here as a mother, therapist and home-owner gave them a certain assurance that living here is possible because, as I tried to convey to them and as all the project partners successfully did, Nicaragua touches and transforms the heart—and often lives.



Learning about the permaculture project during the Nobis delegation lead by Rebecca Wheaton earlier this year.

New Board Members

Meet Kurt



Kurt Guenther has always been a convinced Quaker but didn't find a Friend's meeting until about 10 years ago. He was delighted to find such a diverse and enlightened group of people to share his experience of living in the light with. His interest in Nicaragua began in the 1980's when US backed Contras began mining roads and killing innocent people. In response in 1985 Kurt went to Nicaragua with \$5000 to donate to the victims and their families. Kurt's commitment to the people of Nicaragua continues to this day as he serves as President of ProNica's Board of Directors.

Meet Maureen

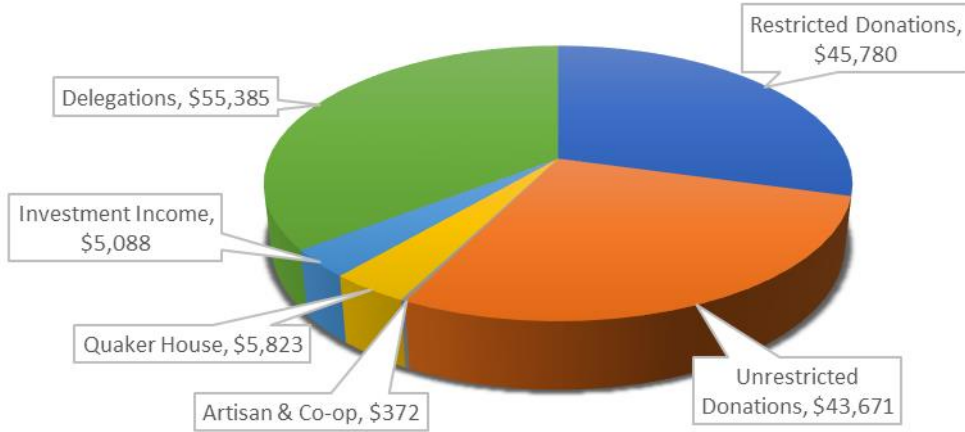


Maureen was first introduced to ProNica in the late 1990's at the annual Circus McGurkis celebration of peace, sponsored by the Saint Petersburg Friends. In 2001, Maureen started a clothing company that contracted with women in Leon, Nicaragua to hand sew and embroider children's clothing in their homes. The clothing company supported an orphanage and a soup kitchen in Leon, and provided good livelihood to the women involved. Throughout the years ProNica's Managua office acted as a resource and facilitated many valuable introductions for her organization.

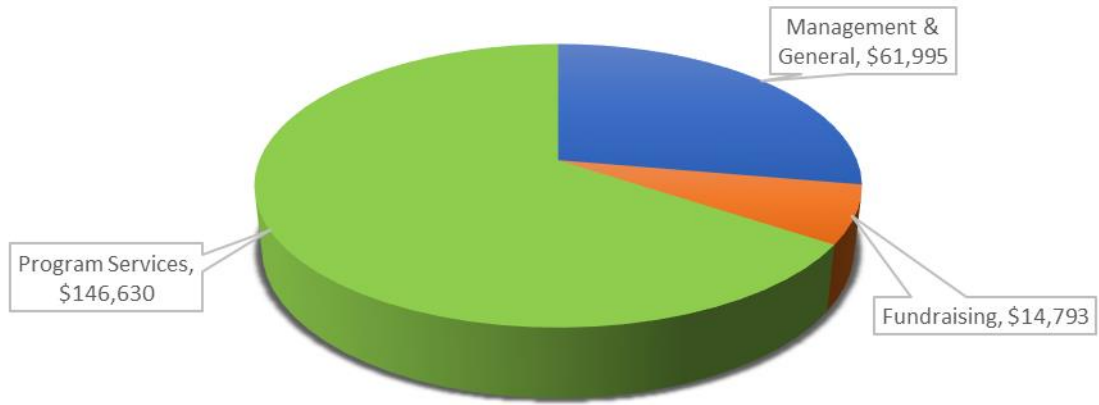
In September 2016 Maureen joined the stateside office in St. Petersburg as a volunteer. In January 2017 Maureen began her tenure with the ProNica Board of Directors. Maureen is a founding board member of her family's foundation, the Brian Injury Alliance of KY (www.BIAK.US). She is a graduate of the University of Louisville and Vanderbilt University.

Fiscal Year Report 2016-2017

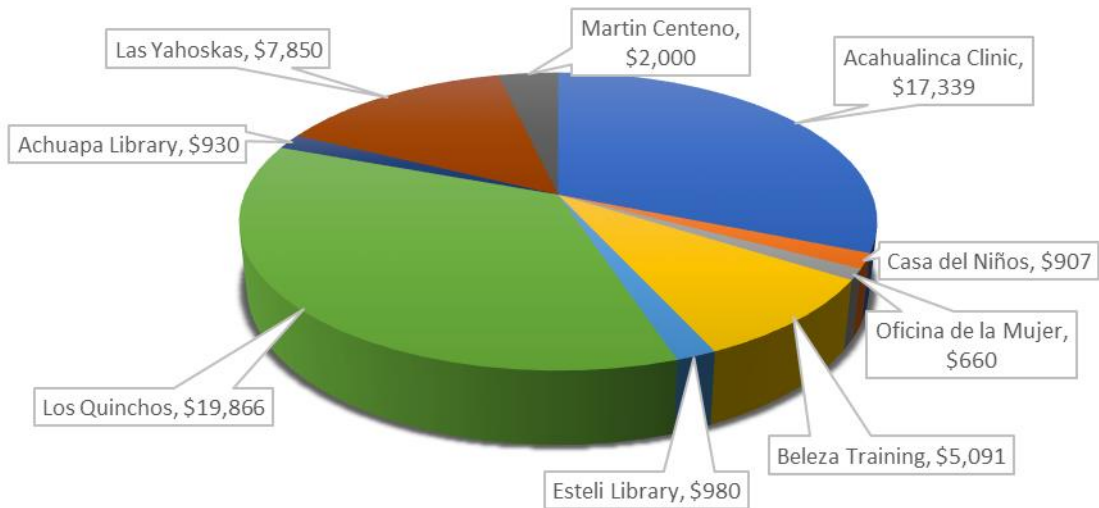
Income



Expenses



The Partners



Program Services

- Intercultural Exchange
- Total Health and Nutrition
- Nicaraguan Presence
- Libraries and Education
- Social Services
- Program Information
- Community Development

ProNica Board

Kurt Guenther..... President
Maureen Rubini..... Director

Staff

Yarrow Ries..... Executive Director
Caroline Lanker..... Financial Specialist
Maxwell Zinsmeister..... Administrative Assistant

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

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.

ProNica Stateside Office

130 Nineteenth Avenue SE
St Petersburg, Florida 33705-2810
Email: stateside@pronica.org Phone: 727.821.2428

www.ProNica.org

We invite you to stay at Casa Cuáquera on your next visit to Nicaragua!

Please join us at Casa Cuáquera (Quaker House), a favorite lodging choice among peace-travelers since 1987

- ♦ *\$14 per night*
- ♦ *Dormitory style accommodations*
- ♦ *Fully equipped communal kitchen*
- ♦ *Internet, washing machine & security*
- ♦ *Convenient to public transportation*
- ♦ *Some street parking available*

Looking to book at Quaker House?

Contact: Yesenia Matamoros

Yesenia@elprovenir.org

011-(505)2268-5781 (landline)



JOIN A FRIENDS WITNESS TOUR



Learn about Nicaraguan culture, history, agriculture, and architecture.

Meet ProNica project partners and see first-hand their innovative and practical solutions to the struggles in their communities. Friends Witness Tours visit potters' and artisans' studios, enjoy performances by musicians, and shop local markets. Friends Witness Tourists also visit volcanoes, crater lakes, black forest, and sandy beaches. Tours include:

- Comfortable accommodations
- All meals provided
- All transportation in air conditioned vehicles
- Tour leader, guides and translators

Gather up at least three friends. A \$100 deposit per participant reserves places. Airfare, departure taxes, tips and personal expenses are extra.

Contact Yarrow Ries at the ProNica [stateside office](#) if you are interested in forming a Friends Witness Tour.

Email: stateside@pronica.org | Office Phone: 727-821-2428 | Cell: 727-408-0993

