

Issue 1

6 February 2012

By: Madeline & Megan



XAVIER UNIVERSITY

# ASLS Nicaragua 2012

Welcome to Nicaragua! We are all happy, healthy and (mostly) sunburn free so far (mothers in the States, don't worry)! Our first weeks in Managua have been action-packed. Meeting our families for the first time was exciting but nerve wracking. We have been busy getting familiar with the *barrio* in which we will be staying until April 19th: *Barrio La Luz* (Light) a.k.a *Barrio de Catorce de Junio* (14th of June). We have also gotten a chance to see some of Managua which is full of life and diversity. Among other places, we have visited the National Palace, the Sandino museum at Tiscapa, an outdoor museum highlighting the Revolution and actual sites of



significant events, like the José Luís Buitrago house. Some people within the city are still rebuilding from the 1972 earthquake, and their rebuilding efforts are apparent. We are getting used to roosters cock-a-doodle-dooing at 3am, mangos falling on our roofs (simulating the sound of an atomic

bomb), constant dust all around, and our favorite Nicaraguan treat—*choco bananos*. Learning to ride the bus to and from service was an experience we will not forget (think maximum capacity times three). We all aspire to become bus-riding pros soon and are excited to explore more of this wonderful country in the weeks to come!

**Martín Castro** is our wonderful and fearless driver, operations coordinator, and host family father (officially to only one student, but acts as a father figure to us all). We're also lucky that he knows Nicaragua like the back of his hand, and shares his knowledge with us. He takes great care of us in safety and in spirit. We're grateful he's been part of our program in various roles for more than 10 years!



## Dr. Irene Hodgson



This will be Dr. Hodgson's 27th trip to Nicaragua and her 8th trip as the faculty trip leader. This is the first time she has not arrived with the group, but will be joining us here in Nicaragua on February 8th and will be with us for the remainder of our trip. Dr. Hodgson will be living with Doña Francisca.

## Bill Schwarz



Bill ("Memo") Schwarz is our wonderful trip assistant. Bill participated in Nica ASLS in 2003 and graduated from Xavier in 2005. He is 6' 9" so we never lose him. It's been fun to see him reconnect with people in our *barrio*. Memo lives at Doña Adilia Luna's hotel, which acts as home base for all of us.

## Dr. Mike Gable



Dr. Gable is our theology professor from Xavier and is the Director of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati Mission office. He will be here for 2 weeks from January 29 to February 10, living with Doña Maritza. Dr. Gable was able to visit his dear friend, Sister Rebecca, in Matagalpa. It was great to see them reconnect and see all of the great ways Sister Rebecca reaches out to kids with special needs.

## Anthony Saxton



**Accounting/Spanish, 2012**

**3,345 miles from Cleveland, OH**

Anthony "Antonio" Saxton is living with Doña Ivania, his sister Natalia and his brother Ivan. Anthony claims to wake up every day at 6 am to play soccer in the park, which he says is earlier than he has ever woken up before.

## Brendan Kelly



**International Studies, 2014**

**3,493 miles from Maryland**

Brendan is living it up at Doña Adilia Gutierrez' home. Brendan says she is a sweetheart (we can attest to that because she does his laundry for him and packs him snacks daily). He lives with his sister Patricia and nephew Rodrigo. Rodrigo likes to call Brendan *hermanito* (little brother) even though Brendan is twice Rodrigo's size.

## Ismael Tidjani



**Modern Language/International Econ, 2013**

**3, 107 miles from Wyoming, OH**

Iso is living with Doña Nieves, whom he likes to call "Mama Nieves". He is a very good listener, which works well because Doña Nieves likes to chat. Iso is getting used to the routine around the house and has greatly enjoyed his time here so far taking in everything Nicaragua has to offer.

## Kaileen McGourty

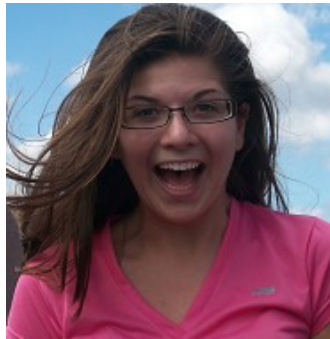


**International & Peace Studies,  
2014**

**3, 130 miles from Chicago, IL**

Kaileen lives with Doña Coco and her various daughters/granddaughters whom Kaileen is still sorting out. She has found unexpected joy in looking at the beautiful stars here.

## Kelsey Blackwell



**Social Work, 2014**

**3,130 miles from Chicago, IL**

Kelsey is loving living with Doña Uraña, Don Jorge, Jorge junior, Maria, Naomi, Chris, and Luciana. They are a very welcoming family and like to sit outside in the evenings relaxing, chatting, and making jokes. Kelsey's sister Maria is our resident nail painter.

## Madeline Hickey



**Organizational Communications,  
2013**

**3,143 miles from Dayton, OH**

Madeline is living with Doña Marta. She has 2 brothers and 2 sisters who range in age from 26-33, along with 3 energetic nieces and nephews. Madeline learned the word *alacran* (scorpion) via her mother telling her there was one in her bathroom.

## Megan DeRosier



**Psychology/Spanish, 2013**

**3,999 miles from Spokane, WA**

Megan lives with Doña Elba and Don Mario and has 1 brother, 2 sisters, 2 nieces, and 1 cousin also in the house. Her family runs a pizza delivery business (so delicious!) and Megan is slowly learning the trade.

## Monica Lynn Bostic



**Sociology/English, 2012**

**3, 101 miles from Norwood, OH**

Monica is living with Doña Marta, Doña Myra and Doña Juana. She has a sister who is 8, a brother who is 18, a pet duck, and a kitten named Tigger. She is pleasantly surprised by how cool her family is and how much she loves Nicaraguan food.

## Tim Wiethop



**History/Spanish, 2013**

**2,871 miles from St. Louis, MO**

Tim "Timoteo" is living with Doña Blanca and Martin, the "godfather" of our group (and fab driver!). He also lives with his brother, Kenneth and baby sister Valentina. They are a tight knit family which is not what Tim was expecting, but he is enjoying his new house.



## Service Sites

Iso and Anthony are working at **Pajarito Azul** which is a long-term care center for physically and mentally disabled children and adults. They were able to take residents for walks and will be working primarily with the younger boys.

Brendan, Madeline and Tim will be working at **La Mascota** which is the only children's hospital in Nicaragua. They have been playing games and coloring with the patients. Within the next few weeks, they will be able to visit others rooms throughout the hospital.

Kelsey and Megan will be working at **Aldo Chavarría**, a rehabilitation center. Aldo is also home to the largest prosthesis making center in Central America. Thus far, Megan has been working with amputees and Kelsey has been working with in-patients.

**“Today was my favorite day of this trip so far.”**

—Anthony, speaking of his second day of service

Monica and Kaileen will be working at **Olla de la Soya de San Rafael** which is a nutrition program based on soy, sponsored by the Christian Base Communities here in Nicaragua. They have been able to help with registration for students that qualify for the program.

We will be spending 4-5 hours each Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning at our service sites. The first few days of service challenged us in our Spanish, but we were excited to finally get started, and have all survived riding the bus!

## Weekend trip: León

After a busy first week in Managua, we hopped on the bus and made our way to *León Viejo* (old) and *León Nuevo* (new). In *León Viejo* we were able to get a tour of the ruins of Old León—a park of ancient history and a beautiful view of the Momotombo Volcano. *León Nuevo* is one of Nicaragua's most historical and popular cities. Our first stop was the Gallery of Heroes and Martyrs, run by the mothers of the fallen during the revolution. We also toured Ruben Darío's house. Darío was a poet and national hero who wrote about the need for social change for the people of Nicaragua. Next we visited the third largest cathedral of Central America, the Cathedral of Leon, and got a comprehensive view of the city from its roof. We ended the night with a group reflection and sunset on the beach. All in all, a great first weekend trip!



## Weekend trip: Masaya

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On our second Saturday, we took a trip to Masaya—a town about 30 minutes southeast of Managua. We visited the Masaya volcano and museum (beautiful view), Coyotepe (a fort where political prisoners were kept and tortured during the oppressive regimes of the 1930's-70's), and a very cool family pottery business in San Juan del Oriente where Brendan, Kaileen and Kelsey tried their hands at the potter's wheel. We then returned to the volcano for night tours of *las cuevas* (caves) and a peek at the boiling lava in the volcano. Despite the lovely smell of sulfur, this was a very cool trip and we were stoked to get hard hats and use our head lamps!



Brendan, Lillian Hall (awesome friend and guide), Martín, Megan, Bill, Anthony, Monica, Ivan (Anthony's bro), Madeline, Iso, Kelsey, Tim, and Kaileen atop a mountain in Masaya

## So where's the work in all this fun?

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None of us expected the academic work to be as intense as we have experienced it in our first two weeks here, and we're just getting started. Striking a balance between family and homework is definitely something all of us are having to figure out. We have often found ourselves reading theology books to the background sounds of Nicaraguan TV shows, so that we are still in the presence of our families while doing homework.

We're taking a full course load of 17 credits: Spanish, Nicaraguan History, Theology, Culture & Society, Service Learning, and Nicaraguan Folk Dance. We are split

into four levels for Spanish, and are all enjoying having such tiny class sizes! Our history teacher is Dr. Julia O'Hara; theology is taught by Dr. Mike Gable; Spanish is taught by Nicaraguans Ramón Zerón and Mirna Velásquez; and dance class is with Zoila Pérez. Culture & Society and Service Learning (taught by Dr. Irene Hodgson and Bill Schwarz) are both just what they sound like and consist of readings, critical thinking, and papers. Such an awesome experience doesn't come without at least a little work!

### Procrastination Station:

For more than just procrastination, here are some cool things that we have been introduced to on our journey thus far. Check 'em out!

### Podcasts for Peace:

<http://podcastsforpeace.weebly.com/index.html>

### Esperanza en Acción:

<http://www.esperanzaenaccion.org/>

For more information on the Academic Service Learning Semesters contact Dr. Irene Hodgson at [contactasls@xavier.edu](mailto:contactasls@xavier.edu)