

Greetings from Nicaragua

Xavier University

Academic Service Learning Semester 2011

Newsletter 1: February 4, 2011

Academic

Indeed we are taking a full course load while we are here, in addition to all of the other learning we are doing “on the ground.” In *History of Nicaragua* with Dr. O’Hara, we read journal articles that provide us with background and perspective for the people and places we are experiencing. In *Globalization and Theology* with Dr. Gable, we learn about the way that religion and globalization interact both here in Nicaragua and around the world. In *Culture and Society* with Dr. Hodgson and Mr. McCormick, we learn about a score of issues from Nicaragua’s political history to its present struggles. In *Service Learning* with the same teachers, we reflect on our service experiences while investigating the organizations and populations we are working with. For *Spanish*, we have two different professors, Ramon and Myrna. They are wonderfully patient, and are giving us the tools to read, write, understand, and speak...pretty much to communicate, better here and in the future!

We’ll probably be pretty smart when we return...



Service

For the rest of the semester, two of us are working at each site on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. They’re all amazing!

- 1.) Pajarito Azul is a long-term care facility for adults and children with developmental disabilities.
- 2.) La Mascota is the only children’s hospital in Nicaragua.
- 3.) Aldo Chavarría is a health and rehabilitation center.
- 4.) Olla de la Soya de San Rafael is a nutrition and education center for children run by the Christian Base Communities.
- 5.) Quincho Barrilete is a program for kids at risk with locations in four barrios around Managua.



Learning

Wow, we made it to Managua! In case all of you enjoying the snow were wondering, it is sweltering here.

For the next three months, we will be living in *Barrio la Luz* (Light), a.k.a *Barrio de Catorce (14) de Junio* (June).

The city is full of history...you cannot turn a corner without seeing a statue or a mural or political graffiti. Everywhere you look, you see the juxtaposition between old and new, global and local, wealthy and poor. These stark contrasts have been jarring lessons about life in Managua. The differences between old and new are the result of a 1972 earthquake whose destruction is still evident in the city. The push and pull between global and local is evident on streets where a Domino’s Pizza is next door to a *pulpería* selling *raspados* (like fresh fruit snow cones!). We saw the economic chasm that exists in the city when in the same day we saw people living in and eating from a gigantic trash dump, and then a new mall selling LaCoste and Gap clothing.

Abby Anderson



Franklin, TN
2013, Spanish/Theology

Family: Doña Nieves, Don Erasmo, Nieves, and Marián.

Fun Family Fact: Doña Nieves can talk for hours without being interrupted!

Service Site: *Olla de Soya*...I'm really excited to be working with children and supporting the staff.

Anna Robertson



Nashville, TN
2013, Theology

Family: Doña Maritza, Melissa, Heydi, and Osman

Family Fun Fact: I commented that there are “many tías” (aunts), and my family thought it was so funny. They quote me on it all the time!

Service Site: *Olla de Soya*...I am very interested in the work of the base communities and in food related issues. I also want to accompany the kids!

Brooke Eastman



Cleveland, OH
2013, Biology/Spanish

Family: Doña Elba, Don Mario, Erenia, Elbita, Mario, Hazel, and Irene

Family Fun Fact: They own and run a pizzeria out of their kitchen.

Service Site: *Quincho Barrilete*...I look at the kids, and I see so much potential. I want to encourage good decisions and the value of education, and high self-esteem. I believe they will teach me so much about self-preservation and resilience.

Eva Marie Witt



Springfield, OH
2013, Art/Psychology/Spanish

Family: Martín, Blanca, Kenia, Kenneth, and Valentina

Family Fun Fact: Martín is our driver, and Kenneth and Kenia come along, so I basically “go to work” with my Nicaraguan family every day!

Service Site: *Pajarito Azul*...I am looking forward to working here because of my experience with art therapy, my empathy, and emotional endurance.

Juan Vargas



Chicago, IL
2013, Social Work

Family: Doña Ana and her family

Family Fun Fact: My ten-year-old sister can talk more than I do, and that’s saying something!

Service Site: *Aldo Chavarría*...It will be a new experience for me working in a hospital helping those in rehabilitation.

Irene Hodgson



Arlington, TX
Faculty Trip Leader 2011
B.A., Spanish- Purdue
M.A., Spanish Literature- NYU
Spain
Ph.D, Spanish & Latin American Literature- Purdue

Family: Doña Francisca
Family Fun Fact: Doña Francisca can give Doña Nieves a run for her money with talking without stopping with over 90 years of stories.

25th time in Nicaragua
7th time as Faculty Trip Leader

Katie Wiggins



Evansville, IN
2013, PPP

Family: Doña Marcia, Mario, Daniella, Abuela, and Tía Myra
Family Fun Fact: Our family has a pet duck!

Service Site: *Pajarito Azul*...I'm very excited to work there because, despite all their challenges, the people there still have wonderful smiles and display pure joy.

Kayla Neal



Columbus, OH
2013, Psychology

Family: Doña Urania, Jorge, Jorge Jr., Maria, Chris, Naiomi

Family Fun Fact: We run a business out of our house for international phone calls, so there are always a lot of visitors!

Service Site: *La Mascota*...I am interested in child psychology and working in a hospital setting, so I thought this would be a great experience. I'm also excited about working and communicating with the kids and their families.

Liza Magley



Syracuse, NY
2012, PPP/Econ

Family: Doña Marta, Linette, Nevil, Alicia, Valeria, Ariel, Odolí, Abel, Manuel, and Raquel

Family Fun Fact: Doña Marta's guacamole has avocados, tomatoes, onions, lime, and a surprise ingredient: hard-boiled egg! Neither of us can understand how people do not like avocado.

Service Site: *Aldo Chavarría*...I am looking forward to lending a helping hand and a listening ear to the individuals rehabbing here.

Ryan Goellner



Cleveland, OH
2012, History

Family: Doña Coco, Norma, Allisón, Paulina, Ósman, Natalie

Family Fun Fact: I meet new family members every day, who may or may not live in my house.

Service Site: *Quincho Barrilete*...I am excited for a meaningful challenge and to help the kids have fun and increase their sense of self-worth.

Tim McCormick



Indianapolis, IN
Trip Assistant 2011
B.A., Organizational Communications- Xavier

Family: Doña Adilia

Family Fun Fact: This house has grown since my first time here from a single family home to a hotel!

6th time in Nicaragua
2nd time as Trip Assistant

Zeke Solomon



Austin, TX
2013, International Studies

Family: Doña Ivania, Don Humberto, Natalia, and Ivan

Family Fun Fact: Everyone in the family has great interests! Don Humberto plays cards, Doña Ivania knows everything about, Natalia sings in a choir, and Ivan plays on an amazing fútbol team.

Service Site: *La Mascota*...I thought it would be the most difficult for me as the children are in great need of care, and a hospital can feel alien at times.



During our first week in **Managua**, we had a lot to take in. At *Lomas de Tiscapa* we saw the famous silhouette of Augusto C. Sandino, Nicaragua's national hero and namesake of the FSLN political party. The silhouette is constructed on top of the remains of former dictator Anastasio Somoza García's national palace. At the site, we heard stories of Somoza's atrocities of the 1970s, and those of Sandino's heroism in the 1930s. After, we visited the old public square of Managua, which has undergone a multitude of architectural changes depending on which political party has been in power. At the same time in the square, we observed the plentiful billboards promoting current president Daniel Ortega, whose controversial re-election run this coming November has already ramped up the political atmosphere here.



Our first weekend trip was to **León**, one of Nicaragua's most famous and oldest cities. For a time, it battled back and forth with Granada to be Nicaragua's capital during the National War of the 1850s. First, we went to León Viejo (Old León), which has a tremendous amount of history. We got to see the ruins of colonial buildings from the 1500s, and the tomb of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, one of the first Spanish *conquistadores* in Nicaragua. We also learned about the history of Spanish-indigenous relations, which have presented socio-political difficulties for Nicaragua. After, we went to Nuevo León (New León), and visited sites including the cathedral where this picture was taken. We also visited the Gallery of Heroes and Martyrs, where we spoke with one of the mothers who takes care of the site, and lost two children, one in the Revolution of 1979 and other in the Contra War.



Go, Bóers!

We were also privileged to be a part of what one might call the quintessential Nicaraguan baseball experience when we saw Managua's team, Los Bóers, defeat Chinandega's *Los Tigres*. The game had just about everything — 13 innings, stray dogs, a last-minute rally, seat-to-seat vendors, and a close-call, game-clinching error by the Tigers to give the game to the Bóers. We got to make friends with some Nicaraguan sports fans, sample some of the game-day fare, and watch some of the most fun baseball/cheerleading bands ever!



About a week ago, we visited a site called **Hacienda San Jacinto**, near Managua. It was a crucial battleground during the National War in the 1850s, where the Nicaraguans (with aid from surrounding Central American countries) repelled the "filibuster" expeditionary force led by William Walker. "The grey-eyed man of destiny," Walker came to Nicaragua and installed himself as president, before being expelled and killed in 1860. This experience at San Jacinto increased our awareness of the complicated legacy of the United States in Central America and especially in Nicaragua, an important dimension of our on-going education here.



At **Masaya**, we got to take in some really fantastic panoramic vistas of the volcanoes and from the tops of the surrounding hills. The views are breath-taking, to say the least. After a trip to the market (where some of us are gradually learning to bargain), we returned to the volcano in the evening and hiked about 200 meters into a cave in the side of the mountain. We also sat just a few feet from the entrance of another cave, where we saw and felt hundreds of bats flying in and out. Afterwards, our Masaya experience was capped by a great nighttime view of some of the molten lava in the crater of one of the volcanoes. All in all, it was an incredible, unmatched experience!

Match the quote to the person who said it- Answers will be in the next newsletter.

- 1.) *Keeeeeennneeeethhh!*
 - 2.) I have a passion for kids...but not in a creepy way.
 - 3.) I don't even know that kid's name, and I have brought him to the bathroom twice!
 - 4.) I'm craving gasoline.
 - 5.) Who's that guy with the beard and the outstretched arms?...Oh...it's Jesus.
 - 6.) I gotta keep up with the fashion.
 - 7.) My pies are sticky.
 - 8.) Watch out, Managua...I've got my party shoes on.
 - 9.) Everyone thinks I am heartless because I never say just "kidding."
 - 10.) Once, I drank so much carrot juice that I turned orange.
 - 11.) We need to hablar about some cosas.
 - 12.) When I was sitting in the wheelchair with a dog...I mean, rocking chair.
- ___ Abby ___ Anna ___ Brooke ___ Eva ___ Juan ___ Irene
 ___ Katie ___ Kayla ___ Liza ___ Ryan ___ Tim ___ Zeke

For more information about Academic Service Learning Semesters, or responses to this newsletter, contact Dr. Irene B. Hodgson, director of the Xavier University Academic Service Learning Semesters, at contactasls@xavier.edu, or (513) 745-3541. Or, visit www.xavier.edu/service-learning.