

Nicaragua 2015

SOLIDARITY SEMESTER

NEWSLETTER #3

A Trip to Nindirí



As one of our excursions in Nicaragua, we visited the community of Nindirí. Our purpose for visiting the community was to learn more about an organization, CEPROSI (Center of Promotion and Integral Health). This organization is run by women and is for women. One of the main goals is to empower women to develop their skills outside of the house. The organization, for example, provides loans for the participants of the cooperatives. These loans can be used to create and expand a business or to participate in CEPROSI projects like the creation of a garden or a

chimney in the kitchen (part of the CEPROSI Casa Hogar Saludable or Healthy House program). These projects are mainly to allow for healthier environments for the women while working at home.

We also met with one of the cooperatives during our time there. We learned to make some of the crafts that the women sell for their livelihood: cards and flowers made out of corn and banana leaves. Through this experience, we were able to see an aspect of Nicaraguan civic responsibility: the organization and support from within the communities themselves.

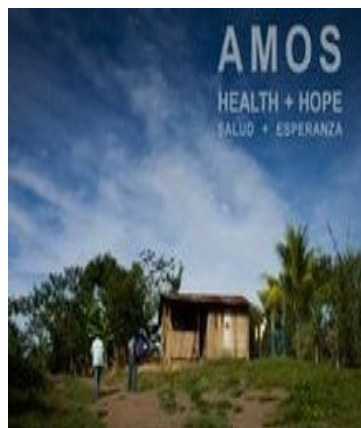
Movie Day: Cinderella

After some not-so-subtle hinting from the children in the barrio, the group decided that it would be fun to take an excursion to the movies. A trip to the movies might not sound exciting, but getting a group of over 20 people

to decide on a movie, pick a time, and find a mode of transportation is no easy task. We decided on seeing Cinderella dubbed in Spanish, which seemed to be a popular pick amongst the children. Planning the excursion took all day and

we took multiple car trips each way, but it was well worth the pain to have such a fun outing with so many kids from the barrio. And it is safe to say that the Eskimo ice cream after the movie helped a bit as well.

Service Learning: AMOS with Guest Speaker Ann Marie



As part of our Academic Service Learning class, we have been learning from Ann Marie Castleman, a Nicaragua Academic Service Learning Semester alumna. She now lives in the same barrio as we do and works outside of Managua, the capital. The company she currently works for is AMOS Health and Hope in Nejapa. We learned about the work and the process that the organization does to help rural communities. The organiza-

tion currently works with 25 communities in four departments: Matagalpa, Chinandega, RAAS, and Boaco. AMOS essentially enters the community after being invited and begins to organize the community. They first begin by training a health promoter, who will eventually fulfill the role of health provider for the community. This individual goes through rigorous training for a year to learn about the medicines, the treatment, and maternal health especially. These health promoters are then

responsible for their respective community after finishing training. AMOS also participates in a Global Health Practicum for those interested in learning more about the healthcare system in Nicaragua. This program takes place during the summer and also offers additional internships. This excursion to Nejapa allowed us to see the organization itself and delve deeper into the mission and the work that AMOS Health and Hope accomplishes.

A New Arrival: Shannon O'Neill

A few weeks ago, Shannon O'Neill joined us here in Nicaragua. She is here to help the group and Dr. Irene Hodgson, the faculty trip leader. Shannon was a part of the India Academic Service Learning Semester as a student in 2004 and as the trip assistant in 2007. In 2008, she was also the assistant to the Director of the Service Learning Semesters. She has also been working in the Center for International Education

since 2014. Her job entails managing the marketing and recruitment of the Nicaragua Solidarity Semester program. She coordinated the selection process and helped to organize the preparation, orientation, and re-entry programs for the students. She also supervises the peer advisor team and works with the programming and assessment of the study abroad programs. Welcome to Nicaragua, Shannon!



Accident Update

As many of you likely already know, on the morning of March 12, the group was involved in an accident in our microbus on the way to the Atlantic Coast. Three students and our assistant were immediately taken to the hospital for treatment. Luckily their injuries were not life-threatening and the majority of the physical injuries have healed. Our assistant Kenia had her arm broken and has undergone multiple surgeries but is now healing

and focused on recovery. After the accident we all felt very blessed to have so many people reach out to us from home to make sure we were okay. There were also many members of our extended Nicaraguan family that stepped up and offered us help while asking nothing in return, and for that we are extremely grateful. Unfortunately, the accident meant that we were not able to visit the Atlantic Coast, but we have still had many oppor-

tunities to learn about the rich culture of the coast. In the down time afterwards, many of us were able to spend valuable quality time with our Nicaraguan families and get to know them even better. We were also sad to see two of our group members leave after the accident, but are excited to see them shortly after arriving back home. We hope Ben and Andrew are doing well and know that they are missed by their Nicaraguan family.

Culture and Society: *La Chureca* with Guest Speaker Chris Hartmann

During one of our recent weekly visits to Casa Ben Linder, we were able to see a presentation made possible by one of our very own Nicaragua alumnus named Chris Hartmann. Chris is working on his doctorate in Geography from Ohio State and doing much of his research here in Nicaragua. He is focusing on *La Chureca* or the local dump here in Managua, and its effect on the surrounding area. For the talk at *Casa Benjamin Linder*, Chris invited a woman who lives near and works in *La Chureca* to

speak about her experiences there and how she feels the area has changed in her time there. A woman named Raquel spoke about the terrible conditions that the people who used to live in *La Chureca* had to face, and how they spent their days selecting recyclable materials from the trash to earn a living. She also talked about the transformation *La Chureca* has undergone in her lifetime, after the Spanish government helped build a recycling plant at *La Chureca*, while making it illegal for non-employees to enter the

dump for recyclables. After the talk, we got a chance to visit her neighborhood that is situated right alongside *La Chureca*, and was also developed with help from Spain. We had the opportunity to meet her family and see how she has been able to support her family through all of the drastic changes to the area. It was also great to see the impact that a program alumnus can have on Nicaragua even years after graduating.

Service Learning: Olla de Soya

Every weekday morning at 8:30 about thirty preschoolers from the area around the neighborhood of *Villa Venezuela* head to the *Olla de Soya San Rafael*. This *Olla de Soya* started in 1990 and is part of a group of *ollas* around Nicaragua helping to curb the problem of malnutrition. This program is an initiative of the Christian Base Communities. The children come for preschool but also for a daily soy-based snack prepared by volunteers. The *Olla* serves

children between the ages of six months and six years, it also serves pregnant and breast-feeding mothers to ensure that children are well-nourished from the beginning. Each day after class at 10:00 am, the children are fed a meal prepared by volunteers, who are usually mothers from the community. This meal is supposed to serve as a snack to supplement the children's breakfast and lunch at home. Every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday,

volunteers from our group arrive to help cook, clean, and help the teachers. Scott and Ben were selected to work at the *Olla*, and Alex has taken over Ben's position since his departure.



Academics Abroad

- **Nicaraguan History:** We are currently learning about Augusto César Sandino and the Somoza Regime. We are also beginning to learn about the Sandinista Revolution.
- **Dance:** We have learned how to do the *bachata*, the *meringue*, and folkloric dancing. We plan on learning the *Palo de Mayo* soon.
- **Academic Service Learning:** We are currently reading excerpts from books about individuals' experiences in Nicaragua and then reflecting on these passages.
- **Central American Culture and Society:** We are learning about the trash pickers in Nicaragua, as mentioned above, and plan to delve into Salvadoran society soon.
- **Spanish:** *Profesoras Ana and Mirna* are teaching our classes. There are four sections of Spanish based on our conversational, reading, and writing abilities. We are also learning conversational abilities from our Nicaraguan families during our time here.



Doña Elba



Doña Maritza



Doña Ivania

Elba, Maritza, and Ivania

Doña Elba: Coming from the *rotonda* one street *al lado* to Hotel Ideas de Mamá, you will find yourself at Doña Elba's house. She houses numerous people, including renters. Her husband, Don Mario, three of her children, two of her grandchildren, three people who rent a room, and Rayanne Elizabeth live there. Currently, there are two pets: a hen and a dog, Campanita. Her family sells numerous items such as pizza, which is absolutely delicious, and raw red beans. You will most likely find Doña Elba laughing or secretly dancing to a song. She has recently gone to the United States to visit one of her children and her grandchild. This will be her first time in the United States, and she has been so excited to embark on her journey.

Doña Maritza: To find this mother, you need to look for a bright blue house with a white gate on the street between Doña Coco and Doña Elba. You could even take a picture of it to remember where it is. At this house, you will find Doña Maritza who is a kindergarten teacher at the local school in the neighborhood. You may also find Don Rubén and their children, Melissa, Heydi, and Osman, and their loving housekeeper, Doña Magdalena. Miau, the cat, is also an important part of the family. Melissa is currently completing her medical residency. Heydi studied business and is now studying English, and Osman is studying English and tourism. Ben, a part of our group, was living with Doña Maritza, but Shannon O'Neill is now living with the family.

Doña Ivania: Nestled away in an alley toward the back of the barrio, you will find Doña Ivania's house. Doña Ivania lives with her two children, Ivan and Natalia, her granddaughter Natalia, three local students that are renting rooms, and Scott Quertinmont. She also has a dog named Lulu, whose powerful bark is known for scaring visitors. Her house is used for many of our group events, including Service Learning Reflection, Spanish class and watching Xavier basketball games. It also houses the group library. Ivania is kept young by the six teenagers who live with her and has the reputation for being an outgoing, caring mother who loves her *telenovelas* and is always willing to talk and joke with guests.