

NEWS FROM THE ROOFTOP



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Spring 2013

WHAT DO THESE WORDS MEAN? OBSTACLES...

HINDRANCE BARRIERS

by Charlene Meyer

They mean: *Something in the way, obstruction of progress, blockage, impediment, the action of hindering, hurdle, stumbling block.*

What do these words have in common? They describe challenges that all families in rural Nicaragua face each day.

As I reflect on our trip to Nicaragua last week, I am once again reminded of the extreme challenges that families in rural Nicaragua face each day. Families without enough food for their children. Families who are unable to send their children to school because they don't have shoes. Families with severely challenged children due to lack of proper nutrition and prenatal care.



challenges each family faces makes me feel very inadequate. How can we possibly fix all the problems? The task seems too enormous.

JOIN HANDS

However, within a very short time I realize it is not for me to fix all the problems. I witness such love, families so willing to share all they have, such faith. I am humbled to realize we are not there to do for them. We are there to join hands, to partner with them, giving

them the tools to continue overcoming the many challenges they face each day. We have so much to learn from these families we have grown to love.

From obstacles to giving and unwavering faith, the families we meet on our travels continue to give me insight on how we are to live our lives. We all have so much to learn from each other. I

didn't know I would be learning from the poorest of the poor we felt called to serve.

Read more about this unwavering faith from a young man named Francisco, featured in this issue.



BURDENS

WALKING THE DREAM

But my reflection is not about the obstacles. It is about families who are overcoming them. It is about Francisco, a young man from the mountainous region near the Honduras border. In spite of being born with only one foot, he was the Valedictorian of his class. It is about Cyndi, the young girl from Cusmapa unable to walk, now living her dream of being able to dance with her friends. It is about families from La Cruz now raising crops rather than eating rotten food from the dump. It is about Wilder who never gave up hope, even when most of his family members died before

reaching the age of 30 due to a hereditary kidney disease. It is about the many students we have met who are the first in their families to graduate high school and are starting their own small businesses. It is about HOPE!

In many ways it is very difficult to visit families in rural Nicaragua. To see the

OBSTRUCTION

BRINGING HOPE TO KIDS

NICA NOCHE 2012 CHANGES A CHILD'S WORLD



Story by Ann Barfels • Photos by Jim Bird

Okay, I will admit it up front: I am writing this article to make anyone who didn't attend Nica Noche '12 say to themselves, "Gee, I wish I would have gone!"

What a fun night we had! When you first walked in there was an inviting "Nicaraguan" market set up with all sorts of Nicaragua hand-made items to buy. There was jewelry, Christmas ornaments, aprons, purses, scarves, baskets, and the list goes on. There was even some organic Nicaraguan coffee for sale! In the background, you could hear the beautiful music of a brass quintet and guitarist playing before dinner.

Moving on...there were 100 items on the silent auction table—everything from spa visits, to local restaurant coupons, to cigars and rum, golf clubs, an iPad...you name it. And silent auctions are so much fun, aren't they? You just have to keep running up there to see if you have been outbid!

And that's not all. Everyone had a chance to play "Heads or Tails" and the winner got to "split the pot" with Tin Roof. Delightfully, the winner, Jessie Gormas donated the prize money back to Tin Roof. (Thank you Jessie!)

Let's not forget the food. Delicious doesn't cover it. There was a cheese and nacho table set

up with appetizers and of course a cash bar. The main course was 'build-your-own fajitas' with all kinds of delicious cheeses, vegetables, meat, sour cream, you name it. A fruit bar was piled high with yummy tropical fruits. And my favorite...dessert! There was a choice of churros, cheesecake or chocolate cake. Even the beverage bar was set up with different items to put in your coffee, such as chocolate chips and flavorings, and there were teas of your choice.

If you wanted to nibble, after all this, there were yogurt raisins on the table as well as chocolate-covered coffee beans...warning, don't eat those too late at night! Ben Lapps, making marvelous music with his classical guitar, provided the lovely dinner music.

The children's choir from Crosstown Ministries at Montgomery Community Church joined in the entertainment and the final number was a

solo by 11 year-old Kalynn Delorenze, who sang *Somewhere Out There*.

The main speaker was Peter Schaller, who overcame his fear of flying, and came to us from Nicaragua. He talked about the work of Tin Roof and the wonderful changes being made in the lives of thousands of impoverished children.

The evening ended with a live auction featuring an Italian villa, a Nicaraguan get-away, a Florida vacation and some beautiful handmade quilts.

So, aren't you sorry you missed it?

A special thanks to two local Cincinnati families who gave a \$35,000 matching gift challenge. The evening was a success thanks to them, our sponsors, donors, lots of volunteers, Al and Charlene Meyer who founded Tin Roof Foundation and especially to our God. The total raised was almost \$159,000! Together, we are all helping to "Change a Child's World".

**Mark Your Calendars Now for
November 9, 2013 — Nica Noche!**



THANK YOU to Friends of Nica Noche 2012

Matching Gift Challenge \$35,000

From two anonymous
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April is re-enrollment month. A cost-free way to help Tin Roof!

Your weekly grocery dollars can raise cost-free money for Tin Roof! Simply register your Kroger Plus card with the Kroger Community Rewards program. If you are already enrolled, in order **for The Tin Roof Foundation to continue getting the rewards you must re-enroll during April.** Just go online to www.krogercommunityrewards.com and follow the directions.

If you are new to this program, here's how it works:

Register your Kroger Card today and Kroger will donate a percentage of your purchase to benefit The Tin Roof Foundation. Best of all, the only cost is a few minutes of your time. Kroger Plus cards are available at the customer service desk at any Kroger store. Go online to www.krogercommunityrewards.com and follow these steps:

1. Register your Kroger Plus Card online at www.krogercommunityrewards.com.
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4. Enter zip code, click on your favorite store, enter your e-mail address, create a password, and agree to terms and conditions.
5. You will get a message to check your email. Go to your email and click on the link within the email message.
6. Click on My Account, log in, and proceed to the next step.
7. Click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards and input your Kroger Plus card number.
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9. Enter Tin Roof Foundation or select it from the list, click and confirm.

That's it! You'll be earning money for The Tin Roof Foundation every time you shop simply by signing up!



THE TIN ROOF FOUNDATION WHO ARE WE?

The Tin Roof Foundation is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to "Bringing Hope to Kids" by providing educational opportunities, meal programs, healthcare to facilitate learning, and economic development assistance for their families, thereby enabling children to escape the spiral of poverty. There are no salaries. All administrative costs are funded by Tin Roof Foundation founders Al and Charlene Meyer and special designated gifts. The Tin Roof Foundation, Inc. is incorporated in the State of Ohio. It is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

DANCING IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY



Story and Photos by Peter Schaller

We all have a dance within us. There is rhythm and celebration inside each of us, though sometimes we are just too scared, or busy, or down trodden by this broken world to let it out. We live in troubled times filled with conflict, corruption, and chaos, though we cannot succumb to adversity—we must rise above.

During our lives we meet certain people who inspire us, not by what they say, or the things they own, but by the way they choose to live. A great human being is not measured by wealth or knowledge, but by integrity and the ability to have a positive impact on others.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY ONE STEP AT A TIME

I met Francisco Moncada in 2007, and his courage and determination have changed my life. Francisco lives in a remote village called Las Jaguas, in the municipality of San José de Cusmapa. Many folks would say that even getting to the town of San José de Cusmapa is an adventure in itself. San José de Cusmapa is located in northern Nicaragua, in a mountainous region on the Honduran border, some 200 miles from Managua. To get there,



you leave the highway and travel for more than 25 miles down a narrow, dirt road that winds its way through the mountains with the precision of a snake. The geography is spectacular, though by the time you get there, you feel like you have been inside a food processor, testing each one of the speeds and settings.

From the town of Cusmapa, Francisco's home in Las Jaguas is still another hour away, down a road that is narrower, rockier and lined with even

more striking scenery. Francisco is the fourth of eight children and he was born with physical disabilities that could have been obstacles if he were a different kind of person. He has only one leg and one hand, with poorly formed fingers. Two of his brothers were also born with similar challenges. Despite this physical limitation, Francisco began to walk on his one leg when he was 15 months old. He has continued to overcome one challenge after another since then.

Although the primary school in Las Jaguas was more than a mile away, Francisco became a dedicated student and finished the sixth grade (the last year of primary school) in 2006. He was determined to find a way to travel to the public high school in Cusmapa, though traveling

back and forth would have been extremely taxing. Francisco's parents are subsistence farmers and they really did not have the means to provide him with another alternative. Just at that time, the new rural secondary program, supported by Tin Roof, was introduced in a neighboring community. The program was designed to provide high school education in remote communities, so that students would not have to travel long distances to continue their education. In most rural communities in Nicaragua, only 10 percent of all students are able to earn a high school degree.

Francisco at age 14 began the five-year program in 2007, and was determined to be the first high school graduate in his family. The program also includes technical training in sustain-



able agriculture and community development, which allowed him to make improvements to his family's farming techniques, to increase their income. In 2011, at the first graduation ceremony for the high school program, it was no surprise to anyone that Francisco was named Valedictorian! He completed the program with an average of 89 percent, the highest among the 61 graduates in Cusmapa.

TEACHING OTHERS HOW TO DANCE

It soon became obvious that earning a high school degree was just the beginning. After graduating, he enrolled in a technical program in the nearby town of Somoto, to study accounting. His classes are held on the weekend, which means that every Saturday morning, he travels 15 miles on horseback to catch a bus that will

take him the other 25 miles to school. When he finishes the technical program in 2013, his dream is to continue on to earn a university degree. Nobody doubts that Francisco will make that dream come true.

One of the most important pillars of the rural secondary program is community service. In his five years in the program, Francisco learned about the importance of becoming an active, contributing member of his community. As a result, he is

ready, willing and able to take on a leadership role in his community. Francisco is now working as a volunteer teacher, working with primary students in the educational enrichment program in his community. The younger children love working with him, as his enthusiasm and determination are infectious. The only difficulty he has had is teaching dance classes. Even so, he asked for support from other teachers, and is now teaching his students to dance in the face of adversity.

CREATIVITY IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY: NICA HOPE JEWELRY



In a neighborhood where garbage dominates everything—the landscape, the economy, even dreams—the Nica Hope Jewelry project has become a haven for 50 young men and women. The jewelry project is housed in one of Managua's poorest neighborhoods, located on the outskirts of the city dump. The members meet two or three times each week to work on production orders and new designs. Prior to learning to make jewelry most of the members worked in the city dump sorting through mounds of garbage to find bits of recyclable materials. They were lucky to make one to two dollars per day scavenging through the trash. Work conditions in the dump are deplorable and have a tremendously negative impact on the physical and emotional health of the workers.

The Spanish government financed a project to seal off the dump and relocate families who lived inside the dump. This project will also establish formal recycling plants. By making jewelry in a safe, clean environment, these young people now earn an average of \$50 a month, which allows them to fulfill basic needs of food, clothing, and education. It also is an excellent way to improve their self-esteem, as the jewelry-makers know they are important

and valuable members of the group.

Twenty-three of the jewelry-makers are young mothers—many of them single—who face great challenges in taking care of their children and generating income. Most of them previously worked in the dump and were forced to take their children with them due to lack of other childcare options. The Nica Hope Jewelry project allows them to work in a safer environment. These young mothers can also now feel comfortable taking their children with them to work. The women work additional hours each week and now earn an average of \$65 a month!

Because the jewelry project has been so successful, the group is now legally organized as a cooperative. The members of the group have received 40 hours of training, which is required by law. This will allow the students and mothers to assume more responsibility and have more control over their business. The wonderful economic and social opportunities afforded by the Nica Hope Jewelry project has and will continue to net positive changes in the lives of dozens of young people in Nicaragua who once had little hope for a better life for themselves and their children.

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- No salaries (all volunteers, all the time)
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Note: We will never share your name or information with any other organization.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN U.S. VS. NICARAGUA

by Diane Douglass

As I prepare to leave the airport for Managua, there is that typical, ever-present electricity in the air, and much more so in international departure terminals. Stress and tension pollute the air.

There are business people with all their electronics in contact with the world. Well-dressed couples sitting next to each other, but not speaking. Parents chasing kids. Long lines of humanity wait to ask questions of too few airline representatives in an effort to reach their destinations.

Like the international travelers, kids in rural Nicaragua live with stressful unknowns, too. Well, not exactly like the travelers. Their unknowns are: Can I get to school tomorrow? Will my house make it through this storm? Will my sister be able to see a doctor? Can I drink this water and not get sick? Will Mom or Dad find work? What will I have to eat? When?

Such is life in Nicaragua. Adequate nutrition, suitable healthcare, and basic hygiene, education, even the privilege of remaining a child until what we would consider a reasonable age are unknown to far too many kids. Unlike the travelers' unknowns, they are fearful, dreadful and appalling. In a country that is as beautiful as the Garden of



Eden, it is not paradise for many.

This is my third trip to Nicaragua with The Tin Roof Foundation and my resolve to work harder to improve the lives of these beautiful children grows each time. There is no more effective method to minister to the needs than the way Tin Roof has structured their support. All groups that are beneficiaries are strong, well-equipped, honest

organizations that work intimately with the families and understand specific needs. All programs receiving Tin Roof funding report faithfully on progress and are visited regularly by Tin Roof representatives. With your donations, you can change a life of fearful unknowns to a life where medical care, education, and a full belly are not only hopes but realities.

OUR FIRST TRIP TO NICARAGUA

by Dan, Marlis, and Angela Williams

Excerpts from the Williams family's journal during our February 2013 trip

Managua: Nicaragua is an incredible experience. De Colores! (All the colors!) Everything is painted bright colors and there is plenty of commercial advertising from the big cities to the remote villages in the mountains. You see a gorgeous building and next to it a run down shack. Even little things like the noises you hear standing outside, such as a rooster, then a dog, then loud car horns and motorcycles rushing by. It's very beautiful but very sad all at the same time.

Angela meets a little girl about 3 years old who just adores having her picture taken. Perhaps she has never seen her own picture before, but she is intrigued. She likes saying 'Angela'. In Spanish it sounds like Ahn-hey-lah. It is a privilege to buy some handmade jewelry from her mom.

Matagalpa: Our first visit is a workshop for children with special needs. We also visit the facility where they make seven flavors of yogurt, cheeses, and granola to provide nutrition to the children and families in the community. The mothers also make by hand up to 1,000 tortillas a day in a small space that looks like it is from the 1800s, but it meets government standards.

We visit a horse farm where they do physical therapy with horses for special needs children. It is incredible to see children with severe physical and mental challenges respond as they sit on the horse slowly walking the trail. This is one of my favorites.

Raw materials that we throw away as scrap or garbage are at a premium. We see special needs kids making recycled paper bags. We also watch students painting cards, crosses, butterflies, etc. It was amazing.

Esteli: We're at another school and play kickball and basketball with the kids. These kids really do not know a stranger. They do not seem to care that we are white people who can't jump! They just wanted us on their team. Their kickball and basketball are flat so we pitch in and go to the market to buy them new equipment and new nets. It was a great day!

Cusmapa: Visiting here is the most interesting car ride of our lives. Up, down, and around the

mountains on a gravel road, with sheer cliff dropoffs for what seems like an eternity. Going where few have ever been, we meet a young man named Francisco, age 19, who has the use of one leg and two fingers on each hand. His one hand stops above his elbow. Every weekend he must travel from his house, which is a



dirt floor hut, all the way to Somoto so that he can continue his education. He travels by horse that takes about three hours. He sometimes walks to his job that requires him to hop on his one leg if he cannot find a ride. That would be exhausting. Francisco seems to beat any challenges thrown his way. He is an incredible young man.

Serving and having lunch with the kids—consisting of rice, refried beans, a tortilla and a soy mixture (meat replacement)—is another incredible experience. A meal most North Americans would turn their nose up at is a daily must for survival to many in Nicaragua. The kids all seem very grateful to be getting these meals. For many, this is the only meal they will receive this day. For all of them, it is the largest meal. They also receive a drink made from corn, cocoa bean, and water. After lunch, it's outside to play with the kids. You don't need to know the language to have FUN! Sack races, piggyback rides, and soccer. It was so much fun!

The hardest part about coming home is realizing our world of stuff—is just that—STUFF! You can't take it with you, it doesn't really matter, and all our stuff means absolutely nothing in the eyes of a child who is wondering where their next meal is coming from.

THANKS FROM MOMS IN MATAGALPA

by Rebecca Trujillo

Familias Especiales would like to thank The Tin Roof Foundation for their continued support of programs to help the people with disabilities in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.

With your help we are providing 447 at-risk mothers and 60 severely malnourished children with all-natural yogurt and cheese to improve their nutrition. We are also providing the yogurt and cheese daily to more than 230 children and young people with disabilities.

We are thankful to Tin Roof who also purchased the building for our yogurt program. This has helped to create jobs for 12 women (six of whom have a handicap).

At the same time Tin Roof is helping support the horse therapy for 55 children who have physical problems and conditions such as autism, schizophrenia, and auditory problems.

Tin Roof's help has made a big difference in the health of all the people served in our community and has created independence for people with handicaps. Thanks to each of your donors and for your partnership!



Victorina Aroliga with daughter Ada, a Familias Especiales family, is the grateful recipient of one of the handmade quilts donated and auctioned off at Niche Noche 2012, but were then given back to be taken to needy families by Tin Roofers on their December trip.

JOIN HANDS WITH TIN ROOF TO HELP CHILDREN OVERCOME ADVERSITY

Tin Roof is effective, efficient, and focused in its mission to help the "poorest of the poor."

Working with partners in Nicaragua we strengthen schools, provide daily meals and educational opportunities, and help with medical needs.

Donate to The Tin Roof Foundation today.

PLEASE MAIL YOUR CONTRIBUTION TODAY

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Photo: Peter Schaller