



Project Opportunity

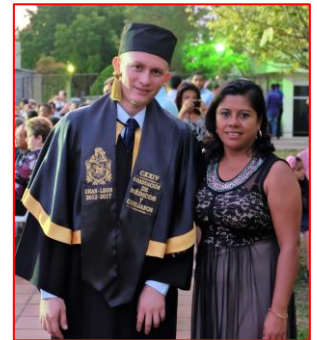
April 2018 Newsletter

Now in our 10th year, Project Opportunity's programs and accomplishments reflect our ever-deepening relationships of mutual trust and acquired wisdom. As we seek to address preschoolers' developmental challenges, scholarship students' restricted dreams and abundant obstacles and young parents' grinding lives of poverty and crises - the PO team creatively digs in, persists, networks, regroup, encourages, accompanies, celebrates and loves.

You are a part of this "pocket of goodness" in the world. Thank you.



Lester Gutierrez
Auto Mechanics 2017



Jairo Zambrano
Medicine 2017

As one student said, "our family is growing" - now to 10. Two mothers in PO job training joined our scholarship student lunch. The spontaneous discussion focused on overcoming self-doubts and nerves to take risks, to speak up. We prompted each to talk about recent accomplishments and current challenges.

How wonderful to hear from a nurse, 3 in auto mechanics, a doctor, a kitchen worker, an international relations student, an English student and a cashier. What a moving, supportive conversation it was! (See p. 3,4,5)



Our CPR classes have reached 1800 thanks to PO Coordinator René Real and Instructor Juan Duarte (see p. 6).



Fifteen preschoolers with special needs receive individual attention each year (see p. 3).



New PO sewing class is a big success on many fronts: self-esteem, mutual support and economic (see p. 2).

What's new this year?

Sewing classes: When discussing ideas for 2018, PO coordinator René Real suggested, "Let's offer sewing classes!". Hmm - really? With the speed of magic and the generous collaboration of the NCFC (Nicaraguan Children's Friendship Committee), the new program began 2 weeks later.

Women over age 40 are "too old" and will not be hired by Nicaragua businesses. Sewing is a valuable skill; income can be generated by mending, altering and making clothes and school uniforms.

Our classes teach not only sewing, they've become a women's space of solidarity, laughter and learning. These are women who have suffered poverty and abuse, some rarely leaving their homes or barrios.



How PO works: Nancy's (in blue) 5-month-old was having 4+ seizures daily. Alarmed, we facilitated an evaluation with the only pediatric neurologist in town. Now the seizures are controlled with meds.



Instructor Graciela Ruiz (center back) first teaches how to measure and make patterns; each woman memorizes her own measurements. Then they learn to sew poster paper using both manual and electric machines. With fabric, they then make skirts, blouses, pillow cases and eventually girl's dresses.

The Catholic Asilo de Ancianos (nursing home) wanted a staff member to learn to operate a sewing machine so she could make and mend sheets, curtains and habits.

Job training internships: We asked our working friends in León to consider training a young person for 4-6 weeks as an apprentice. PO provides a stipend, transportation, uniforms and coaching and, afterwards, job search assistance. So far, PO has facilitated internships in a restaurant kitchen and a hardware store.

Mercedes (L), mother of 2 toddlers, is now employed thanks to Maribel Gomez's (R) fine teaching and support.



Advocacy, evaluation and intervention with special needs children:

PO teacher, Vilma, works mornings at two community preschools. Her duties include identifying children with special needs and facilitating family involvement. PO then facilitates competent evaluations and Vilma works individually and creatively with the child to maximize their learning and potential.

In addition, she tactfully "orients" the preschool mother-educators on strategies to improve learning and stability in the classroom. As caring "eyes on the ground" in the classroom, her presence really makes a positive difference!



Vilma quickly identified 2-year-old Sofia (L & R) as deaf; her family thought she was going through a "stubborn stage."

PO is facilitating evaluations. Vilma teaches Sofia, her mother and teacher gestures to communicate.



Elion (L) constructs his first Lego tower.

Preschool building improvements: Each year PO collaborates with preschool parents to accomplish much needed improvements and maintenance at the schools. This year's projects include wiring upgrades, new fans and lighting and plumbing improvements.

Responding to teacher and parent requests, PO installed an outdoor sink and walkway at preschool "Gotitas de Esperanza".



PO scholarship students become more amazing each year.



Scarleth Blanco is 19 and recently began her 3rd year at the Universidad Americana in Managua in International Relations (and her 8th year as a PO student). Her professors continue to applaud her dedication, enthusiasm and insightfulness. She maintains an impressive A average. In 2017, thanks to PO, she was able to attend a Political Science conference in Guatemala. This year she'll likely go to Colombia.



Larry Ramos graduated top of his class from the National University's School of Nursing in early 2017 and recently completed his post graduate year of service in the public clinics. He's 22 and now studies in daily English classes as he completes the steps to obtain his official license. He hopes to work in intensive care at a hospital that requires English and eventually to continue his studies in graduate school.



Jovania Leiva at 24 was a star in her first year in the Politécnico LaSalle Auto Mechanics program. During December break PO helped her get eye surgery and glasses - she can now see out of *both* eyes. She's technically minded, loves engines and is working out how best to function in this non-traditional profession. Now in her 2nd year, she'll begin a practicum Saturdays at an auto repair shop.



Pedro Centano is also in his 2nd year in the Politécnico LaSalle Auto Mechanics program. At 23, he's mature and focused. Jovania told us about him - that he struggled financially and was an excellent student. He applied for a PO scholarship and after interviewing him we said "Yes". He's especially adept at computer systems and works weekends with a mechanic in his shop.



Luisa Espinoza is Pablo's (below) mother. She has a college degree in Communications and a passion for learning. PO pays tuition for her to study English - she's in the 9th level of 13. She's smart and dedicated - earning all A's and B's. She loves tutoring PO students in English. She landed a job using her English as a receptionist at a hotel close by her home. This added income is necessary for the family.



Pablo Espinoza attends his 2nd year at Primeros Pasos private preschool. He's now 5 and in kindergarten. He has behavioral and attentional challenges associated with autism. A full-time psychologist assistant is at his side at school. Now in our 3rd year working with Pablo, PO supports this intensive coordinated effort with family and school to help Pablo manage his difficulties and achieve his potential. A pediatric neurologist is on the team as well and prescribes appropriate medications. Pablo is highly intelligent like his mother and excels in academics - he can read, write and do arithmetic, ahead of his classmates. He's also a very loving little boy.

PO scholarship students graduate and get jobs.

We never view graduation as the end of PO involvement. Prior to graduation, PO students prepare curricula and obtain solid recommendations from faculty. They've already had internships in potential employment sites, thanks to PO persistence. Then, we call on our León network to help the student land a job that utilizes their skills. Typically graduates in Nicaragua remain unemployed; this extra orientation and encouragement is necessary.



Please join us and congratulate Lester Gutierrez!! We met Lester (L) when he was 14. PO supported his high school studies; he was the first in his family to graduate (R) in 2014. Now, after graduating from 3 years of technical studies in Auto Mechanics (see photo p. 1), he's employed by Ingenio San Antonio (above), one of the largest sugar refineries in the country. He works 12-hour shifts in their heavy machinery repair area. He says he learns something new every shift.

And in the medical field....



Larry Ramos (L) gives a presentation to his nursing colleagues detailing a survey of their district. Yes, they do wear starched white!

Jairo Zambrano (R) is off to the pueblo Ocotol for 3 years to complete his service obligation and practice medicine. He studied in the US at the Univ. of N. Carolina during July 2017 - what an experience he had!



iSalva una vida! program now in its 6th year = 1800 Nicaraguans trained in 160 classes.



We can't keep up with requests for classes! Schools, restaurants, churches, hotels, community groups, "non-profits" and "for-profits", youth programs, security companies receive classes each year. Participants learn the Heimlich Maneuver, CPR and how to stop bleeding during our 2-hour class. They practice over and over how to respond quickly in an emergency.

Instructor Juan Duarte (middle) works as a Red Cross ambulance 1st responder on rotating 24-hour shifts so he can answer most questions. He's dynamic, dedicated and tireless in his teaching. Juan's earnings from PO pay for his wife's cancer medicine.

Medical advocacy for people with disabilities



PO enjoys a close working relationship with community leader Martin González, who has been paraplegic since falling out of a coco tree at 15. He uses crutches.

He developed severe pressure sores on his ankles from ill-fitting boots which required months of specialized treatment. Then, PO facilitated the making of padded orthopedic boots. He's thrilled to be "back on his feet".

This year we are grateful that PO has the resources to help a few long-time collaborators and some families with much needed medical advocacy and expenses.

Seven-year-old Xiomara was fitted for a prosthetic eye which she now wears daily. She lost her eye after a wood-splitting accident 2 years ago.

Scholarship student Jovania had cataract surgery which returned sight to her L eye, now 10 years after a similar accident with a wood splinter.

Jorge, at age 11, who benefited from years of extensive PO assistance for severe club feet, now walks normally with orthopedic boots. PO shares the cost with his parents.

And there's the baby with epilepsy, the 5-year-old with a severe limp, the deaf 2-year old, the autistic 5-year-old...well we're busy.

PO succeeds thanks to our dedicated Nicaraguan team and generously willing network.



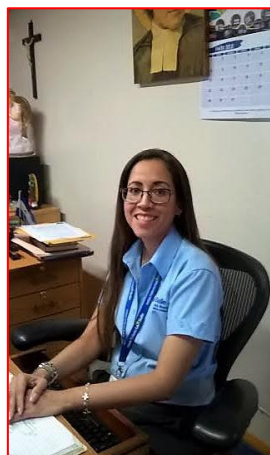
PO core team L to R: Vilma Dolmus (Special education), Kate Stewart (Co-founder), Deborah DeWolfe (Director and Co-founder), Claudia Rodriguez (Accountant), René Real (Coordinator).



Mercedes Escorcía, Coordinator at preschool Tortuguitas works closely with PO improving educational attention and school facilities.



Mercedes Lara, Engineer, has assisted PO with building projects since the preschool 7 years ago.



Carolina García
Coordinator Scholarships
Politécnico LaSalle



Juan Maradiaga (R)
Carpentry Program
Nicaraguan Children's
Friendship Committee



Ninoska Delgado, MD
OBGYN, Sex educator
Faculty, UNAN



Alberto Maradiaga
Driver, Great contacts
Beloved "fixer"

Thank you for caring!
Our shared efforts create opportunities that inspire and empower.

www.projectopp.org

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¡Mil gracias a todos!

Despite our best efforts mistakes can occur. Please accept our apologies; we'd be grateful if you would let us know.