



Project Opportunity

May, 2011

The preschool is done! Children are attending!

You have participated in a small miracle.

The preschool "Las Gotitas de Esperanza" (Little Drops of Hope) welcomed students on May 3rd, 2011. This dream was accomplished through the many helping hands in León, Nicaragua and the U.S. Your belief in us, along with your financial and moral support, kept us going - in all ways.



Freshly painted and ready for move-in, the new red school is the pride of the neighborhood.



Right after the ribbon-cutting, families and children are welcomed to take their first look. Note the ceiling, lights and fan - all "luxuries" to enhance comfort and learning.

On April 30th, as we were completing painting, installing doors and patching concrete; little chairs and tables were being moved into the new classrooms - all in time for the gala community inauguration on May 1st. The event was complete with a piñata, ribbon-cutting, official unveiling of our plaque and too many speeches in the sweltering heat.



Eighty children will soon fill the two new classrooms and use the covered recreation area in back.



Our plaque says "Community Center 'Little Drops of Hope' Created with much love and caring for the children of this community. Donated by Project Opportunity and Project Minnesota-León, United States of America"

Lest you think the school just "appeared," this is what the building looked like just 2 weeks before the inauguration. Andrés, our maestro de obra, orchestrated over 30 workers completing tasks in all corners of the site. During the final push, Kate headed up the painting crew of 8 and Deborah worked 12/7 managing the details and unexpected "imprevistos."



Two weeks before



After

Here you can see the retaining wall and fence to block balls from the adjacent court, covered canal for drainage alongside the walkway and Kate's fabulous paint job.

Our original team of 11 workers grew with five additional contractor crews. Gustavo's crew welded the elaborate roof structure and completed all of the metal work while Guillermo's mixed and poured the concrete walkways, canals and retaining walls. Others installed the electrical system, made the windows and put in the ceilings and downspouts.



Alejandro completes the three-toilet bathroom located between the classrooms.



The kitchen door is being installed while the stove is being moved in.



The kitchen is tiled and has a window for passing food trays to the adjacent classroom.



Martin is the intrepid and wise community leader who worked persistently on his dream of this preschool. He was involved every day-not easily, as he lives with polio and gets around on crutches. Gisella, the preschool director, is thrilled to be moving into the new school. This is the second classroom and is being set up for toddlers.

The Inaugural Celebration - 5/1/2011



Celebrating at the inauguration are Project Minnesota-León board members and director, Sarah, community leaders, Martin and Nubia, León school director, Aura Teresa, and Deborah and Kate of Project Opportunity. Some of the children who participated in Project Opportunity supported dance classes perform with great enthusiasm.

Over 300 children, parents, construction workers and their families, school staff, friends and community members attended this joyful event. The León Mayor's office loaned the speaker system, the school provided the refreshments and the community brought the piñata and helped with decorations. Even the soccer players on the adjacent court took a break to participate in the festivities.



Kate thanks the workers for their hard work on behalf of Project Opportunity and the community's children. This is the covered multi-use area with concrete floor that is at the back of the building.



Once the ribbon was cut, the plaque was unveiled. All the metal work you see was cut, welded, painted and installed on-site by Gustavo and crew.

This beautiful preschool, which also serves as the community disaster shelter, cost \$45,000. Project Minnesota-León generously helped with the purchase of \$10,000 of building materials.

We hope you feel very satisfied with how your dollars were used. This community and its children will benefit for years to come.



Here we are - a bit hysterical, very tired and incredibly happy.

Dental Program

★ There's more...

During our 5-month stay in Nicaragua, Project Opportunity implemented a dental program, sponsored dance and art classes, coordinated a class for small business women, contracted with a local seamstress on special projects and purchased and distributed educational materials. All these additional projects were accomplished with \$6500.

This year the dental program was about so much more than teeth - although 450 children's teeth benefited as well.

Moms were hired to help each child learn to brush and then to hands-on teach more parents.



The mothers transported children to the dental clinic via bus-camionetas (small trucks) and kept track of evaluation results for the kids' future treatment needs.



Some children were terrified, many had never brushed before. Deborah taught mother-helpers at 6 community preschools to gradually introduce the kids to brushing through our new "custom-made" dental care coloring book and the demonstration big teeth and brush. The mothers became experts at the children's differing developmental capabilities and ways to engage their participation and enthusiasm.

Some may take this approach for granted. However, it is not typical of Nicaraguan parenting or teaching styles. With successes, the mothers became convinced that a gentle positive teaching approach worked best. The children were so proud of their mastery of tooth brushing.



We also worked with the pediatric dental clinic at UNAN, the national university. For \$9, this clinic provides a child with all necessary treatment. Twelve children with severe problems (like young Ani top left corner and Francisco shown here) benefited from this collaboration.



A compressor?? Who could imagine that a compressor would make or break children receiving dental care? After 4 repairs and a burn-up, Project Opportunity purchased a new one for the small community clinic serving the children - as well as purchased all the necessary dental supplies. The government only pays the dentists and provides tools for extractions.

Dance and Art Classes

Soany and Lenin, members of an indigenous art cooperative of young artists, were hired by Project Opportunity to teach kids folkloric dance and the basics of color and art.

Over 12 classes in this after-school program, children also learned about local traditions and their cultural history.

They loved Soany and Lenin, learned some new skills and were proud of their fine accomplishments.



Classes for Women with Small Businesses



Nidia teaches this group of mother-small business owners the importance of being positive and creative. Participants share about their ideas for expanding their businesses.

In early 2010, Project Opportunity gave 19 loans for small businesses. Over half of loan recipients paid their loans and solicited and received larger loans (\$75). Others were in process repaying and a few had defaulted. This year, the national school wanted to take over providing starter loans and Project Opportunity focused on development classes.

We collaborated with Fundación León 2000, a microfinance program, and their highly capable team of teachers. Our shared goal was to offer a class to help these mothers develop their businesses beyond the daily subsistence level of buying ingredients and selling product each day. These women are always one family crisis away from losing their businesses.

An unfortunate array of challenges resulted in only partial completion of this program. While there were significant individual benefits, we weren't able to realize all that we hoped.

Crib Mattresses, Covers and Sheets

The infant classroom was in dire need of 14 new crib mattresses. With Maria Delia's expert help, Project Opportunity purchased quality foam. Then she sewed 28 cotton zippered covers and 52 little bright colored fitted sheets for the foam mattresses. With matching fabric, she designed curtains for the classroom and jackets for the teachers.

The cheerful results were much appreciated and gave the teachers and infant-helpers a great boost. Maria Delia's spirits were also lifted by having paid work that valued her talents. We also contracted with her to make 12 school uniforms for children whose families couldn't afford them.



Educational Materials

In our February, 2011 newsletter we told you about all the crayons, pencils, paints, glue, scissors, paper, notebooks, poster board and learning materials that we purchased and distributed to 16 classrooms of preschoolers. Without your help, these classrooms would have had to make do with nubbins for crayons and very few other supplies.

Before leaving for Nicaragua in November, we purchased about 200 children's books in Spanish - below you see children in the new classroom loving their books. Little Jorge on the right is exploring one of the donated puzzles that we transported with the numerous donated toys from Seattle.



**You have touched many Nicaraguans with your
kindness and generosity.
And you have helped plant seeds of opportunity.**



Thank you so much for caring.

Deborah and Kate

www.projectopp.org



Special thanks to those who donated their time, homes, delicious food and expertise to help with fundraising and gathering educational materials. This "DIY" (do-it-yourself) non-profit couldn't have accomplished so much without your help. Paloma, Steve R., Cass, Janet, Evelyn, Bill, Linda, Kate, Anne W., Lorraine, Paul, Anne P., Michael J., Lauren, Michael K., Marilyn, Laurie, Louise, Steve S., Corina, Holly, Marcia, Patty and Ellie- we thank you!

And to Jenny, Jody, Alex, Emma, Vicenta, Maribel, Veronica B., Doribel, Marcos and everyone else on the ground in Nicaragua - ¡ Muchisimas Gracias !

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