



# Project Opportunity

## May 2017 Newsletter

Was this the best Project Opportunity year ever? You decide.

From integrating 4 new scholarship students to intensifying efforts with preschoolers, we and our PO team in León, Nicaragua continue to work with growing wisdom and creativity. Join us and celebrate our 9<sup>th</sup> year with more lives saved, new graduates of academic and job skills programs, an innovative sexual health program and preschool facilities improvements.

All thanks to your very necessary support.

### Highlights to celebrate:



*One of 7 PO scholarship students, Larry Ramos, graduated top of his class from the National University's Nursing Program. Other students study Auto Mechanics, Diplomacy and Medicine (see p. 2 & 6).*



*Preschoolers with special needs benefit from our individualized hands-on approach: home visits, personalized attention, diagnostic evaluations and consultations with teachers (see p. 4).*



*PO's popular "Salva un vida" classes really do save lives - at least 13 that we know about (see p. 5).*



*Job and small business skills help parents earn an income. Katerin and Amy study to be cashiers (see p. 3).*



*Each year 125 more preschoolers and 10 mothers enthusiastically learn about dental hygiene (see p. 5).*

**Education, improved health, and economic and emotional stability are key to transitioning from extreme poverty. Project Opportunity addresses all four in small, but significant ways.**

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## Who are PO's new scholarship students?

Students receive comprehensive support from the PO team and our other scholarship students. We take on sexual health education, pay for driver's ed., facilitate treatment for health issues, counsel the families when crisis erupts or parents obstruct the student's success. If there's a problem at school - we're on it!

We help students confront fears and encourage them to overcome new challenges. We lovingly *insist* that students, with the help of their parents, maintain their aspirations despite setbacks and the negative pressures associated with living in poverty.



**Jovania Leiva**, now 24, has lived apart from her biological family since she was 15. She finished high school, supporting herself with a meager income repairing refrigerators.

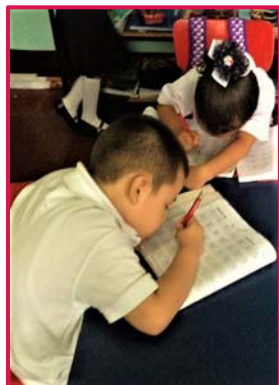
She was so enthusiastic and dedicated in her motorcycle repair class during 2016, that PO now supports her in a full-time 3-year Auto Mechanics Program at Instituto Politécnico La Salle. She is the star in her all male class!

Each year more Nicaraguans drive newer vehicles. Few Auto Shops have the technology or personnel to fix them. PO sees this as an opportunity for future employment!



**Judith Portocarrero** (on L) had to stop her 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the Auto Mechanics program last year due to her father's death and the family's resulting dire economic situation. Lester, another PO student, told us about her. We met with Judith and her mother, she applied for a PO scholarship and now she's back in training.

It's been bumpy. Her older brother has drug problems and can be violent, Judith has health issues and her mother appears manipulative at times. Now, having addressed all the above (for now), Judith is consistently engaged and proud of her successes.



**Pablo Solis Espinoza** was kicked out of preschool at age 3 for aggression, tantrums, hyperactivity and inability to listen or relate to others. He had symptoms of autism and neurological deficits. PO developed a trusted relationship with his family and facilitated comprehensive evaluations. René tutored him and counseled his family twice a week during 2016.

Now in 2017, PO pays expenses for him to attend Primeros Pasos, a private preschool. A full-time psychologist assistant is at his side. After medication adjustments, interventions with his parents and coordination with Primeros Pasos, all facilitated by PO, he is making great progress. He has a "highly intelligent" streak and is reading words and writing letters at age 4, a surprise to all!

**Job skills training, small business consultation and more...**



*Tania completed PO's hotel housekeeping training in 2014, worked in a hotel for 2 years and now has her own home business selling used clothes. She secured a small business loan from ProMujer.*



*Luisa (R) is Pablo's (p. 2) mother. PO pays tuition for her college-level English classes. She earns all A's and now is in the 7<sup>th</sup> level of 13. Here she passes on what she's learned to a preschool mother.*



*Rafael, Edwin and Moises completed technical training in 2015 thanks to PO. Now all 3 use their skills in stable jobs. Moises works in Costa Rica.*

**PO sponsored training:**

- Auto/moto mechanics - 6
- Driving School - 3
- Hotel housekeeping - 13
- Restaurant work - 3
- Computer/cashier skills - 9
- English - 5
- Electrical repairs - 3
- Home business accounting - 7
- Baking and decorating - 3
- Beautician skills - 2
- Welding - 2



*Aracely has worked at one of Leon's best hotels since completing PO's hotel house-keeping program in 2014.*



*Jaciel starts her 3<sup>rd</sup> 80-hour Sunday Auto/moto Mechanics class.*



*Karla's mobile appliance repair business continues to grow.*



*Maribi received her 6<sup>th</sup> grade diploma through PO's 2014 class. Now she's in Saturday HS.*



*Maribel's pulperia store serves her community and augments family income. PO also is helping her 5-year-old daughter, Xiomara, get a prosthetic eye.*

## PO helps preschoolers with special needs.



When 65 children start a new school year at "Tortuguitas" preschool, some attending for the first time, PO staff observe children with special needs. Some show the effects of malnutrition or extreme isolation, some have experienced abuse or neglect, and others have physical, developmental or behavioral issues.

In coordination with teachers, we identify those with the greatest difficulties and define a plan of action: home visits, diagnostic evaluations, reviews of educational needs and individualized attention two times weekly.

Each year, we work with 15 children and their families in this intensive manner - helping each to maximize his or her potential and get the help they need.



## PO works with preschool parents to improve classrooms.



*PO paid for the materials to replace leaky tin roofs at 2 preschools, parents did the work.*



*This new wall divides the 3- and 4-year-old classrooms at "Las Tortuguitas".*



*Parents wanted to brighten up the gray concrete walls at "Dulce Sonrisa". Now they are green and yellow.*

Each year parent committees submit proposals to PO for improvement and maintenance projects. PO works with 3 preschools in adjacent neighborhoods, one we built in 2011. Our goal in the collaboration is to facilitate parent participation at the preschool and to accomplish a needed improvement.

With the successful completion of a project, we celebrate and encourage parents to continue to participate and engage - both at school and at home.



*Andrés, Kate and Mercedes celebrate a project successfully completed.*

## "Salva una vida" classes - 1500 Nicaraguans now trained!!



PO's "Salva una vida" classes are widely respected and valued. Participants are trained to step in and stop a child or adult from dying of asphyxia or a heart attack. Police officers, life guards and nurses-in-training attend our classes, along with school teachers, community groups, older teens and hotel and restaurant workers.



This year, Juan Duarte, our dynamic instructor and René, PO coordinator, suggested that we include "how to stop bleeding" in the content...so now classes teach CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver and methods to stop bleeding.



## Dental Hygiene Program for Preschoolers



*Deborah makes sure that positive encouragement is a part of teaching brushing for both the mothers and the children.*

The children love to brush their teeth and get special attention from our dental hygiene mothers. "¡Yo primero!" (me first) they say. It's a wonderful introduction to life-long preventive dental care.

PO hires and trains the mothers who later can sign up for PO-sponsored vocational training. Each year (we're in our 9<sup>th</sup>), children at 3 preschools learn to brush and the teachers incorporate dental hygiene into their curricula.



*PO's 2017 dental hygiene mothers practice our 5-step brushing technique with René's help (L). Next, they assist preschoolers to learn the steps and teach them to their own children at home.*

## PO scholarship students achieve, overcome and progress.



**Larry Ramos**, now 22, is currently in his "servicio social" year working in a rural health clinic and completing his thesis. He graduated top of his class from the National University School of Nursing in February. He hopes to further his studies in a US university in intensive care nursing. And, with PO support, he avidly studies English while we all look into US programs.



**Scarleth Blanco** at age 18 impresses us and her professors with her maturity, enthusiasm and dedication. She's a thinker and a reader. Now in her second year at the Universidad Americana in Managua, she majors in International Relations and works hard for her "A" average. PO has supported her educational expenses for 7 years - what a pleasure it's been!



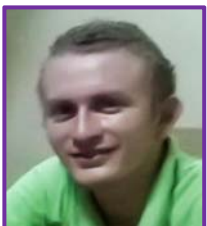
**Lester Gutiérrez**, now 19, is in his third and final year in the Auto Mechanics Program at Instituto Politécnico La Salle. He will do his 4-month practicum in an established company in Managua with future employment possibilities - a huge step for him since he's never been to Managua. PO will be at his side as he takes on this challenge, as we've been over the past 5 years of his studies and "teen" moments.



**Judith Portocarrero** (see p. 2) is 18 and joined the PO student group this year. She's in her 2nd year studying Auto Mechanics and is learning to assertively ask her technical questions over and over until she "gets it". She earns excellent grades and is curious and motivated. During vacation in June, thanks to PO, she and Jovania (below) will learn to drive and will participate in our sex ed. classes.



**Jovania Leiva** is 24 and our oldest student (see p. 2). Her maturity is apparent in her focus and dedication in the Auto Mechanics program. She knows the hardship of living without resources. She has adapted well in her all-male class and is jubilant about this opportunity. Being a mechanic and working in a successful auto shop has been an impossible dream, until now.



**Jairo Zambrana** is 23 and in his last year of medical school at the National University. Having studied English in addition to medicine, he's been accepted to a 2-month program at the U. of North Carolina focusing on nephrology. His financial situation is beyond precarious; he lives on the edge struggling to stay in school. PO is providing him a monthly stipend so that he can study with less anxiety and worry.



**Pablo Espinoza** and his family benefit from intensive PO attention (see p. 2). He is thriving at Primeros Pasos, a private preschool. His mother and father are learning improved strategies for managing his hyperactivity and symptoms of autism. His first "report card" indicates that he's achieved age-level for knowledge, vocabulary and awareness - a big advance to celebrate!

**Meet the PO team and some of our extended family.**



*Our team from L to R: Andrés Hernández (Construction), Vicenta Hernández (Instructor), Vilma Dolmus (Special education), René Alberto Jirón (Computer skills and mathematics tutor), René Real (PO Coordinator), Alberto Maradiaga (Transportation), Doribel Niño (Accountant), Deborah DeWolfe (Director and Co-founder), Kate Stewart (Co-founder). Not pictured: Juan Duarte ("Safe a Life" instructor).*



*Genoveva, Auto Mechanics Program Director, is a mentor for PO students.*



*Alberto knows everyone and is our beloved "fixer". He'll help Lester get established in Managua.*



*Mercedes is "abuela" and grandmother to all. She's the engine behind Pre-school "Tortuguitas".*



*Jorge (L), licensed electrician, generously works on PO projects.*



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

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*Project Opportunity is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.  
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*¡Mil gracias a todos!*

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