

No Age Limit to Making a Difference

My name is Kian and I am 10 years old. My family visited Nicaragua last January and I loved it there. When I got home I decided that I would like to help a Nicaraguan boy my own age have an education and be able to play on a sports team.



Kian 2nd from the left

I decided to have a bake sale and invited a couple friends to join me. We sold mostly cupcakes and brownies. I looked at many organizations but chose Empowerment International. It seemed like it had a very personal feeling and the money I earned could do so much! I can't wait to be in touch with my new friend.

Revolutionary Year

There have been so many changes since the beginning of 2006! Empowerment International and the communities it serves have moved forward in every way. Amazingly the increase of parental meeting and event participation rose from 35% to 98%. With a collaborative effort from our ground team in Central and the program participants (the children and their families), Empowerment International's program is something we believe our donors and supporters can truly be proud of. Our program has continued to shape itself into something much more powerful than just providing scholarships.

Over this past year, we have witnessed a revolution in the interest of the children and their parents in school and education. There is a shared passion for education and the opportunity it brings. It is wonderful to walk through Villa Esperanza and see children outside their homes with their

school books studying, often with their older siblings and parents sitting with them and participating. Children will often proudly run up to volunteers and visitors to show them their notebooks and exams.

The parents often will stop a volunteer or staff member to share concerns and questions. In the past year, we have learned techniques and processes for fostering this passion, interest, and investment in the future of the participants in the community. We feel we are getting closer to establishing a true community-maintained program in Villa Esperanza which will allow us to dedicate more of our personnel resources to other needy communities.

I am very excited about 2007 as we look toward continuing to refine our program to meet the needs of these communities and start the process of creating a reproducible program for another location in Nicaragua. I would like to thank each and every one of you for your ongoing support and belief in us and, most importantly, in the future of the children of Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

Sincerely,

Kathy Adams
Director and Founder



Wish List

- Your used Digital Camera
- 35000 Frequent Flyer Miles
- Laptop computers

Save the Date

- Friday Sept. 07, 2007
- 4th Annual Fiesta de Esperanza Benefit (Salsa Dancing, Art Auction and more. Westminster Butterfly Pavilion)

Supporter Experiences Program First Hand

In spring of 2006 I learned of Empowerment International (E.I.). Their efforts in Nicaragua and Costa Rica to provide essential uniforms and school materials, tutor kids at home, and counsel parents to focus on the long-term payoff of keeping their children in school fit my dream for Nicaraguan children. This story is about my experience helping with Empowerment International's "Inscription Day".

Today, I get to help with registering children from Villa Esperanza in Empowerment International's 2007 school year program. Kathy and I walk to the school where the E.I. staff is calmly finishing the final touches on organization for the big day. Half of nearly two hundred children will register today, the other half tomorrow.

I am assigned to interview the children and help them write letters to donors. The interview template looks straight forward. I think I understand the Spanish. We open for business and greet the parents and children who arrive at our door. I introduce myself to a very small boy and his mother and ask his name. He stares wide-eyed. His mother nudges to tell his name. Finally, she says it for him.

The room fills with children's voices. Everyone seems to be talking. Everyone but my little boy. I ask if he has brothers or sisters, if he has a pet, what he likes to play. With each question, he smiles wider. His eyes are big with wonder. He looks at me as if I'm a rare bird. I wonder, 'does he understand me?' I know how different Nicaraguan Spanish sounds to my Mexican trained ears. How must I sound to him?

"I'm sorry my Spanish isn't better," I tell him and his mother. She says she can understand, but this is his first time. He's beginning school this year. I try to speak slowly and clearly, shrink closer to him and make my smile as big as the one he shares. I compliment him for being big and brave. Finally, with much prodding from Mom, we finish. Once finished, he's as hesitant to leave my table as he was to speak. Through the morning I interview other kids, returning students who are quick to respond and enjoy telling about themselves. I enjoy them all but my little first-timer is something special. The first-timers are so brave as they make the first steps into the new world of school.

Midday Yoaska came to register. The young lady with rod-straight posture and thick shining hair is striking in her immaculate jeans and top with wide eyes and quick smile. She offers to



stay and help. Yoaska answers the last interview question and asks why there is a blank space at the bottom of the page. "So the volunteers can translate the Spanish into English for the donors," I explained. She sees a chance to practice her English. When she gets hung up, I help her. In no time she finishes.

I'm taken aback to see how much English she's learned and we show her work to Kathy. After a hug of congratulation, Kathy grins and hands Yoaska a stack of interview forms. Yoaska motions for my help. We work through letter after letter. When the English does not match the Spanish grammar, she wants to know why. She is so driven to learn and succeed. At the end of the day, she hands Kathy a thick stack of letters she has completed. Delighted, she gives me a big hug.

I walk back to the center of town tired but happy. I've been among the parents, children, volunteers, Anielka and Kathy for just two days, but I've seen how well they work together. The E.I. staff offers support and holds high expectations and the children respond to meet these expectations. As one who has spent nearly thirty years working with teachers and school-children, it is a pure pleasure to see a program that works so well and accomplishes so much to better the lives of these children, their families, and the community. By Sheila McAuliffe

In January, Sheila McAuliffe and her husband Bob Bechtel from Denver Colorado came to visit Granada and had a couple of opportunities to experience Empowerment International on the ground level. This article is part one of a two part series

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