



Raíces y Ramas

Roots & Branches

OUR MISSION

Planting Hope serves communities in Nicaragua and the U.S. by enhancing educational opportunities, supporting grassroots initiatives and fostering cultural exchanges.

OUR VISION

Planting Hope envisions global equity, sustainable growth and mutual understanding through the exchange of social, cultural and material riches of Nicaragua and the U.S.



Above, campers learn a new game during their first week. Below left, craft time at camp.



LET THE CAMPS BEGIN!

ONE CHILD'S EXPERIENCE

My name is Kenya Liseth Herrera Salas and I am in the fifth grade at the Rubén Darío School in Ocalca community. Of the classes taught by my teacher, I like math best because I have fun writing on the board.

Of the activities we do at coffee camp with the mobile library, I like "The King Commands," whereby we divide into two groups and the king can ask for any token, like say for example "Bring me a rubber band" or "a leaf" and whatever is asked of us, both groups have to find and deliver it to the king.

The game that I want to share with my family is the game of the pump, because it's really fun, it's funny and it's easy to play.

A VISIT BY THE MOBILE LIBRARY

interviews by Digna Cardoza



My name is Nelly María Hernández and I am 13 years old. I am in sixth grade at the Oasis of Hope School in Sor María. I am one of the top students in my class. I like physical education class because we play games and exercise.

Of all the activities that we have done with the Mobile Library, the crafts projects are my favorites. They teach us how to make decorations, cards and other things as well.

What I'd like to share with my family are the games that Professor Marvin teaches us; also, craft projects, plays, dances and reading.

It's important that the Mobile Library project visits us because it helps us with our classwork, as well as our behavior and conduct. They come to play recreational games with us and take us to get to know other places and to have fun, to get us out of the daily routines of our homes and school.

My name is Guiselth del Carmen Hernández, and I am 17 years old. At this moment, I am Nelly's guardian, since my mother had to travel to Costa Rica to work, due to the lack of work here. There are five of us siblings who live in our house.

As Nelly's sister and guardian, the change that I can see in Nelly is that she is motivated to participate in the activities that Mobile Library brings, like dance, theater and crafts, as well as the trips they go on to learn about different places.

One of the nicest things they did, according to my sister, was to visit Calvary Hill with the Mobile Library.

I think it's really important that the Mobile Library project keep functioning for the formation of our boys and girls, instilling in them moral, educational and artistic values that contribute to their personal and professional training for the future.

For example, previously my sister spent her time watching television and now she does activities like painting, drawing, practicing dances and doing creative projects, and all this is positive for us as a family and for all the community.



Nereyda and her family.

My name is Nereyda Urbina and I have been working with Planting Hope since 2002. In 2005, they allowed me the chance to take a break and travel for the first time out of Nicaragua to work in Costa Rica. I returned to Nicaragua and back to work with Planting Hope in 2009. I am currently employed with Planting Hope as the director of educational programming, where I direct and work with the Mobile Library and La Chispa Library. My beautiful children depend on me and my salary. I also support my mother and my niece.

What makes me fall in love with my work each day is the joy I get when I hear how happy the kids are with my stories, art projects and games. It's very exciting when the kids welcome me with so much joy and they shout, "Here comes Planting Hope!" and they run to meet us and greet us with a hug.

Another of my favorite aspects of my job is that thanks to the skills and knowledge I've acquired working with the Mobile Library, I am not a traditional Nicaraguan mother. I've developed the habit of reading stories to my sons. On occasions, I have the opportunity to involve them in my work and I think they are happy with the mobile library, just like the other kids we serve.

DEAR FRIEND OF PLANTING HOPE,

As we wait for December to cloak Vermont in snow, Nicaraguans are also anticipating a season of hope and excitement. School graduations, holidays, year-end bonuses (required by Nicaraguan law), and the coffee harvest are what December means for Nicaraguans.

Those who are able and eager to earn extra money during these summer months head to the farms to harvest coffee. The beautiful ripe, red beans on the green-leafed coffee plants make a perfect Christmas card. But for Nicaraguans, the coffee harvest means work in abundance and, with it, the paycheck to provide hope for the coming year. (And hopefully a little coffee left for their families.)

Children who have a spot in our coffee camps are excited for what this school vacation time and the Planting Hope staff will offer them: new games, theater and dance presentations and hearty meals. It is their chance to enjoy being children, an opportunity that is rare for many: to interact with others in a safe environment that encourages curiosity, learning

new games and, with them, new skills and exploring their natural surroundings with a sense of adventure and fun.

Planting Hope is making a difference in the education and self-esteem of children. Many rural children who were previously shy and embarrassed, now flourish, largely because of our mobile library and coffee camps. These programs provide children with individual attention and alternative ways to learn. Teachers report that their students never miss a day of school when the Mobile Library is to arrive. They are inspired to learn, and their success and growth inspires us.

We hope you will be inspired by our students' stories and that you will give generously to support their futures, and the futures of the Planting Hope staff members who guide their learning, self-esteem and success every day.

Sincerely,



Beth A. Merrill
Founder & Executive Director



ODE TO DARRYL BLOOM

This December, we bid a fond farewell and send a bushel full of gratitude to Darryl Bloom, our compassionate, fearless, supportive and all-knowing board chair, who has spent the past eight years guiding and directing Planting Hope through many changes and on to many new and exciting ventures. Darryl has been an indispensable member of our board, providing support equally to staff and supporters in the US as well as staff in Nicaragua. Darryl's bicultural and bilingual wisdom and understanding have helped us grow immensely. Darryl was part of Planting Hope's first multi-generational delegation in 2005 and soon after that she joined our board of directors and was quickly appointed board chair. Darryl has traveled with groups and on her own to Nicaragua at least five times and she is always as accessible to the youngest children as she is to the full-time staff. Darryl knows what it is to be present and she is a wonderful model for us all.

More recently her worlds merged when she participated in her daughter Hannah's Occupational Therapy trip with Planting Hope to Nicaragua to work with children and families.

Darryl, we will miss you, but we thank you for this wonderful voyage! We wouldn't be here without you!



Darryl Bloom in Nicaragua

CAMPS, from page 1

The Coffee Camp project is important because I study, I learn more, we play games, draw, paint and I'm not bored.

When there were no Coffee Camps, I helped my mom with chores, and I studied with my brother Deybin's help. Now that there is this project, I have so much fun and I'm not bored at home.

**CAMPS HELP KIDS THRIVE:
ONE MOTHER'S STORY**

My name is Yamileth Salas Velazquez, I am 37 years old and I live in rural Ocalca. We are a family of eight; I have five girls and a boy. My husband's name is Ruben and he works as a security guard at the electric plant.

I have four girls in school, Kenya in fifth grade, Marling in first and Kelly in third. Jarelis studies her first year of high school at the Institute of San Ramon on Saturdays. She helps haul water and wash clothes for her aunt to earn money for transportation to San Ramon and buy her study guides. My son Deybin is in his fourth year of high school studies also in San Ramon on Saturdays. He works harvesting beans and shucking corn to pay for his studies. When there is no work he helps his father.

Three of my daughters have participated in the Coffee Camps since this project began in 2010. I remember prior to this

project, Kenya did not like going to school. She was shy and ashamed, but when the Coffee Camp project came to the community, she felt excited to attend school, because she has fun and does a lot of activities. Now she participates in school and has changed her way of being.



Kenya at camp

Kelly has been always been an active girl, an intelligent, cheerful girl; she does not know what shy or embarrassed is. She comes home and recounts everything they did at camps with joy.

Marling is shy and embarrassed. She is not participatory, she is quiet, half-shy, but she likes to attend camps so she doesn't get bored. I remember that Marling had trouble reading the past year, but when she participated in the camp she learned to read. We borrowed a textbook from the teacher and she now reads well.

Coffee Camps are important because children read stories and play. They are not bored, but they are having fun and this helps aid in their learning and development. They are given good food and accommodations.

The camps benefit me because I look after three girls and I know they are safe and I'm not worried about them all day. The teachers take good care of them. They are not bored or at home alone. There are things that I can not teach them, but they learn them at camps.

HELPING MAKE CAMPS BETTER FOR EVERYONE

by José García Rodríguez,
volunteer, Barcelona, Spain

My volunteering for Planting Hope started in January, 2013 with the Coffee Camps. My first impression was that the children were not having much fun and that the teachers

who were in charge of each camp worked in a very formal way, probably as they were taught.

I realized that the staff lacked the appropriate training for this type of program. They had only their own personal experiences with teachers

as models. When I communicated my observations to Mercedes and Beth, they agreed that the staff needed training in different teaching methods to engage the children in more playful learning. With this goal, I returned to my country (Spain- Barcelona) to get materials to bring back to Nicaragua and give the camps a different feel.

We are now in the third week of camp and thanks to the training that took place before camp began and the motivation of the staff, the children are arriving at camp with more enthusiasm and leaving each day having learned through play. If all goes well we will achieve our goal of offering a playful and fun place for children to be while their parents work.



Jose, left, with his Nicaraguan co-workers on the La Chispa Library balcony.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: DIGNA CARDOZA GONZALES

Digna Cardoza was one of Planting Hope's original high school scholarship students who began working at the La Chispa Library when it first opened in 2002. Digna currently studies business administration at Matagalpa's public university, La UNAN, and hopes to graduate next year.

Born and raised in La Chispa neighborhood, Digna is the youngest of seven children and lost her mother at a very young age. She currently resides in La Chispa with her father and siblings and their children, totaling 12 people.

Digna has filled many roles with Planting Hope over the years, including librarian, computer teacher, cyber café assistant, business management assistant to El Chile Weaving Association, and micro-business manager. For her long history with Planting Hope and her honest work ethic, Digna was chosen to sign checks for the organization.

For the past three years she has worked in San Ramon and its outlying communities as the Rural Projects Diagnostics and Evaluation Coordinator, helping Planting Hope to evaluate its rural projects. Digna visits the communities where we work each week and interviews the people who are involved in or benefit from the projects. After she finishes work, she returns to Matagalpa, where she takes evening courses at the university.

Digna is one of the only members of her family with a job and her salary helps support the 12 people in her house. She notes that she is the economic pillar

I realized that if you don't accept challenges or responsibilities, you'll never learn from your mistakes.



Digna Cardoza

for her family, since her two sisters are unemployed and her father is too old to work. She prays to God that some day not long from now, her sisters will find work so she can be relieved of this responsibility and they can share it mutually.

"I think my most significant change over the years has been in the economic and academic aspects," says Digna. "With my salary, I pay for my education, I support my family in certain ways and I have had the opportunity to perform administrative tasks related to my business administration major."

Digna is inspired by her sister Tanya because "she finished her studies with a lot of sacrifice and she counseled me to keep going and not to feel bad because I haven't finished my studies since it's never too late to learn."

"On a personal level, working with Planting Hope has helped me a lot, because previously I was fearful of assuming responsibilities and overcoming challenges that perhaps I thought that I couldn't," says Digna. "But I realized that if you don't accept challenges or responsibilities, you'll never learn from your mistakes."

"I think the organization has also helped me a lot because I've learned new things and interacted with so many different people—from the rural communities to the people I met when I traveled to the U.S. in 2009 with Planting Hope, where the people, their climate and their way of thinking are different. But this wasn't an obstacle for me, because I related to and lived with them and I adapted to their climate, even though it's difficult to leave a tropical country to go to a country where snow falls. I appreciate that opportunity, as I never imagined I'd travel to another country in an airplane."



NEW WEBSITE!

Check out Planting Hope's new website for updates on our service adventure trips, upcoming events and information from our students and staff in Nicaragua .

You can also use the site to make a secure donation to Planting Hope online .

—Digna Cardoza Gonzales

THANK YOU!

INTERNS & LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERS

in Nicaragua: Angie Asetline, José Garcia, Carson Kadas, Molly Thoms, Claire Puleio, Paul Angell Darryl Bloom, Hannah Bloom, Rachel Milanez, Rachell Kirk and William.

DELEGATIONS

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters

Employee Trip: Colleen Popkin, Rafael Contreras, Tanya Jean Reilly, Elizabeth Anne Pew, Michelle D'Amico, Brian Wilson, Dustin French, Jake Hewitt, Eric Pembroke, Joseph Jacob, Charles Compton.

Norwich University: Joyce Rivers, Robert Berkey, Elizabeth Weber, Paul de Rose, Daniel Colon, Ana M. DelValle, Kimberly Martin, Frank Carissimo.

North Branch Nature Center: Richard Haynes, Nancy de Groff, Edward Hack, Sandra Hack, Elizabeth Lackey, Richard Paul Guthrie, Leroy Suess, Joan Dobert, Marvin Dobert, Chip Darmstadt, Dan Lindner, Katherine Vose.

February Multi-Generational: Kirsten Thun Dunn, Sydney Dunn, Madison Tyler Dunn, Julie Patricia Connor, Alexandra Stetter, Seth Casagrande Herz, Rhea Costantino, Grace Baker-Whitcomb, Sally Elkins Aldrich, Owen Koucky, William Koucky.

Central Vermont Multi High School: Sarah Mele, Noah Witke Mele, Ceres Porter, Sammy Rivera, Sammy Darmstadt, Silas Baker, Daniel Staples, Moriah Post-Kinney, Alexis Powell, Kelly Myrto, Abigail Mihaly.

Stowe High School: Gabriel Vellavance, Bailey Sherwin, Calvin Dixon, Drew Jacobson, Ashley Raymond, Kelsey Reinhardt, Dashiell Kim, Zack Massi, Kalli Glance, Abigail Nicholson, Meghan Driscoll, Yanah Ziegler, Rubi Goss, Andrew Chambers, Sabrina Touchette, Abby Blaine, Isabelle Strong, Sarah Spey, Heidi Vietze, Laura Kalp, Lucas Peterson.

University of New Mexico Occupational Therapist: Hannah Bloom, Allison Weber, Amy New, Anaclaire Hunter, Kim Willard, Linda Sloan, Heidi Sanders, Jackson Sanders, Kathleen "Mo" Taylor, Karen "Cal" Wright, Azucena Taylor Wright, Alejandro Taylor Wright.

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PLANTING HOPE STAFF AND BOARD GATHER TO PLAN FOR FUTURE

by Paul Angell

As a member of the Planting Hope board and an avid traveler, I had the pleasure of joining the Nicaraguan staff for a strategic planning workshop in mid-October. I spent my first morning witnessing first hand the enthusiasm and engagement of young students in a rural school in El Chile as they received a visit from Planting Hope's Mobile Library bringing books, activity leaders and dynamic scholarship student instructors. It certainly brought the school to life!

The next two days were devoted to a well-organized and seamlessly-implemented look by the Nicaraguan Planting Hope staff at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats of the organization. The first day included over forty participants and included home-stay family representatives, the Mobile Library driver, scholarship students and all staff members. The leadership team



After two days of energizing strategic planning, board member, Paul Angell, bottom right, outside of La Chispa Library with Planting Hope's full-time staff members.

— Mercedes, Oscar and Claudia — organized everyone into mixed groups for the initial discussion and then brought those groups back together to synthesize the responses. On the second day, staff

members met at the La Chispa Library to look at the identified threats and weaknesses and develop strategies and tactics to address them. In the afternoon, the leadership team drafted a report to send to the Planting Hope Board of Directors.

I was impressed throughout the process by the engagement of each and every member of the Planting Hope community and their willingness to speak forthrightly. I was also impressed by the effective collaboration of the leadership team and the wealth of experience and expertise they brought to the process. It has given the Board a valuable resource for future planning which has been the subject of several sessions of recent discussion.



Don Alvaro, Mobile library bus driver presents the perceived strengths of the organization with other staff.

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**GREEN MOUNTAIN
COFFEE ROASTERS**



BREWING
a better world

FOR SUPPORTING
OUR PROJECTS IN
NICARAGUA!

TRAVEL TO NICARAGUA THIS SPRING WITH PLANTING HOPE

PLANTING HOPE SERVICE GROUPS 2014

Planting Hope is currently planning two group delegations to Nicaragua:

March 21–31: Naturally Nicaragua. Get ready to be immersed in the nature and culture of Nicaragua. Call Larry, 229-6206, or visit northbranchnaturecenter.org.

April 20–30: Multi-Generational Group. Open to adults, families, mature teenagers . . . Focus on education and mobile library literacy activities.

We arrange high school and university trips as well! Call us if you would like more information about how your group might collaborate with Planting Hope's projects in Nicaragua.



FOR MORE INFO, VISIT PLANTINGHOPE.ORG OR CALL US AT 802.778.0344.

Newsletter layout & design by Dana Dwinell-Yardley.



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Staff from La Chispa Library take a break.