

# LOS HERMANOS

Villanueva Brigadistas Newsletter — Volume 10.1

Spring 2021



## WHY SUPPORT VILLANUEVA?

BY EILEEN M CLINTON

As I went to speak at three masses at a small church in Syracuse, I was not optimistic I would receive a large response. My goal was to speak to the people about our little community in Villanueva. This is a community our Parishes have supported for many years. Both St. Lucy and All Saints parishes have been the main group supporting this small Community. Frank Woolever visited this community year ago and started this special relationship.

During my reflection, I described my trip to this village where, one day, we helped the community buy several bikes so the brigadistas could get to the remote countryside to provide medical services to pregnant mothers and other family members. I showed pictures of this special community, like the picture of us distributing baskets of food and supplies to the brigadistas to reward them for their work.

It was only then that I saw smiles on some faces and real interest in our cause. I think they gained a great understanding of the need for medical care in this small village.

Several weeks after, we received a healthy check from this parish to support this cause.



Pregnant women doing crafts at Casa Materna

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Other folks that I approached for this story indicated they became interested in Villanueva, as they knew someone who made the trip to visit Villanueva. They knew that their contributions would get to those who were most in need. Still others are keenly aware of the suffering and poverty in Central America and wanted to help out in some small way. As one supporter said, “ If I have five coats, I give one away”. Many support maternal health in general as a way to curb infant mortality.



Candida (Brigadista leader) with photo of Frank Woolever

Hearing the stories of the people of Villanueva, about their families and learning about the discipline of the brigadistas in how they carry out their work, had an impact. People donate when they see the impact of their donations. They place themselves in these pictures and stories and have empathy for the good work being done.



Monthly Brigadista training session .

## Remembering Her Mother's Song

Doña Alejandra had a feeling they would come.

On a late December day, when the Directiva (Candida, Maria Antonia, Juanita, Lucas and Melvin) paid her a visit, Doña Alejandra said she had a premonition that they would be coming to see her. Doña Alejandra Peralta, now retired after many years of serving her community of Santa Anita as a midwife, suffers from Alzheimer's. But, on that day when the Directiva stopped to see her, she was particularly sharp and recognized all of her visitors.

The purpose of the visit was to wish her Feliz Navidad and to personally deliver her Christmas gift basket--something the other Brigadistas would have received at the annual end-of-year celebration on the second Wednesday of December. As volunteers in their communities, Brigadistas and midwives receive no other compensation from the program, but the gift baskets are the Program's way of recognizing their service with practical items such as dish soap and toothbrushes. Because Doña Alejandra's delicate health would have prevented her from making the trip to the Program Center in the town of Villanueva, the Directiva went to her.

As they sat and talked outside her home, Doña Alejandra expressed her great love for the members of the Directiva and also acknowledged how much she feels the love they have for her. She was grateful for the fact that the Directiva follows through on its promises--bringing the gift basket--and for all that she had learned over the years at the monthly training sessions held at the Program Center.



## CASA MATERNA - FAST FACTS

Between 36 and 42 pregnant women from the outlying communities stay at the Casa Materna each month while awaiting delivery at the Villanueva health clinic across the street.

An average stay is 5-10 days.

Some women stay up to 15 days, especially the youngest.

If a woman needs a C-section, she goes to Chinandega, the next largest town. Afterwards, she may stay at the Casa Materna for 2-3 days to recover.

In the summer, when the river is high, mothers sometimes have to wait a few days for the river to go down so they can cross to get home.

In 2020, the goal of the program was for 442 women to stay at the Casa Materna. The actual number was 472 women!

Births in Villanueva in 2020: There were 633 babies born in Villanueva in 2020!

Remembering Her Mother's Song

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Candida then pointed out that Doña Alejandra had truly been a servant of Christ which prompted the retired midwife to reflect on how she had been devoted to the Virgin Mary since she was a young girl. Mindful of the toll Alzheimer's has taken on her, she spoke about how she has been praying to Mary to restore her sanity. It was then that she mentioned Aquí Venimos María, which she remembered singing as a girl. This song, Maria Antonia reminded her, was written and composed by Doña Alejandra's mother and is now known throughout Nicaragua.

As they concluded the visit, Candida told her that they came "in the name of God, and in the name of all of our brothers and sisters from All Saints and St. Lucy's in Syracuse, and all the members of our team, to wish her and her family a Merry Christmas." It was then that Doña Alejandra asked if they would sing Aquí Venimos María.

To watch the video of the song, click on the link below or scan the QR code with your smartphone.



[Singing Aquí Venimos María with Dona Alejandra](#)



## MONTHLY BRIGADISTA TRAINING SESSIONS

On the second Wednesday of each month, the Brigdistas from the surrounding communities meet at the Program Center in Villanueva.



**Breakout session during Brigadista training**

Every monthly gathering, except December's, is dedicated to training sessions. In December, there is a celebration at which the Directiva provides gift baskets to all of the volunteer Brigadistas to thank them for their service.

Each month, the Directiva tries to plan the most relevant topic, addressing present needs; E.G., From the start of the pandemic, the training sessions have dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In January, the training was a coordinated session between the Ministry of Health and the Community Health Network (Brigadista Program).

In February 2021, pneumonia was a big problem. There were respiratory problems caused by the large temperature changes throughout the day with the warm days and cool nights.

Leptospirosis and dengue fever are ongoing problems in the community that need to be reviewed each year.

Other topics that will be addressed in future training sessions include evaluating the work in the community and dealing with domestic violence.

### **2021 Community Health Network Project Priorities**

According to Candida and the rest of the Directiva, the 2021 project priorities are:

Strengthen and maintain Villanueva's volunteer Brigadista network through ongoing training, basic supplies, and small incentives

Address the top capital improvement priorities for this year:

Paint the kitchen at the Program Center

Install a water tank at the Program Center

Purchase an additional 5 bicycles for deserving Brigadistas

Replace the latrine in the Becero Community Health Outpost

## **Please Contribute!**

Thank you from both of our parishes for being so generous during this pandemic year!

*If you wish to help support our Sister Community and their efforts, you can make a tax deductible contribution as follows:*

Make checks payable to either

**St. Lucy's Church, or**

**All Saints Church**

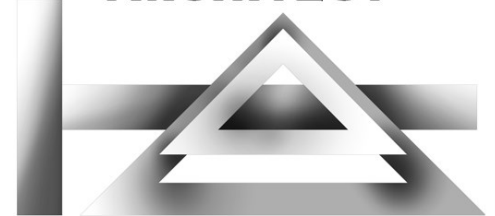
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*Or place your contribution in the envelopes available in the back of each supporting church*

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## **COVID-19 Update**

Because of the preventative measures, there have been few COVID-related deaths in Villanueva.

In February 2021, there were only two positive cases of COVID-19 in Villanueva.

**Pray for us all!**