

LOS HERMANOS



Villanueva Brigadistas Newsletter — Volume 7

Fall 2018

La Casa Materna

La Casa Materna provides pregnant women from rural villages in the greater Villanueva region a place to stay during the final days or weeks of their delivery. Because La Casa Materna is directly across the street from the Villanueva clinic where they will deliver their babies, these women are able to receive daily checkups by doctors during their stay. And, the fact that they will give birth in the clinic the presence of a doctor and nurses—as opposed to in their rural community without professional medical attention and facilities—greatly increases the prospect of a successful delivery. Since there is considerable “down time” for these women as they wait, La Casa Materna provides entertainment in the form of magazines, TV, and crafts (as pictured above). They also have support groups and parenting education for the young mothers. Money sent from the All Saints and St. Lucy’s communities supplies the food budget at La Casa Materna and pays for the cable TV so that the women have something to do during the day. There are still opportunities to help, however. La Casa Materna would like our support in developing a library of reading materials for the women. They would also like to add a knitting program which would require a commitment of about \$50 per month for materials. If interested in making a special contribution to this program, please see any member of the All Saints/St. Lucy’s Villanueva Steering Committee.



Women at the Casa Materna

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FOOD + COMMUNITY = SUPPORT FOR NICARAGUAN SISTER COMMUNITY

BY Jane Hugo

Sometimes the work for justice is done with a whisk, eggs, apples, and maple syrup — plus a group of dedicated volunteers and generous customers.

For almost ten years, the St. Lucy's Justice and Peace Committee has put on pancake breakfasts to raise funds to support the maternal and child health program in Villanueva, Nicaragua. Our menu is pancakes, sausages, baked apple crisp, juice, maple syrup, and coffee or tea.

Our customers are members of St. Lucy's Catholic Church on the near west side of Syracuse, NY. Three times a year (Fall, Winter, and Spring), they come for breakfast and conversation between the two Sunday-morning masses. Each customer is greeted by Bill Cuddy sitting at a card table covered with Nicaragua's national flag and a welcome sign. Each one makes a free-will offering, which goes to support volunteer-based community-health work in Villanueva. Occasionally, guests from the neighborhood attend as well.

These breakfasts serve several purposes. First, they raise money to sustain a 25-year relationship with Villanueva. This commitment came over with the merger of St. Andrews and St. Lucy's. St. Andrew's parish had supported the community health project for years through parish tithing. When St. Andrews merged with St. Lucy's in 2008-2009, some from St. Andrew's brought the Justice and Peace Committee to St. Lucy's with the intention of continuing support for our sister community as one of its goals. Seasonal pancake breakfasts seemed like a doable project. Now, the breakfasts raise about half of St. Lucy's \$6,000 commitment to our sister community.



VENANCIO FINALLY GETS HIS BIKE

Venancio Madrigal is a Brigadista with over 30 years of dedication to the program. He has earned the respect and admiration of his fellow Brigadistas for his longevity and commitment to the program. In an effort to continue the bicycle initiative which began during our February 2017 trip, the Directiva had selected Venancio as one of the next recipients of a bicycle. They identified Venancio as particularly deserving because of the distances he must travel within his farming community of Mayocundo to check up on the members of his community and attend to their needs. This past August, the Directiva purchased two bicycles which they were going to present to Venancio and Ubence, another deserving Brigadista. However, when they tried to contact Venancio, he was nowhere to be found. It turns out that, due to the lack of opportunities in his village, he had traveled to another town several hours away to try to find work in order to feed his family. When Venancio returned in late September, his bicycle was waiting for him.



Scan this QR code to hear an audio recording of Venancio thanking our community for the bicycle. Here's a translation of his message: Hello, brothers and sisters. Good morning! I am just now receiving the bicycle that you all donated. I am Venancio Madrigal Andina from the community of Mayocundo. I am a Brigadista (Health Promoter) and am very happy to receive this gift. May God bless and keep you always!

Brigadista Focus

Doña Rosaura is a midwife from the community of Santa Anita. In addition to dedicating her life to serving the women of her community, she has had 24 children of her own! After a long life of service to her community, her health is failing and she can no longer stand up. It is because of people such as Doña Rosaura that the Community Network of Volunteers Program which we support has been so successful. Please keep her in your prayers!



Doña Rosaura

Second, the breakfasts are a time to remember that the work of building the kingdom doesn't stop at our borders. At each breakfast, we try to remind ourselves of our connection to our brothers



Folks gathering at last Pancake breakfast.

and sisters in Villanueva and their connection to us as a parish.

Third, the breakfasts bring people together in service. Volunteers do the work. In addition to the Justice and Peace Committee, our volunteer pool has grown to include young people in confirmation classes and St. Lucy's religious education program, and members of the Building Men school program run by parishioner Joe Horan, as well as parishioners who have travelled to Villanueva and those who just want to help.

Finally, a meal together is a great way to build community. People attend from all the masses at St. Lucy's. The conversation is animated; people linger over cups of coffee or seconds on pancakes. Volunteers make new acquaintances by working together. More faces have names.

Additional funds for the Nicaraguan community health project are raised through a wreath sale at Christmas time, Peg Barnett's December craft sale, and diocesan Mission Sunday talks. Thanks to all who support these projects in any way.

NICARAGUA REFLECTIONS

BY MARIJANE REILLY

(This reflection continued from last issue of Los Hermanos!)

To us Americans, Candida's house was much less than the houses from which we had come. The beds were hard, with mattresses like the ones we use on cots. The walls were thin and offered little privacy or protection from those of us who snored. She and her mother and daughter did laundry by hand on the patio, while we took showers in the outdoor facility, dipping water from a huge tub into a plastic gallon milk container and pouring it over ourselves to wash. But our linens and her home were clean and neat and comfortable.

Family pictures and images of Our Lady of Guadalupe adorned every room.

We ate most of our meals at The Center, but Candida cooked something different and delicious for us every morning. After breakfast, she wouldn't let me help her with dishes. I knew not to press the matter because I was her honored guest.

Her endless energy was enviable, as she was a in her 50s and never seemed to slow down. Candida worked for the government full time and worked full time to train brigadistas and to nurse others. I wondered when she slept. Her brigadistas, much like LPNs in this country, working daily in remote villages, walked up to three miles one way in intense heat into Villanueva to learn more from her to help to improve their villagers' lives and to save newborns and their mothers.

And then there was Lucas. A crooner, a dancer, a father, a gardener, an owner of a shop selling natural remedies, a tour guide and fierce protector. He was Candida's "right hand man" constantly working with her to make our visit special.

We had so much fun. Again, I could not say anything more than "Hola" when I greeted him, but our love of laughter kept us enjoying each other's company without words. He wore his pride in his country and love for God like his well worn, comfortable cowboy style boots. Holding hands in our circle of friendship, he sang acapella traditional songs and hymns to open and close daily activities. In silly games and silent moments, he made us feel like family.

On one of our walks around Villanueva, he insisted we meet his priest; Lucas was so excited about the celebration planned for his 100th birthday in March! The man was not able to converse and seemed unaware of our presence. His constant nurse attended to his physical needs. But Lucas pulled him up out of his wheelchair into his arms and held him like a child, kissing and rubbing his aging head, telling him how much he loved him. His love for his elder was palpable. I felt humbled in their presence.

I reflected on the plane home.

I had learned a lot on this trip: love wasn't about doing; it was about being. Sitting, talking, sharing a meal together was really Eucharist. No matter our differences, we are one. In poverty there is dignity, acceptance and joy despite circumstances.

I can check "mission trip" off my bucket list, but I can't check off "los hermanos" in Villanueva. I will do all I can to help them continue to help themselves. After all, they are my family.

Contribute!

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

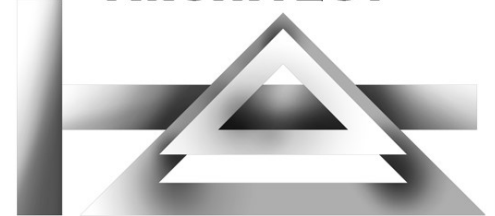
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Or place your contribution in the envelopes available in the back of each supporting church

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Travel Update: Due to the continued political unrest in the county this past year, the community has asked that we postpone our upcoming trip. At the moment, our sister community has not been touched directly but travel to and from the capital remains problematic. Pray that peace returns and that we may visit them again soon!