

LOS HERMANOS

Villanueva Brigadistas Newsletter — Volume 8

Spring 2019



INTERVIEW WITH HAZEL GROCE

BY CHARLES CLINTON

Hazel Groce is a former Peace Corps volunteer in Villanueva who returned to visit Villanueva in April 2018.

When did you work in Villanueva as a Peace Corps volunteer and what was the nature of your work there?

I lived and worked in Villanueva from 2010-2012. As a community health volunteer, my job was focused on education on topics ranging from dental hygiene, nutrition, reproductive health, vaccination, disease prevention, water sanitization, breast feeding support, prenatal and post-natal education. I worked very closely with Brigadistas traveling to rural communities and weighing babies, and providing resources and support to their local efforts. Villanueva, at the time had the BEST maternal and infant death rate in the state—no deaths in 12 years—which was, from what I could tell, directly related to the Brigadista program and the Casa Materna.



Health care for the most vulnerable



Hazel Groce and Candida (retired nurse and member of the Directiva) – April 2018

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Update on Maria Antonia's son and Juanita's grandson

What have you been up to since your time in the Peace Corps?

I came back to the USA in the spring of 2012, and worked as an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Maine Migrant Health Program. I then went onto nursing school. I currently work as a Family Nurse practitioner in New Hampshire.

What made you want to return to Villanueva to visit last spring?

I actually had tried to go back 4 years ago but my flight was canceled. I really missed the nurses I worked with, and the community has grown. There are so many new children, and the elders are aging. I really wanted to get back in touch with Candida. She inspired me to become a nurse, and I want to keep the connections I have with my friends and family there.

What had changed in Villanueva since you had lived there? What surprised you?

I was surprised at some of the business changes. Everyone now has smart phones, so the internet cafes have all shut down. It seems like app development would be a great way to connect with the youth in the area. The community has invested in making the park better. Unfortunately, the week after I left the government essentially collapsed and many people in the moment are suffering from unemployment and the problems that come with this.

As a health-care professional, what is your assessment of the Brigadista program? What are their greatest successes and greatest challenges?

I think one of the strengths of the Brigadista program is their connection to the community. Each member is a respected individual from their smaller community. Their dedication and motivation really drive the program. The struggle they have is recruiting new members. In general, the Brigadistas are of older age. I spoke with Candida and Maria Antonia about this, and they say what it seems to come down to is local economics. They will incorporate youth, but then they leave to the cities for employment opportunities, or leave the country.

Anything else you want to share?

Villanueva is a special community full of resilience and compassion. Their daily struggle to simply feed, clothe, and nurture their loved ones doesn't diminish their determination to make the world around them a better place.



Maria Antonia (left) and Juanita (right) are two of the original members of the Directiva. By trade, Maria Antonia is a nurse and Juanita is a cook. In the Fall of 2018, both women experienced difficult circumstances in their families. Maria Antonia's son, Gilbert, was apprehended while working near Houston, TX and threatened with deportation. Juanita's 13-year-old grandson, Fabio, had a brain aneurism and was hospitalized for several weeks in the capital city of Managua.

Just as we celebrate the successes of our Sister Community, we also seek to bear their burdens with them. Our All Saints/St. Lucy's communities rallied to support these two families with prayers and monetary donations. This was greatly appreciated by the families of Maria Antonia and Juanita.

The good news: we received word this April that Gilbert is now back working in the Houston area and Fabio has almost fully recovered and is back to school and enjoying time with his friends.

Annual Celebration

The second Wednesday of December marks the Annual Celebration for all involved in the Brigadista program. In addition to music and dancing, all Brigadistas are given a gift basket with necessities in appreciation for their service, and individual Brigadistas are recognized for outstanding contributions to their communities.



Health care with Amos

MEET AMOS:

“A MINISTRY OF SHARING HOPE AND HEALTH”,

ANOTHER IMPORTANT PROVIDER OF HEALTH CARE IN NICARAGUA

“In Nicaragua, a doctor shouldn’t just be a doctor; a doctor must also be a teacher.”

These were the words of Dr. Gustavo Parajón, who founded AMOS in 1967 as a response to the desperate need for primary health care services in rural Nicaragua. Similar to the model practiced by our Sister Community in Villanueva, AMOS teaches people to serve as “health promoters”, and to provide health care within their own communities. These promoters can reach every mother, child and baby, even in the most remote areas.

AMOS serves over 69,000 people in 6 regions of Nicaragua via a network of 630 community health workers in both urban and rural areas. Again in 2018, there were no maternal deaths, and a very low rate of mortality among newborns and very young children. Services include obstetric care, newborn and child health care, including vaccinations, as well as emergency triage and transport services. In the capital city of Managua, AMOS’ initiatives also include a Zika-prevention project.



In 2017, AMOS hosted over 400 people in 25 mission teams, as well as individual volunteers....among them, our own team from All Saints/St. Lucy's! We were fortunate to have AMOS and plan to stay with them again when we resume trips to Nicaragua.

For an example of the life-saving work done by AMOS, please read about what happened to María in the remote community of La Danta: <http://www.amoshealth.org/saving-lives-in-rural-nicaragua/>

Like all Nicaraguans and their institutions, AMOS has been affected by the ongoing crisis in the country. Here is their latest update: <http://www.amoshealth.org/amos-update-number-6-crisis-in-nicaragua/> They ask for our prayers that the situation be resolved quickly and safely.



Walking between houses in a rural community



Supervision Rounds

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

Be sure to put in the memo section: "Sister Community"

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

Contact us if you want to sponsor our next newsletter !

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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!