

RIGHT TO PHYSICAL, MENTAL & MORAL INTEGRITY



Friends of Batahola (English) / Centro Cultural Batahola Norte (Spanish)



friends_of_batahola



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Message from the Co-Presidents

And just like that, summer is behind us; pumpkin spice, wool sweaters and football season are upon us. Shorter days mean more time for meditation, contemplation, and reflection, particularly gratitude about the gifts bestowed upon us by our Creator. As we approach our time of thanksgiving, we might also reflect on those who struggle or even find themselves in devastating situations. Many of us who have visited Batahola have spoken with survivors of physical and psychological violence and have heard how the Center helped them through very difficult times; providing support and education to assist them in building a better life for themselves and their family.

The Center's prevention and outreach programs help to break that vicious cycle of children being abused or

seeing abuse and becoming abusers themselves. Please take a moment and read about how the Center reaches out to young people to prevent domestic violence, to girls to help them vocalize their fears and aspirations, and to women to help them overcome difficult situations.

We thank you for your prayers and financial support of the Center.

Tony Perazzo & Mary O'Toole



Girls Network to Prevent Gender-based Violence



In our society a culture of silence prevails that justifies violence towards girls and women. For those reasons, the Center decided to form a network of girls and adolescents to have a safe space where they can express their feelings and strengthen their self-confidence while learning about their rights.

This girls violence prevention network was formed this year with 23 girls who had previously participated in another series of workshops at the Center starting back in 2019. This group of girls has prepared their own action plan to recruit more girls at the Center.

The Centers' social worker, Gabriela Zamorán who is accompanying this initiative says, "it's nice to see girls leading other girls with their skills and experiences because it shows that there are no limits for them. It is not easy to break the stereotypes brought on by parents who doubt the abilities of their daughters. These girls have definitely evolved".

María Gallegos and Solimar Juárez, both 10 years old, comment on their experience as members of the Creating network project:



"At the Center I feel safe and confident, I have learned about self-respect and self-esteem. Attending workshops has changed my behavior because now I can recognize that I have the right to be happy."



"I made new friends who have learned to respect and value each other as we are. In the workshops we learned to work as a team, to recognize that we have the right to play and study."

The Integrity Program

The Center launched the Integrity Program in 2014 to prevent gender-based violence. The first project focused on working for seven years with children and adolescents in the Jorge Dimitrov neighborhood on topics of human rights and gender equity through a method called Interactive Art. After this successful experience in Jorge Dimitrov's neighborhood, the Center decided to work in the Acahualinca community for 5 more years. This neighborhood was selected for having a high level of social vulnerability and families with very limited opportunities for income and employment.



The main purpose of this program is that children, adolescents, and women can empower themselves through the knowledge of laws that protect them and the ability to identify different situations of violence that they have been through.

Gissett Sanarrusia, Integrity Program Coordinator, shared "Women have recognized that violence is not only being hit but also being yelled at. There are other ways to live a meaningful and dignified life." The Center uses a social intervention strategy called "If I change, we change":



"First, I change as a woman; I recognize my rights and focus on me as an individual, then I make small changes in my family and subsequently in my community."

Annually, this program serves around 450 people through internal and external programs at the Center. This high-impact program provides opportunities, tools, and new possibilities to Nicaraguan families for having a life free of violence.

When a Woman Changes, her Environment Changes

In 2019, the Center decided to work in the community Cedro Galán. This decision was made after implementing a socio-demographic survey that showed high vulnerability criteria such as economic poverty, illiteracy, and situations of gender-based violence among its population. With support from the Cedro Galán community leaders, the integrity staff visited 55 families and began doing workshops with women in their backyards once a week.

Another problem that was emphasized in the socio-demographic survey was that women from Cedro Galán community had not finished elementary school, so they

decided to provide scholarships to each of them in Basic Education for Youth and Adults as the first step in the Center's intervention process.

"These processes have a direct impact on their children, on their relationship with their partners, and on the women's lives because it strengthens their self-esteem and helps them recognize their inner strengths...now they can feel free to make decisions and set limits knowing they have the right to think about themselves."



"This year we decided to work on key topics: sex and gender so that women can learn about their bodies and how society imposes gender roles. In a second series of workshops, we taught about the types of violence and its cycles so that women are capable of recognizing the different impacts that violence has on their family and community."

—Sofia Romero, psychologist and workshop facilitator

Friend of Batahola: Joe Connelly

When I was a sophomore in college I spent a semester studying abroad in Nicaragua with the Center for Global Education. On my first day in Nicaragua my cousin took me to Sunday Mass at the Center. It was a very impactful first impression of the country and the community. Even though I didn't understand Spanish at the time, I could feel the energy and the spirit of the Center through the music and the murals. I never would have imagined the impact the Center would have on

my life and that almost 20 years later it would still be such an important part of my life.

Even when I went back to the U.S. after college I always stayed very connected to Central America. I did a lot of educational immersion trips back to Nicaragua and the Center was always a highlight of our trips. There was a point in my life that I was looking for some more stability, I was about to become the father of twins. So I joined the Center's staff

as the International Liaison. It was a wonderful experience on many levels, but especially to get to know the Friends. Their commitment and connection with the Center was so inspiring and those relationships continue to mean a lot to me. I've also had the pleasure of traveling around the U.S. to talk about the Center and the wonderful work they do. This year I became a member of the board where I hope to continue being an ambassador for the Center.