

Message from the Co-Presidents

As we prepare this Fall Newsletter, we are struck by the level of activity that goes on this time every year at the Friends of Batahola and at the Cultural Center of Batahola Norte. Preparations are well underway in Nicaragua and the United States for our joint, annual online “friend-raising/fund-raising” event on Sunday, October 13th. Don’t miss it — you’ll experience uplifting stories highlighting the Center’s great work, as well as a moving tribute to Pat Berning, a long-time, tireless force for the Center, who we lost this past year. We are also preparing the Friends of Batahola Annual Report, our way of saying “Muchas Gracias” for your generosity and trust. We see Friends of Batahola as a conduit — not for electricity, but for the hopes, dreams, and desires of our donors for a better life and brighter future, a “New Dawn,” for those served

by the Center. It is your trust in us that results in your donations, that ultimately makes the work of the Center possible. We cannot thank you enough for your trust, love, and support for the people of Batahola Norte and surrounding communities.



May the ties that bind us across the miles be strengthened and sustained.

Amanda Otero & Dave Stickel

A Story of Change: Odalys Lizet Rosales García



Odalys Lizet Rosales García’s personal transformation began in 2020 when she joined Project Education at the Center, after her neighbors told her about the scholarship program.

Odalys reflects, **“I used to be afraid to interact with others, but through my community service at the Center, I developed more confidence, which helped me come out of my shell.”**

The Center is a safe space for children, adolescents, and young adults who receive psychosocial and educational support to become trusted community role models. For example, Odalys’ community service helped her develop creativity and the ability to teach others.

Odalys has now graduated from Project Education. She wants to thank those who sponsored her for six years,

enabling her to complete her high school studies and setting her on the path to becoming a future lawyer.

“The financial support was a huge help. It allowed me to buy school supplies, and when my shoes wore out, I could buy new ones,” Odalys says.

The support she received from the Center wasn’t just financial, but also psychological. As a child, Odalys was bullied for her appearance, but by participating in the Center’s self-esteem workshops, she learned to accept herself as she is.



“Being part of Project Education completely changed my life. I became a new Odalys. My 13-year-old self was very introverted and different from who I am now,” Odalys shares proudly.

Welcome to the family, Alicia Molina!

In this newsletter, we're excited to introduce you to a new member of the Center's family: Alicia del Rosario Molina Ramírez, our new Social Pedagogue. Alicia is a shining example of resilience and dedication.

It's no coincidence that Alicia found her way to our Center. She always dreamed of studying pedagogy, and her experience in community organizing from a young age has taught her how to lead engaging educational processes based on popular education principles.

As a single mother, Alicia has faced the complex and sometimes challenging journey of parenting alone. Her new role at the Center has been a true blessing, providing her with job stability and the opportunity

to share her wealth of experience in socio-educational environments.

Alicia is an enthusiastic woman who describes herself as a "dreamer" and "curious learner." She's constantly seeking to expand her knowledge in areas related to gender issues and violence prevention.

Alicia's message is clear: "Going the extra mile is always worth it. No matter how tough the circumstances, the key is to never give up. With hope and resilience, we can overcome any obstacle to achieve our dreams."



Future Industrial Engineer: Mitchel Suyapa Buitrago Balladares

Mitchel Suyapa Buitrago Balladares is a 22-year-old Industrial Engineering student at UNAN-Managua. She's currently in her final year and is about to graduate from Project Education.

Mitchel came to the Batahola Norte Cultural Center in 2021, encouraged by a friend who told her about the Center. Reflecting on her early experiences, she shares,

person, but thanks to the Center, she has learned to treat people better. The Center has supported her professional growth as well.

"It's wonderful that they support young people who want to study, especially when our families can't help with our college educations," she says with gratitude.

In her free time, Mitchel has helped local children with math tutoring, though she can no longer do so due to time constraints. Currently, she's focused on finishing her last year of college and has set big goals for herself:

"I want to find a good job, pursue a master's degree, continue to seek training, and support my family — all with God's guidance and will."

Congratulations to future industrial engineer Mitchel Suyapa Buitrago Balladares!



"I didn't like to talk much or express my opinions because I wasn't confident. Thanks to the workshops I've attended, I've learned more about my emotions."

Mitchel has experienced significant personal growth. When she was younger, she used to be an angry

Friend of Batahola: Amanda Otero

I first traveled to Batahola as a college junior participating in the Center for Global Education and Experience's Central America program. Since my mother is Nicaraguan, my time there was particularly transformative. I learned more about the country's history and connected with my family's roots. I was struck by the strong sense of community in Batahola, which inspired me to apply as a volunteer at the Center after graduation. I spent four years there, initially as a volunteer and

later as the International Liaison.

I got involved with the Friends of Batahola quickly after moving back to the U.S. in 2014. I have so much respect for the work the Center does, and have seen first-hand the impact it has on people's lives, including my husband Melvin, who was a scholarship recipient. It felt important to find a way to support their work, as well as to maintain my connections with their staff and Friends of Batahola board members. I've been on the board

since around 2016, and became co-president this year. I continue to be inspired by the commitment of the Friends and the Center to cultivating strong relationships based in reciprocity and mutuality.

Nowadays, I live in Minneapolis with my husband and our kids, Luz and Diego, where I am co-director of Take Action Minnesota.

