



FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER

RIGHT TO MENTAL WELLBEING & ACADEMIC SUCCESS



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



friends_of_batahola



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Message from the Co-Presidents

Greetings from the Friends of Batahola! As we head into autumn and days become shorter it's time to reflect and give thanks.

In our newsletter, we often highlight the beautiful eye-catching activities at the Center — dancing, murals, cooking, sewing, esthetics and art. But those activities are just part of the services CCBN provides to the people of Managua and Batahola Norte.

As co-presidents, we are even more grateful for our benefactors who enable us to support the Center's work around psychology, wellbeing, life success coaching and academic support. In this issue, you'll

read about the important work teachers and staff at the Center are doing to foster healthy individuals, families, and communities, from a communications campaign giving children a voice in their own protection, to a beloved teacher whose own journey at the Center spans decades, to a new project bringing psychosocial support to over 200 families. Know that every dollar and every prayer enables the Center to make tomorrow better than today. Thank you for your continued support.

Joe Connelly and Tony Perazzo

Motivated Children, Supported Children!:

A communication campaign that strengthened the right to learn and grow in safe environments.

In 2025, the Batahola Norte Cultural Center, with financial support from the Sisters of St. Joseph, spearheaded the project Motivated and Supported Children, which benefited 100 children and adolescents. Throughout its implementation, the Center fostered spaces for learning and community building through play and hand-on activities designed to strengthen cognitive and social-emotional skills.

As part of the project, the Center launched the communication campaign "Motivated Children, Supported Children," a participatory strategy designed to promote staying in school and prevent sexual abuse in educational settings. The campaign was shaped by the children and adolescent participants themselves. They developed a visual identity and slogan "Different

Paths, One Destiny: Listen, Trust, Protect" through focus groups and creative writing workshops.

"Being part of this campaign reaffirmed for us just how important

it is to actively listen and to value children's opinions and experiences as key elements in designing and carrying out our work. As a team, we came to understand that commitment, empathy, and collaboration are essential to building protection and support processes that truly make a difference," shares Gissett Falcón, Psychosocial Wellbeing Coordinator.

Their biggest projects were a podcast miniseries, which explored themes related to educational support, and the book "The Toy Store," a collection of short stories written by young girls and adolescents. Through literature and art, these young authors gave voice to their experiences, strengthened protective factors, and helped promote a culture free of violence.

"Going through this project for the first time, we were all nervous, but seeing Deurin and Nayeli so motivated and engaged made all the effort worth it," says Alicia Molina, Education Program Officer.





Psychosocial Wellbeing: Tools to Transform Lives and Strengthen Communities

Amid the changes and challenges facing Nicaraguan families, many experience social and economic vulnerability that can impact their emotional wellbeing and capacity for coping with daily struggles. In response to

this reality, the Center launched the project “Allied Voices” this year. The project aims to strengthen participants’ personal, emotional, and social abilities, through prevention, care, and psychosocial accompaniment.

“Promoting wellbeing is the heart of this project. It allows the people we support to create healthier family and community environments, cultivate respectful and violence-free relationships, and

generate positive, long-lasting changes that benefit the whole community,” shares Gissett Falcón, psychosocial wellbeing coordinator.

The project directly benefits 215 people at the Center, including 50 children ages 6-12, 50 adolescents ages 13-17, 100 women ages 18-55, and 15 teachers. It includes workshops, support spaces, and psychological care, where participants learn to recognize their emotions, work through difficult situations, and develop strategies to protect themselves and their families.

“Our groups build skills that help participants manage and process their feelings, which allows them to put self-care tools into practice, build resilience, and create a protective environment, grounded in respect, empathy, and solidarity,” says Falcón.

Mildred Castillo: a Life Dedicated to Educating and Transforming Communities

To talk to Mildred del Socorro Castillo Sandoval is to discover a story of commitment, calling, and profound love for education. Recently, she has taken on a new challenge at the Center, supporting the Academic Success initiative, where she coordinates the tutoring program (Good Habits) to elementary school students. This opportunity arrived to her after she decided to close the chapter at her previous job, a choice that has led to significant improvements in her health, her family’s well-being, and her ability to fully enjoy her calling.

“It’s a new challenge for me, because I get to develop different skills apart from teaching. The kids have really connected with me, even though it’s just my first year, and I’m excited to see them grow alongside their tutors.” says Castillo.

Her history with the Center began as a student. Encouraged by her father, who worked at the Center, she enrolled in English classes, where she found a warm and welcoming environment. Shortly afterwards,

she learned of a vacant teaching position in the Basic Education for Youth and Adults program at the Center. Although she had been working with children as an elementary school teacher, she decided to apply.

“Ever since I arrived here and started my interview, I felt at home, and wanted to give myself the opportunity to try something new. To this day, it’s been a wonderful experience.”

Since then, she has been a part of the Basic Education program, initially in evening classes during the week, and later on Saturdays, adapting to the needs of her students, who balance their studies with work.

For Mildred, teaching is much more than transmitting knowledge; it means listening, guiding, and building each student’s self-confidence so that they can continue building their life projects.



Friend of Batahola: Erika Coe

I was a Friends of Batahola volunteer at CCBN from 2013–2015. When I moved back to the US in the winter of 2017 (or 2018, the years are starting to run together) Sue invited me to join the Communications Committee. Then in 2020, Pat Berning invited me to become a board member! I became Co-President of the Communications Committee around 2022.

One of my favorite memories from my time at the Friends was hanging out with Sue, Pat, Mark, and others in Doña Cony’s back porch having some helado (ice cream) with rum.

My relationships with people at the Center motivates me to continue with my work with the Friends of Batahola. In a world that moves so quickly, being a part of the Friends

helps me to center good things in my life like love, relationships, and solidarity. I take so much pride and joy in this commitment.

I live in Philadelphia and work at a University teaching political philosophy. For fun, I like to ride my bike around and enjoy all the free music the city has to offer.