



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



friends_of_batahola



www.friendsofbatahola.org



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Message from the Co-Presidents

“An investment in education pays the *best* interest.” This pearl of wisdom from Benjamin Franklin leads many of us to make enormous sacrifices so that we ourselves, or perhaps our children, can reap the yields of education. The stories in this issue celebrate how our investment in the Center provides a bountiful return for the community of Batahola Norte. Many of the students like Marcia have become teachers or staff, giving right back to the Center. Others like José use that education for better jobs to support their families and make the community a better place. If you ever

doubt that your donations or prayers make a difference, know that these investments pay off every day. Thanks to all of our supporters for the investment you make, year in and year out, for the people of Batahola Norte.



Tony Perazzo & Mary O'Toole

Marcia Santamaría: A Passion for Teaching



Marcia Santamaría Muñoz has been teaching at the Center for eighteen years. Yet her first experience at the Center was as a student. Motivated to learn practical skills that would bring her financial freedom, she enrolled in an Introduction to Cooking course at the age of 30 with Mrs. Rita Cruz.

She remembers someone from her neighborhood telling her that there was a Center where women could learn everything. “I always wondered: If I could make bread, would there be food? Because in my time, bread was very scarce” she shared with lots of longing.

When she was invited to join the Center staff as a teacher, she decided to diversify the Introduction to Cooking course as a strategy to reach more people, so she designed a new curriculum to offer additional courses such as Pastry, Cake Decorating, International Cuisine and Baking. She has taught these courses with great enthusiasm which has encouraged more students to enroll at the Center.

Marcia finds teaching at the Center rewarding because she can share her knowledge and passion with students who are putting it to practice by starting their own businesses.

“It makes me feel so happy when my students call me and say: ‘Teacher, I sold lots of cakes and desserts!’ Each student reaps what they sow, and that motivates me a lot because I like it when people thrive and become their own bosses.”



From right to left, Marcia Santamaría, Mrs. Rita Cruz (who was Marcia's first teacher) and students from the Introduction to Cooking Course

José Moraga Alemán: A Story of Resilience

José Moraga Alemán came to the Center for the first time to study elementary school when he was 13 years old. Unfortunately, his dream of finishing his elementary school education was suspended because of limited socioeconomic conditions which forced him to work in construction and carpentry from a very young age.

Luckily his story didn't end there. Over twenty years later he returned to the Center to complete what he had started. For him, 2022, was a decisive year in making his dream come true of graduating from the Basic Education for Youth and Adults' program. In 2023,



José Moraga with his classmates

he decided to go the extra mile and take the challenge of studying a technical course, Computer Operations.

Currently, he supports his family by working for a

casino as a slot machine technician where learning skills in computing and programming will allow him to be better at his job.

José Moraga also has his own business and said that learning to read and do math, such as addition and multiplication, allowed him to start his business plans.

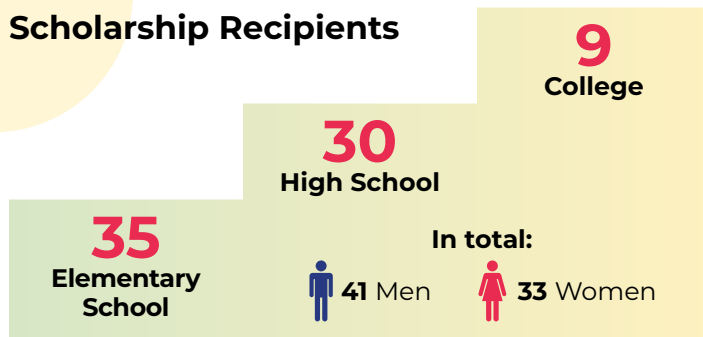


José Moraga Alemán next to his teacher Mildred Castillo — after completing elementary school through the Basic Education for Youth and Adults.

“When I came back to the Center at age 36, I was a little bit afraid and shy...but everyone here greeted me warmly and with great enthusiasm. They motivated me to enroll and achieve my goal of completing elementary school.”

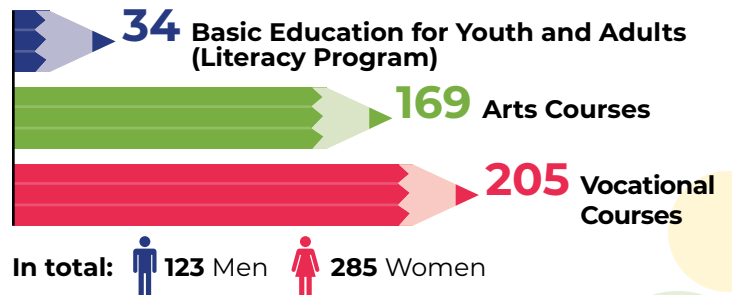
Education Program

Scholarship Recipients

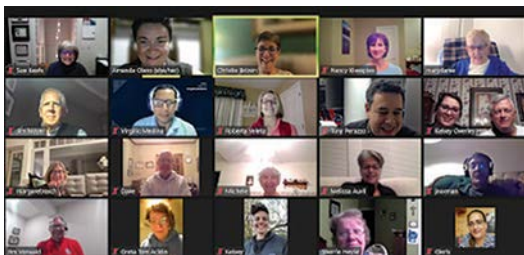


Enrollment Process in 2023

Technical, training and vocational program



Batahola Talks



The Friends of Batahola have been hosting a series of events called Batahola Talks. These

events are an hour-long Zoom meeting where the Center staff and the Friends of Batahola community can see each other virtually and get to know each other better.

The Batahola Talks were started in 2022 by Amanda Otero, a current FOB board member and previously a volunteer and staff member at the Center. As the board was revisiting the FOB mission statement, they were reminded that solidarity and building community is just as important as their financial support and prayers.

So Amanda started coordinating the Batahola Talks with the help of Claudia Mercado, Communications Coordinator at the Center. For each Batahola Talk they invited two staff members from the Center and hosted a Q&A session to hear first hand about their day to day life and work in the community.

Before the pandemic, the Friends of Batahola and other groups would frequently visit the Center. Now with the help of technology we are able to virtually visit the Center from the comfort of our homes. It's an easy and simple way to continue building relationships when we can't be together physically.

Join us for the next Batahola Talk, a chance to connect virtually with staff at the Cultural Center of Batahola Norte. RSVP at: <https://tinyurl.com/bataholatalks>

