

RIGHT TO ART & CULTURE



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



friends_of_batahola



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Message from the Co-Presidents

Each November, the Cultural Center of Batahola Norte provides an Annual Report to the Friends of Batahola, documenting the past year's activities and achievements, goals for the next year, and how support from you, our generous donors, enables their mission. The 2023 report was titled "40 YEARS ACCOMPANYING COMMUNITIES." The word "Accompanying" offers insight into the cultural nuances between the U.S. and Latin America.

In the U.S., "accompany" has a straightforward meaning, like accompanying your friend to a game or your child to the dentist. However, in Latin American culture, accompaniment carries a deeper communal and relational significance. The concept of "accompaniment" is about creating a sense of community and shared experience. The act is often seen within the framework of fostering social bonds

and collective identity, reflecting the communal values prevalent in many Latin American societies.

Thus, while "accompaniment" in both cultures involves being with others, in the United States, it is often more about the act of being present alongside someone in an individualistic sense. In Latin America, it emphasizes a more collective and deeper relational experience. Won't you please join us in "accompanying" the Center through prayer and financial support so they may continue this wonderful ministry?

Amanda Otero & Dave Stickel



The Inspirational Story of the Escobar Sisters



Two talented teenage sisters have discovered a passion for the arts at the Center, using their creative pursuits as an avenue for personal growth and overcoming challenges.

Alejandra and Fernanda Escobar have been immersed in the arts since childhood. The Escobar sisters have studied flute, dance, guitar, marimba, and violin at the Center and are active members of the Ángel Torrellas Choir and the Nuevo Amanecer Dance Group.

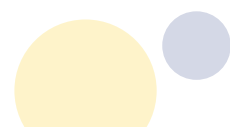
"Every time I visit the Center, I feel accompanied and protected," shares 12-year-old Alejandra. "I love coming here everyday and connecting with my classmates."

Through their time at the Center, the sisters have developed values like empathy, discipline, and responsibility. They have developed self-confidence by learning to listen to their emotions.

Fernanda, 14, reflects, "Every class I've taken here has made a difference for me. I used to be very shy and couldn't speak in public. But the Center has taught me to believe in my abilities, and now I can give presentations without a problem."

Throughout their eight years of artistic training at the Center, the Escobar sisters have fearlessly showcased their talents before diverse audiences. Their dedication, perseverance, and passion for the arts have made them inspirational figures to those around them.

The Center has provided a safe space for families like the Escobars to cultivate their abilities and turn their dreams into reality.



Creative Writing Workshops Open New Worlds for Girls

Since 2022, Dorling López, a Nicaraguan communicator, storyteller and actor, has been leading girls from the Center's Arts and Culture Program on an exciting journey through her creative writing workshops.

In each session, Dorling leads the girls through short, thought-provoking writing exercises and interactive, play-based activities to inspire the creative process and allow the girls to explore their identities and emotions.



"Art has allowed me to change how I behave and be more disciplined in everything I do. The Center has taught me that Art is more than just dance or music, but something that must be respected no matter where you are."

—Julia Castillo, 11 years old

Dorling shares, "The first thing I like to ask before starting a session is 'How is everyone feeling today?' Understanding the girls' emotional state guides how I lead the workshop."



"I used to be very quiet and introverted, but now I've learned how to make friends. I feel that with art it's easier to understand people and be empathetic with them."

—Zoe Izaguirre, 10 years old



"These workshops have helped me to be a better person, learn to love myself, and at the same time, teach others they should love themselves too. I really enjoy when we write and draw stories inspired by looking at an object."

—Noelia Monzón, 12 years old

She has created a safe and welcoming space, where each girl can freely express herself and have her emotions validated.

The impact of these workshops goes far beyond the writing itself. The girls begin to see art as a form of therapy and a vehicle for self-discovery. They learn to disconnect from the outside world to reconnect with themselves.



"I used to get embarrassed easily, but being a part of the workshops has helped me be more social. I can talk to the other girls and I feel good when I'm here."

—María Caballero, 11 years old

Thanks to Dorling, the girls in the Arts and Culture Program are discovering their creative voices and learning to embrace their individuality. On this journey, art becomes a path to empowerment and personal fulfillment.

Friend of Batahola: Mark Overley

I first got involved with Friends of Batahola over 15 years ago through my home parish, the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) in Cincinnati. I'd had experience flying to Nicaragua through my work, and asked if I could help out by bringing anything to the Center. I ended up flying down to Managua to deliver supplies and visit. On that first trip, I remember getting a tour of the Center and being impressed by how much they were able to do with a small space. Everyone I met was so gracious and welcoming.

Not long afterwards, in 2009, I traveled to the Center with my daughter Lauren on an IHM

immersion trip with her high school. Afterwards, former presidents Sue Keefe and Pat Berning asked me about getting more involved. I started out on the governance committee, and became President around 2015. I am currently the chair of the Development Committee. My daughter Kelsey was also a volunteer at the Center from 2017–2018.

What motivates me to continue my work with the Friends of Batahola are the strong relationships I've built with folks at the Center over the years and knowing what a difference the Center makes. I have time and energy to give, and I'm

glad to be able to share that with a place full of so much passion and commitment.

Currently, I live in Cincinnati with my wife Claudette, where I work as a pilot for an aviation company. I have two adult daughters and two grandchildren. In my free time, I enjoy going out on my boat and spending time with my family.

