

## Message from the Co-Presidents

In the Bible story “Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes,” one enduring — and endearing — lesson is that Jesus can take a seemingly small offering, bless it, and multiply its impact in ways no one could have imagined. A few barley loaves and fish became nourishment for thousands.

There is a clear and beautiful parallel in the story of your generosity to Friends of Batahola. Each gift, no matter the size, is received with deep gratitude and multiplied in impact through the Batahola Norte Cultural Center’s work.

In our newsletters, you have met people whose lives were transformed at the Center. You have read about after-school activities that nurture children’s curiosity and support their education. You have heard of women launching small businesses, gaining economic independence, and providing for their families. And

you have witnessed the celebration of art, music, and culture that fosters community and uplifts the human spirit.

These are not just stories — they are modern-day miracles. And just as the young boy must have been amazed to see what his modest lunch became, you too will be heartened and inspired by what your gift makes possible.

Thank you for continuing to walk with us. Your generosity is indeed blessed and multiplied.

With gratitude,  
Amanda and Dave



## Cultural Nest Program Serves as Cornerstone for Arts and Cultural Programming in the Community

In recent years, the Center has identified a critical need to sustain dynamic cultural programming that promotes community care, collective engagement, and preservation of artistic expression. As a result, the Center has developed its Cultural Nest initiative, which will nurture the artistic growth of 100 children and youth in the Batahola Norte and Sur neighborhoods.

Cultural Nest activities fall under the “Artistic Expression and Cultural Identity” program area, led by Center leadership team member Mora García Flores. The



initiative is supported by the ALIARTE Project, financed by the European Union and implemented by the French Alliance of Managua, which funds the multidisciplinary

cultural programming at the Batahola Norte Cultural Center.

Over the coming months, participating youth will engage in a diverse range of cultural programming, including mask-making workshops, classes on traditional folkloric costumes, creative writing courses, storytelling sessions, art exhibitions, and collaborative mural creation.



Through the project, participants will improve their artistic skills and, in turn, explore their feelings and express them through artistic creations. Additionally, the Center will strive to build partnerships with other cultural spaces to develop programming specifically designed for young people, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

# Joyful December: Batahola Norte Cultural Center Returns to the National Theater

*Joyful December!* was a showcase performance featuring 40 children and youth from the Center's arts and music programs on December 4, 2024, at the Rubén Darío National Theater.

The production was made possible through generous support from the Center for Central American Empowerment and the Sheaf Foundation. It brought together Center staff, Board of Directors, and Friends of Batahola including Melvin Hamilton, Amanda Otero, and Joseph Connelly, who attended with their families.

Karla Zamora, folkloric dance instructor, shared that the performance was "a dream come true" that celebrated Nicaragua's cultural diversity while highlighting the artistic skills developed by students across multiple disciplines.

*Joyful December!* represented a significant artistic challenge that participating youth embraced with



***"Planning this event was a year-long effort by our Arts and Culture team," Zamora shared, "Families were a huge support, working together to make sure their children could attend rehearsals and present a high-quality performance."***



dedication and enthusiasm, with many overcoming stage fright to participate in the performance.

Behind the scenes, the production required extensive coordination including costume procurement, instrument repair, and set design. Gema Jarquín, mother of dancer Kirsten Bustamante, reflected on the experience: "What struck me most was the trust built among families as we supported our children through rehearsals and the final performance. All the students were thrilled to perform — for many, this was their first time on a professional stage. I'm grateful for the Center's staff and their dedication to organizing this event."

## Friend of Batahola: Maria Goble

I got involved with the Center when my children were grade schoolers at Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) in Cincinnati. Another mom and I were looking for a way for our children to give back to the community. IHM's long-standing relationship with the Center gave us the perfect opportunity.

We discovered that students at the Center are required to wear shoes — not flip flops. We started collecting shoes to send to the Center, and soon many other IHM students joined our annual shoe drive.

Over the years, I've worked on fundraiser committees, taken on marketing roles, and am now blessed to serve on the board. I have so many amazing memories, including heartwarming letters from students who received our shoes, my first trip to the Center with high schoolers (including my son), and returning to the Center earlier this year.

My journey has shown me how a simple desire to teach children about service can evolve into a meaningful, long-term commitment. From collecting



shoes to serving on the board, each step has reinforced my belief in the power of community support.

I work in banking client sales and service. Our ninth corporate move has us in Dallas, Texas — we love it here! In our free time, my husband and I enjoy tennis and pickleball.