

# Friends of Batahola



## Successful Crowd-Funding Campaign Benefits 200 Women

In June, the Center ventured into new terrain by launching its first-ever crowd-funding campaign. The Center was accepted by Global Giving to participate in its June Open Challenge, where organizations and non-profits competed to raise at least \$5,000 from 40 or more donors for their causes. The goal of the Center's campaign was to raise \$15,000 to equip 200 women from Managua with critical life and job skills.

*(Continued on page 2)*



Two hundred women will benefit from the recent Global Giving campaign. The women pictured here are enrolled in the Center's adult basic education literacy classes.

## Message from the Board



Dear Friends,

Several years ago, my community, the Congregation of St. Joseph, granted the Center funds for a program that would create systemic change for its staff and students. The focus of the project became the pervasive problem of gender and generational violence. The project we funded continues to this day and has expanded with the creation of self-help groups for women and, more recently, male reflection groups.

Candido works at the Center transporting students and visitors. As a staff member, he was asked to attend the class on gender and generational non-violence. He went closed-minded, with arms folded across his chest, saying, "I am here because of my work. They sent me here!" As Candido participated in the workshop, he was transformed. He recognized ways that he had been controlling his family and saw how he was treating his daughters differently than his sons. He has put behind him what are considered culturally accepted male behaviors.

Melvin came to the Center as a scholarship student. He grew up in a violent home environment. Because of the Center's dedication to non-violence, Melvin developed a better sense of how to live without resorting to violence. He, too, is a changed man, because of the Center's programs.

As Friends of Batahola, we must all continue to fund the Center's anti-violence programs...for the sake of families.

Peace,  
Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ

Save paper costs, receive the newsletter online! Go to [friendsofbatahola.org](http://friendsofbatahola.org), click Signup for Newsletter, add your email address.

## Mission Statement

Friends of Batahola supports, sustains, and promotes the Cultural Center of Batahola Norte in Managua, Nicaragua, through prayer, financial assistance, solidarity, and building community, thereby responding to the call of the Gospel.

## Crowd-Funding Campaign *(continued)*

The 200 fortunate women from Managua who will benefit from the campaign will learn strategies to combat the discrimination and violence that keep many women from achieving their dreams. These women will also enroll in the vocational classes, workshops, and job-readiness programs offered at the Center.

Joe Connelly, the Center's communications liaison, said, "We are deeply touched by the outpouring of support and generosity that we have received and hope to carry out similar campaigns in the future to benefit more students."

When the newsletter went to press, the Center had surpassed its goal, raising \$15,570 from 143 donors. Congratulations to everyone at the Center who worked on the campaign. What a grand success!

### You Can Help

If you'd like to contribute to the work of the Center, please make a donation in the enclosed reply envelope. Together, we're rebuilding lives. Thank you!

*Friends of Batahola is a registered 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. 97% of all donations go directly to the work of the Center.*

## Scholarships Build Leadership Skills

Students who receive scholarships through the Center are required to volunteer their time and talents at the Center by helping others. It's a great pay-it-forward concept with eye-opening outcomes! Scholarship students are put in charge of the Center's after-school tutoring programs and Story Corner reading activities for the younger students. Without even being aware of it when they first get started, the scholarship students are acquiring valuable leadership skills, while learning about commitment and the importance of service.

Joe Connelly, the Center's communications liaison, said, "We don't talk about it enough, but many students leave the Center not just with life-changing new skills but also with a dedication to community service and leadership, all because of their volunteer hours with the younger students. Our scholarship students learn what it means to be focused on others. It's hard to put the value of that into words, but we see leadership talent blooming at the Center every day."

**Note:** When you read scholarship student Janeth Baez's story on the next page, you'll see how service hours which emphasize leadership have been an important part of her experience at the Center. If you would like to provide a scholarship to one of our promising students, go to [friendsofbatahola.org/Get Involved/Project Education](http://friendsofbatahola.org/Get Involved/Project Education).

## Friends of Batahola: Terri and Herb Holman

*By Joe Connelly, CCBN Communications Liaison*

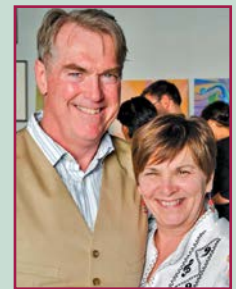
The long road that led Terri Holman to Batahola and to the Center began when she was 18. While working as a professional ice skater, she felt drawn towards religious life and, in particular, to the Sisters of St. Joseph (CSJ). While working in New Orleans, she made a visit to the CSJ convent and the then head of vocations, our own Sr. Helen Prejean. While not pursuing religious life, Terri worked closely with the sisters, serving as a regional development director for nine years.

More than 20 years after her initial meeting with Sr. Helen, Terri encountered her again at a dinner. Sr. Helen talked about her dear friend, Sr. Margie Navarro, co-founder of the Center, who had recently passed away. Sr. Helen also talked to Terri about the work going on at the Center. Terri was moved by everything she heard and thought that perhaps she could bring her experience with development work to help the Center. Terri never imagined the impact that her

first visit to the Center in March 2002 would have on her life. She was immediately and fully hooked to the cause. Since that initial visit, Terri has returned to Nicaragua each February with the Friends of Batahola (FOB) board. Most times, she is accompanied by her husband Herb. For many years, Herb, a physician, provided medical consultations to the Center's students during visits. Later, he focused his attention on the Center's staff, leading them in Tai Chi classes and providing medical acupuncture.

Terri has been President of FOB on two occasions: 2005–2008 and 2013–2014. Since 2014 she has served as Chair of the Fundraising and Development Committee.

Terri, your love of and dedication to the Center these past 13 years is inspiring. The Holy Spirit was surely at work when you bumped into Sr. Helen at that dinner 20 years ago, and you followed the call!





## Volunteers Erika and Kelsey Say Goodbye

In our last few weeks at the Center, we have been incredibly busy with several projects and feel great that we are going out on a high note. After wrapping up work with summer delegations and the Center's first online fundraising campaign, we are now preparing for the arrival of new volunteers and another fundraiser, the annual Center bazaar.

It seems like yesterday that Sam and Andrea picked us up at the airport and brought us to our host families' homes. It has been an incredible journey learning how to translate for visitors to the Center; getting to know all of the students in the Project Education scholarship program; and being educators, teaching all the English classes.

It's not lost on us that we have experienced life here from a very special and rare viewpoint. We were outsiders, invited in to live and work in Batahola, to share in our coworkers' celebrations of birthdays and babies' births, and to cry with them when they experienced loss. We may never live in this neighborhood again, but we now happily join the network of the "Friends of Batahola."



*It's hard to believe that Missionary Movement Volunteers, Kelsey Schrock and Erika Coe, are wrapping up two years of service to the Center. Gracias for all the hard work and love you've shown to everyone!*

We are also beginning the process of discovering how we will carry this experience back with us to the U.S. We would like to share heartfelt thanks to all those who have supported us by reading our blogs, looking at our photos, and by keeping us in your prayers. Hasta la proxima!!

## READ MORE Online

[friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/summer-2015](http://friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/summer-2015)

- Meet one of our promising scholarship students: Ivette Velásquez.
- Read about students' recent visit to the Center: "We take back something much more valuable than what we can fit in our suitcases."
- Sign up at "Amazon Smile" and donate to our work without spending an extra dime!

## The Center has changed my life!



### Janeth Baez

I came to the Center five years ago, and it has been a very moving and important experience for me. I wanted to study but didn't have the means. I heard about the Center's scholarship program and applied right away. I've taken the sewing, cosmetology, and baking classes. One thing I like most about being a scholarship student is giving back to the Center through social service hours. I've been leading tutoring and homework help groups for the younger students, ever since I began my classes. I am also involved in our Youth Network for Violence Prevention program and gender equality workshops. All of these experiences have helped me a great deal. I now realize that I have great value, and, as a woman, I have a great deal of dignity. I am also very proud that my children are studying at the Center and have such a safe and positive space to come to. I can't say enough about how the Center has affected me. I have studied, and I have improved my home life and the educational opportunities of my children.

## Renovation Complete!

On June 5 the Center officially inaugurated its newly renovated facilities which include a beautiful and much needed rehearsal and storage space for artistic groups, expansion of the current stage, and the expansion of several offices. Funding for the project was made possible through a generous donation from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and a very generous legacy gift from Noel Pedrotty, a longtime Friend of Batahola and member of Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Cincinnati, Ohio, who passed away in 2013.

The celebratory inauguration and ribbon cutting took place during a festive cultural presentation. A surprise during the event was the unveiling of artwork created by Gerardo Arias, which beautifully depicts the faces of the Center's founders, Sr. Margie and Fr. Angel.

You can see pictures of the renovation and celebration online at [friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/summer-2015](http://friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/summer-2015).

## Donate Now

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## Students Making the Connection

In May, a group of nine students from the Center's choir, orchestra, and dance groups had the opportunity to travel to Central America's largest biosphere, the Boswás Reserve, in Jinotega, Nicaragua, thanks to a grant from Prince of Peace Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The objective was for students to reflect on the connection between art, music, environmental sustainability, and social justice, while

having an exchange with youth and families in the community of Macizo Peñas Blancas.

For five days in the hilly tropical forest, the Center's youth took educational hikes, learned to make a raised bed for planting, participated in a cultural workshop with local youth, designed recycled jewelry with a women's cooperative, and

performed folkloric dances for the community.

Students returned to the Center with a passion to apply what they learned.



*Students work on a raised bed for planting as part of a project funded by Prince of Peace Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*