

# Friends of Batahola



## Life-Changing Workshop Shows Women How to Set and Attain Personal Goals

When women sign up for courses taught at the Center—like baking, cosmetology, or adult basic education—they qualify for a six-week workshop on personal goal-setting. The workshop is often an empowering and eye-opening experience for these women, many of whom have suffered

*(Continued on page 2)*



*The Center's six-week workshop helps women to set positive life changes in motion.*

## Message from the President



Dear Friends,

I have seen over and over the blessings of the Holy Spirit in the quality of people that work at the Center. Continuing that tradition, I would like to introduce you to three of our most recent blessings: Christina Blebea, Clare Morrison, and Natasha Hansen.

Christina is the new International Resource Liaison. She is a graduate of Boston College with a major in Theology and minors in Environmental and Hispanic Studies. Part of her college studies included studying abroad in Costa Rica and Ecuador. She has spent most of her time since graduation working in Nicaragua. She learned about the Center from attending Sunday Mass there. Christina will be the communication link between Friends of Batahola (FOB) and the Center. She will also oversee the FOB volunteers, coordinate visiting delegations, and help spread the word about the good work of the Center. One of Christina's prior co-workers used the phrase "joyful presence" while describing her. I am anxious to see her bring her joyful presence to the people of the Center.

Natasha Hansen and Clare Morrison make up the fifth generation of FOB volunteers. Natasha comes to us from Arlington Heights, Illinois, and Clare from Wenatchee, Washington. Both women have impressive international experience and are eager to get started teaching the English classes and working with the Center's choir and dance groups, among many other responsibilities. You can follow their adventures at [bataholavolunteers.wordpress.com](http://bataholavolunteers.wordpress.com). You can also read some of their initial thoughts in the welcome article on page 3.

Blessings,  
Mark Overley

**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.*

## Life-Changing Workshop (continued)

domestic violence, have little education, and have never had anyone ask them what they'd like to do with their own lives.

One woman couldn't say enough about the workshop's impact on her and the other women's lives. She said, "Throughout the six weeks, we learned about how to set goals with a specific plan and timeline and the importance of focusing on a personal goal. Many of us are mothers, students, workers, and grandmothers. We are often found cooking, cleaning, working, or studying, which leaves little time to focus on what makes us truly happy. As we mapped out our goals and the necessary resources to achieve them, you could see the wheels of change spinning. We began thinking about what we like to do,

what potential we have, and how to actually implement changes in our lives. The Center created a safe place for us to share and reflect on our histories and a bond was created. From strangers to friends, we left the workshop ready to start on our goals...from learning how to make pizza to a larger goal of starting a hair salon!"

Workshops such as this one reflect the Center's holistic approach to education. The Center is about much more than its individual course offerings. It's about improving the lives of all who walk inside its doors. For this group of women, the Center provided the space, resources, and confidence-building the women needed to set positive life changes in motion.

## The Poor People's God

The Center's Angel Torellas Choir and New Dawn Dance Group were participants at the Central American Festival, *The Poor People's God*, in Las Palmas Church in Managua. The festival was held in honor of the 40th anniversary of the Nicaraguan Peasant Mass, the 35th anniversary of the Salvadoran Popular Mass, and the anniversary



*The Center's Angel Torrellas Choir and New Dawn Dance Group performed at the Festival of Masses in Managua, receiving a standing ovation and three encores.*

of Archbishop Oscar Romero's martyrdom and recent beatification.

The music for the Masses was inspired by the social movements of the 70s and 80s in Central America. In the early 1980s, Father Angel Torellas, co-founder of the Center, was the first person to adapt the music for a choir.

Though the social context of Nicaragua has changed a great deal since that time, for many, the message still rings true. According to 19-year-old Kevin Arroliga, choir member and lead organizer of the festival, "We are experiencing the same forms of oppression today that we fought against in those times—injustice, violence, and inequality. Though we are no longer living with war, there are other countries that are, and one way or another, this affects us, because we are all human."

## Friend of Batahola: Mary Ann Antrobus

*By Terri Holman, former FOB president and current board member*

To know Mary Ann Antrobus is a gift that never ends. Mary Ann was one of the original board members of the Friends of Batahola (FOB), a friend of Sister Margie Navarro who was co-founder of the Center, and is the sibling of Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, and current honorary FOB president.

In 2001, Mary Ann was asked to be on the FOB board, and she said yes. When she was asked to be the Treasurer, she said yes again and began to learn the ins and outs of bookkeeping, as well as keeping up with donations and investments. Mary Ann continued her work as Treasurer until fall 2012 and continued to be

an active board member until fall 2015, when other commitments required her to resign.

Mary Ann played an active role in the lives of the women at the Center and stood in solidarity with them by making annual trips there, by making sure the women practiced self-care, by sharing her love of Louisiana cooking with them, and by committing personal resources to support the Center.

Mary Ann will continue to be active with FOB in the years to come, and we thank her for nearly 15 years of being a good and faithful servant and FOB board member.



## Welcome Christina, Natasha, and Clare

It's with great joy that we welcome Christina Blebea as the Center's new International Resource Liaison, as well as two new Friends of Batahola (FOB) volunteers, Natasha Hansen and Clare Morrison. These three women bring a wealth of energy, talent, experience, and passion to the Center, as you'll read below.

### Christina Blebea



I'm honored to be a part of an organization that I've long admired. To immerse myself in the strong community that is Batahola brings me great joy, and I look forward to fostering lasting relationships built on solidarity and *confianza*. I began my first week at Sunday Mass, and it seems as though that spirit of a joyful, loving struggle for justice, engaged by a group of dedicated and united people, will pervade my time here. I'm excited to walk with you all in our efforts for Batahola.

### Natasha Hansen



I'm very grateful to join the FOB team. I feel blessed to be surrounded by such talented and helpful community members, both students and co-workers at the Center. The work of the Center is truly beautiful. I've been busy wrapping up an English class, starting a trial English class for children, and accompanying two women's leadership groups. My days are filled with hugs from smiling children, learning about the realities of people's lives in the community, and laughing with co-workers. I'm grateful for all the support I've received and am excited for the adventure of these next two years!

### Clare Morrison



My first few months at the Center have been a blur of activity: launching a play-based English pilot class for students in the scholarship program, accompanying the women's leadership group through a violence prevention program, and running an informal children's craft group on Saturdays. I've also gotten involved with the choir and orchestra. Everyone has been incredibly welcoming and supportive. I'm very thankful to be part of such a tight-knit and caring community.

Welcome to the FOB family!

## English Classes Inspire Psychology Student



Yubelka is a 20-year-old psychology student at Central American University in Managua who completed the Center's English classes, which were taught by Friends of Batahola volunteers, Sam Estes and Andrea Kraybill.

It was in these classes that Yubelka discovered not only her love of the language but also the desire to volunteer, like her volunteer teachers.

Yubelka said, "I decided to start studying English because I think it is a beautiful language and a universal language. I've always liked it, since I was a little girl. My favorite thing about the Center's English course is that it was the most dynamic and interactive course I had ever been in. And my teachers, Sam and Andrea, were amazing. They were creative and smart and were able to project that in our classes. The English classes had a big impact on my life. And, believe it or not, Sam and Andrea taught me to love and trust myself more, to recognize that I had a skill and was good at something. They were so supportive and empowering. They would constantly be encouraging us. The environment at the Center is so nice."

Yubelka said the English classes made her think about her future and the possibility of working as a translator. Because of her teachers, the classes also introduced her to the concept of volunteering, something she would now like to make part of her own life. Yubelka also dreams of completing her master's degree in psychology, maybe in Canada, where she could continue to master her English skills.

For sure, Yubelka is a student from the Center who's on a mission of excellence!

## READ MORE Online

[friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/winter-2016](http://friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/winter-2016)

- Read U.S. students' and chaperones' comments after a recent visit to the Center: "There are no words to fully describe how absolutely eye-opening and powerful the trip was."
- See how the Center's Latin Rhythms dance class is uniting and strengthening families...all while they're learning to dance.
- Shop Amazon Smile and Amazon will donate .05% of your purchase to the Center. Sign up online.

## Donate Now

friendsofbatahola.org  
Friends of Batahola  
P.O. Box 36159  
Cincinnati, OH 45236-0159

## Contact Us

friendsofbatahola.org  
bataholavolunteers.wordpress.com

### Email

president@friendsofbatahola.org  
secretary@friendsofbatahola.org  
treasurer@friendsofbatahola.org  
info@friendsofbatahola.org



Like us on  
**Facebook**

Friends of  
Batahola (English)

Centro Cultural Batahola Norte  
(Spanish)

## Information in Nicaragua

Jennifer Marshall,  
General Coordinator  
jennifer@centrobatahola.org  
011-505-2266-7737

## Newsletter Volunteers

**Editor:** Mary Pommert  
mwpommert@aol.com

**Layout:** Photonics Graphics, Inc.  
photonicsgraphics.com

2364 Heather Hill Blvd., N.  
Cincinnati, OH 45244

PRESORT STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
CINCINNATI OH  
PERMIT NO 1294

## Board of Directors

### President

Mark Overley

### Honorary President

Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ

### Honorary Vice President

Sr. Sandra Blanchard, CSJ

### Secretary

Jeannine Blatt

### Corresponding Secretary

Sue Keefe

### Treasurer

Andi Newton

## Board Members

Pat Berning  
Richard Gruber  
Melissa Hess  
Terri Holman  
Michael Keefe  
Dotty McCrea  
Amanda Otero  
Mary O'Toole  
Rebekah Sapato  
Virginia Serio  
LaVette Ulichnie  
Anna VanHaverbeke

## 7 Ways You Can Help the Center!

Please help by making a donation in the enclosed envelope. Together, we're transforming lives through education.

- \$10** Provides weekly tutoring for students to get help with homework and learn good study habits from older students.
- \$30** Gives two grade school students notebooks, pens, and other school supplies needed for one month.
- \$55** Covers the cost of one session of games and projects for 30 families, fostering healthy parent-child relationships and encouraging child development.
- \$80** Provides staff and supplies for 150 young children to develop a love of reading and learning. Eager readers are tomorrow's leaders!
- \$105** Buys 15 books for the Center's travelling library which visits local schools.
- \$200** Prepares 15 youth leaders as peer educators on topics such as self-esteem, self-care, developing good study habits, and caring for the environment.
- \$500** Repairs or replaces 75 damaged books and buys supplies to keep the Center's library and its collection up to date and well maintained.

*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.*