

Friends of Batahola



Styling Their Futures

Professor Maria Antonio Centeno is always surrounded by a ring of students. When class is in session, students hang on to her every word. "Relax, take it section by section," she coaches her students during a straightening lesson.

(Continued on page 2)



Students watch Professor Maria Antonio Centeno closely as she demonstrates styling techniques.

Message from the President



Dear Friends,

The Friends of Batahola board members talk often about how to make more people aware of the great work that is happening at the Center. One of our ideas has been to increase the number of visitors to the Center. We know from experience

that once people visit the Center they are forever changed. Each summer, students from Archbishop McNicholas High School and St. Ursula Academy in Cincinnati, Ohio, come for an immersion experience and return home both energized and humbled. This past March, former board member and long-time friend of Batahola Terri Holman organized a delegation of friends to visit the Center. Impressed and moved by all they experienced, the group is making plans to return next year. This is how lifelong relationships begin! (You can read about Terri's delegation and their trip online at friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/spring-2017.) Perhaps *you* would like to plan a visit to the Center with a group, meet our scholarship students and violence prevention staff, attend an arts and culture performance, and talk to our dedicated adult literacy students. Beware! You, too, will be inspired and forever changed.

Our new Arts and Culture Coordinator, Mora Garcia Flores, a social worker in Managua, was so inspired by the Center's reputation that she wanted to use her talents and skills working at the Center and to be, as she said, "part of something beautiful." Mora's story is on page 4. We welcome her to this important position and to the family.

Blessings,
Mark Overley

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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.

Styling Their Futures (continued)

Giselle, Anna and Alfonso nod and continue to watch the demonstration, playing close attention. "She's been an excellent teacher," Giselle whispers. "When I first got here, I was so nervous, but she makes you feel confident in your



Alfonso hopes to broaden his skills to gain more clients.

skills. She takes away that fear, as she's constantly reassuring us and always imparting excellent information."

"So far, we've learned how to wash hair, straighten, and color," Anna said. "Next week, we're going to start to learn how to cut." Alfonso sits to the side, scissors in hand, practicing on his own hair. "I work in a salon already," he shares, "but I can only cut men's hair. I've come to learn new skills to hopefully gain more clients."

Each student has a dream. Giselle's dream is to "one day open my own salon. I'm going to convert a room in my house. I want to be able to take care of my children during the day while working. I'm hoping the class can give me the skills necessary to achieve that." The students nod in agreement and with confidence. Under Professor Antonio's guidance, they believe by the end of Advanced Hairstyling, there will be nothing standing in the way of their success.

If you would like to help an aspiring student like Giselle, Anna, or Alfonso, please make a donation today in the enclosed reply envelope.

Friend of Batahola: Roberta Veleta

It was during a Christ Renews His Parish (CRHP) weekend retreat at Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) parish in Cincinnati, Ohio, when Roberta Veleta became aware of the Center. A fellow retreatant, Sue Keefe, was on the board of Friends of Batahola (FOB) and was actively involved in every aspect of the Center. After the CRHP retreat, Roberta and her Small Christian Group, began to volunteer at parish fundraising activities to benefit the Center.

From 2009 to 2013, Roberta, an accountant by training and a business professional, served as Treasurer on the FOB board. She was instrumental in streamlining the financials and donor recognition with bookkeeping procedures and software. Her work gave the board a solid understanding of its finances and support trends. She also helped to develop policies for the missionary volunteers working at the Center.

Roberta said she found serving on the board "incredibly inspiring. To be in their company with their concern and dedication to the Center always filled me with hope. And it was fun. Often we shared a meal while completing our work, always with lots of laughter."

Roberta and her husband, Rich, have two sons. Both boys have visited the Center and were influenced

by the generous, welcoming, and friendly nature of the community. Their oldest son, John, created a video about the Center as a film project while at Ohio University. Their youngest son, AJ, visited the Center as a high school student.



Currently, Roberta serves the Center through fundraising activities. She sells arts and crafts made by the Center's students and staff at IHM's annual *From the Mountains to the Sea* luncheon, after Sunday Masses at IHM, at local Christmas shows, and at local Catholic high schools.

After many years as an active Friend of Batahola, Roberta believes more than ever that "the work of the Center, its educational efforts and programs, is vital. It provides a place for students to learn work and relationship skills. It provides an opportunity for change and that change is passed on and on to others."

Thank you, Roberta, for many years of dedication and service to FOB.

Volunteer Reflects on Her Two Years at the Center:

"My worldview has been altered."

By Clare Morrison



Understanding a new culture is like a visual perception puzzle.

way, you saw a vase, and if you looked at it another way you saw two faces, and whichever pattern you saw, it was almost impossible, at least at first glance, to see the other."

My time at the Center has given me countless ways of looking at the world that have enriched my life and broadened my perspective. As I embark on my last months, I'd like to share a few ways my worldview has been altered:

- **TIME:** Nicaraguans have a relaxed sense of time. When a meeting starts at 10:00 it actually means more like 10:30. Overall, it seems Nicaraguans are much more comfortable living in the present moment, rather than focusing on the next items on their to-do lists. I love coming home after work, sitting outside, and chatting with my host parents and neighbors. I hope I can bring some of this back with me, as I transition into the clock-worshiping culture in the U.S.
- **COMMUNITY:** Being in Batahola often makes me forget that I'm living in one of the biggest cities in Central America. It's essentially impossible to walk a single block without running into someone I know and stopping to chat for a few minutes about our days or to complain about the heat. I already know this will be the most difficult part about transitioning back to the U.S., but I'll continue to look for ways to build community when I return home.

READ MORE Online

friendsofbatahola.org/newsletter/spring-2017.

- The Center was a hub of activity on International Women's Day. Read how the Center's teen gender-based violence prevention community organizers marched to end violence against women and in support of women's rights.
- Would you like to visit the Center? Read about former board member and long-time friend, Terri Holman, and the new group of visitors she brought to the Center. Lasting relationships and plans for a return visit were made.
- Yes, you can help us reach our goals and achieve our mission: read *7 Ways You Can Help the Center*. And, learn how signing up on Amazon Smile also contributes to our efforts. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

- **SOLIDARITY:** The first time someone offered to hold my backpack on their lap while I was standing on a crowded bus, I thought they were trying to rob me. I soon learned this is a common courtesy. It's one example of the

numerous little acts of kindness I've seen during my time here. It's inspired me to work against my innately selfish instincts and look for ways to live in solidarity with those around me.

- **GOD:** Through my time here, I've come to see God in the incredible team of women who've dedicated their lives to sustaining the Center these past 34 years, like the dedication of guitar teacher Nineth who inspires a love of music in new generations (and who makes delicious *gallo pinto* for all of us in the choir after Mass each Sunday) and in the young violence-prevention workers who strive for a more just and peaceful society. I feel incredibly lucky coming to work every day and seeing the image of the Nicaraguan Christ portrayed in the Center's awe-inspiring mural, welcomed by ordinary women and men with offerings of mangoes and corn. I know this gift of finding God in the people around me is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Soon I will begin the next chapter in my life as a student in the Masters in Library Science program at the University of Washington. I'm incredibly grateful for the many thoughtful, passionate, and generous people I've had the privilege of getting to know during my time in Batahola. While I will no longer be here physically, I will continue to build solidarity and support for the Center from the States.

Godspeed, Clare. Blessings for all your hard work and sustaining love.



Clare takes time out to have a bit of fun with a student.

How You Can Help...

If you'd like to contribute to the ongoing mission of the Center, please make a donation today in the enclosed reply envelope. Our students, full of hope as they work toward a brighter future, need your support. 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.

Donate Now

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Welcome Mora Garcia Flores!

In April, the Center welcomed its new Arts and Culture coordinator, Mora Garcia Flores. Mora is a social worker from Managua who recently



Mora Garcia Flores

worked on educational and gender-based violence prevention projects. She decided to look into work at the Center because of its reputation. When you think of the Center, she said, "You think of the wonderful things that they've done. It's an opportunity to be part of something beautiful."

Mora said she plans to strengthen the technical part of the Arts and Culture program: optimizing resources, updating information, and working on obtaining grants. More than anything, Mora said she is hoping to "strengthen the Center's link with the community. I want to put culture back into the streets of Batahola. Being in touch with the community is what characterizes the Center."