

RIGHT TO ART & CULTURE



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



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www.friendsofbatahola.org



P.O. Box 36159, Cincinnati, OH 45236-0159

Message from the Co-Presidents

Pat and I met Sr. Margie Navarro in 1998 when she visited her family in Cincinnati, Ohio, our hometown. Three years later, Pat and I traveled to Nicaragua to visit Sr. Margie and her beloved Center. As they say, the rest is history. Working with the Center's talented and dedicated staff has filled our hearts with joy and love. Our faith has grown, as well as our continuing need for solidarity with our brothers and sisters there. Through our connections with the Center, we have formed new communities of friends, both globally and locally.

Pat and I have served as FOB co-presidents for two years. Pat had served as president previously and we are indebted to her for her organizational skills, her sense of humor, and her love for the students and staff at the Center. I have had the privilege of leading 15 groups of teens and chaperones on immersion trips

to Nicaragua. Some of those participants have become active supporters of the Center. During our co-presidency, we have enjoyed Skype/Zoom conversations every two months with Sonia and others from the Center. Even though our term is ending, our commitment to the Center continues. We love everyone, working together to *heal, teach, and shine!*

Peace,
Sue Keefe and Pat Berning



Teaching with Justice

Karla Cristina Zamora is a folkloric dance instructor at the Center and also works professionally as a lawyer. Motivated by her mother to attend Sunday mass, she came to the Center for the first time when she was just 10 years old. Thanks to the Centers' founders she learned the lyrics of the Nicaraguan popular mass and her first steps of Nicaragua's traditional folkloric dance.



"I remember that Sister Margarita sent me to dance school to take classes, she was the person who motivated me to study Dance as a major".

During her childhood and adolescence, she studied music and was part of the Center's artistic groups including Theater and Dance. She studied high school in Cuba thanks to a scholarship that Sister Margarita encouraged her to apply for.

Besides teaching folkloric dance at the Center, she decided to become a lawyer to defend her rights and accompany others in the defense of theirs.



"I am a lawyer because Sister Margarita taught me to defend my rights, also those of my fellow women."
—Karla Zamora

Karla is proud to continue shaping new generations and preserve Nicaraguan culture & identity. Likewise, she considers dance as a means of social transformation in which boys and girls can strengthen their self-esteem, body language and creativity.



The Margarita Navarro Ensemble



The Margarita Navarro Ensemble is a violin group for boys, girls, and adolescents.

Currently, it is made up of 12 members between the ages of 9 and 18 years old.

This ensemble was started in 2017 when Denis

Tijerino Chavarría pitched the idea and became the director. Denis studied music

at the Center starting at age 9 and

then went on to get a Bachelor's degree in Musical Arts Education so he can share what he has learned with the new generation of students.

"Music and instruments are my passion. I started with the flute course because it is the foundation to learn other instruments. I feel safe at the center because it is a place where I can be at peace."

—Sharon Alondra Gutiérrez, 10 years old.
Flute student



The majority of the ensemble members are young girls who have found new ways to express their emotions and feelings through music. In Nicaragua, it is difficult to study music



"I chose the violin because of its sound. I have admired many artists and I have always wanted to play the violin. Even though it is hard to learn, in three months I have learned a lot."

—Andrea Sofía Palacios, 9 years old.
Violin student

because it is an expensive career. It is even more difficult for a girl to learn music, not because of the technique but because of the social mandates for women.

The Center provides support for musical training by loaning instruments so that kids can take them home at no cost. The program also gives members the unique opportunity to play with other national and international artists.

The plan for Margarita Navarro's Ensemble is to continue reaching more children and adolescents so that they can discover themselves through music and recognize their rights in a world of inequality.



"The drawing classes are fun; I do love to draw flowers and plants. At home, I always draw my mom, and the drawing I liked the most has been an owl with big eyes"

—Ashley López Vallecillo, 8 years old.
Drawing & Painting student

Friend of Batahola: Nancy Kleespies

My husband and I have been part of the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Cincinnati for 29 years. Thanks to our twinning program, we lived vicariously through the work the Center was doing for many years. Finally, in 2011, my daughter and I were able to visit the Center as chaperones for the high school group and I was astounded by the friendliness, joy and dedication to the mission from everyone at the Center. This visit really solidified my long-term commitment to the Friends of Batahola.

In 2017, I was able to travel back to Batahola, but this time as a Board Member. Now that I've been on the Board, it has added a lot more depth to my involvement and it has been a privilege to get to know the staff personally. One of the main roles I have taken on during my time on the Board was as Chairperson for the Communications Committee. I was in charge of supporting social media efforts, updating the website and overall improving communications between the

Center and current or potential supporters.

It is truly a gift to witness how the Batahola community has transformed over the years. This is a testament to the staff's commitment—I have so much respect for the work they are doing.

