

RIGHT TO ART & CULTURE

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

 friends_of_batahola

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Message from the Co-Presidents

Recently, a tour of *To Kill a Mockingbird* brought the iconic story of Tom Robinson and Atticus Finch to life on stage in Cincinnati. So many people who saw it commented in conversations and on social media how this story, written over 60 years ago, continues to touch our soul deeply about what we can do to help overcome racial inequality and societal injustices. Dialogues were renewed because this story sparks something inside of us to *move*. The power of art, whether it be theater or music or crafts or painting or sculpture or dance, enables all of us to share our ideas and whole selves with our communities.

Students in Batahola Norte do not have the privilege of arts education in their everyday school life, but the Center helps fill this important aspect of education.

Your generous continued support enables children at the Center to communicate in ways where plain written or spoken word would fall short. Enjoy the stories in this newsletter about how Lex and Alejandro are so positively affected by participation in the arts at the Center as well as Ronaldo who is giving back after receiving so much from the Center.



We thank you for your prayers and financial support of the Center.

Tony Perazzo & Mary O'Toole

The Power of The Arts in Promoting Human Rights

Annually, the Arts and Culture Program serves about 180 students in courses and artistic groups. This program at the Center has been paramount because it was the strategy that founders used to reach the Batahola community.

The main goal of this program is to promote the Nicaragua culture with children and adolescents from a rights-based approach. This means educating and providing a safe environment where they can actively participate in the artistic and cultural life as protagonists of their community.

technique, but art also has a significant impact on the body and its emotions. Art is a strategy for recognizing the person as a whole: validating their emotions, expressing themselves, establishing limits, and recognizing situations of violence in their lives.



"To understand the Arts Program means to ask the children: Why do you paint? Why do you dance? Why do you play that instrument? Everything has an objective and a purpose... it is true that you can execute the simple step, but if it does not have a right-based approach, it is just something mechanical. If you are not interested in the person who is dancing, painting, or playing the guitar, then I am very sorry, we are not doing anything."

Mora García Flores, Arts and Culture Program coordinator shares about the purpose of art in the lives of boys, girls, and adolescents. Art is not only a



Student Success Story: Ronaldo Murillo



Ronaldo Murillo recently joined the Center's staff, but his journey at the Center started as a student 7 years ago.

At the age of 16, Ronaldo's friend encouraged him to study theater at the Center so he could play fun characters.

"I started in the theater class and after six months I was invited to join the Angel Torrellas Choir, but the director sent me to take the recorder class because I didn't know how to play it. So, I started learning to play the recorder on Saturdays."

From 2018 to 2020, Ronaldo took on the responsibility of leading the choir for Sunday Masses at the Center.

Then in 2020, he took over as guitar instructor.

"It was easy for me to start teaching because if I know something, I like to share that knowledge, and if someone needs my help, I will be there to provide it."

In 2021, he became the Arts and Culture Assistant which required him to spend more time at the Center, then in 2022, he moved up to the Arts and Culture Promoter position.

"I have always wondered what I would be doing right now if I was not working for the Center. During my adolescence, I didn't know what I wanted to do...if I wanted to continue studying or what I wanted to study. So, the Center has been very important in my life as a student and now as an employee."

What do art and culture bring to your life?



"For as long as I have belonged to the Center, I have had an important connection with art because it is a way to express how I feel. I joined the Arts and Culture Program at 11 years old as a music student."

Art for me is like a home that I am finding and building at the same time. Thanks to the Center I have developed my confidence. At the Center, people encourage me to be myself."

—Lex Palacios Téllez



"I joined the Arts and Culture program when I was 14 years old, motivated by my dream of becoming an artist. My mom found out about the Center through its official website where we read about the artistic programs."

I began with the guitar course and now I am member of the Angel Torrellas Choir; my life has changed, for instance, now I AM JUST MYSELF, I know me better."

At the Center, we have access to instruments, and we get a wholistic education at no cost."

—Alejandro Luna Artola

[Click here to Meet Ronaldo, Lex and Alejandro](#)

Friend of Batahola: Jeannine Deis

I took my first trip to the Cultural Center in 2009 after my daughter Kate encouraged me to visit. She had been there twice and it had made a big impact on her life, and soon it made an impact on mine too. I was impressed by the bright colors and art, which inspired me to help local artisans by selling their arts and crafts back in my community. That same year I joined the Friends of Batahola Board of Directors. I am the recording secretary and I'm also part of the Communications Committee and the Executive Committee.

I am a member of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish and I've been involved in our twinning relationship with the Center since its inception. Also I work as a nurse and health teacher at McNicolas high school where there has always been a strong relationship to the Center through the Sisters of St. Joseph and Sister Margie. Some of the founding members were still on the board when I joined and for me, it's important to pass on their vision and legacy. I hold that responsibility very dear and take it

seriously. It has been exciting for me to watch the Center change and transition to having local Nicaraguan leadership. It's so powerful to see Sister Margie's vision come to fruition with the amazing women who are running the Center.

