

# Thurston–Santo Tomás Sister Community Association

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*A letter from Maureen Hill, founding member and treasurer*

December 13, 2015

Dear Friend of TSTSCA,

May you find yourself surrounded by friends and family, reflecting on the unending challenges across our country and the planet. May you be optimistic and take hope in the active organizing to turn the tides everywhere. There is no way out but forward, and conscious people are in good company with each other across the earth.

I hope you've had a chance to read our Fall 2015 Newsletter. It was full of inspiring information on recent delegations, and articles about a long time member as well as a new scholar in Santo Tomás, Chontales, Nicaragua. If you'd like, you can find it again here: <http://oly-wa.us/TSTSCA/Newsletter.php>

It was exciting for me to be a part of the summer delegation that included an infant, elementary school students, high school students, a college student, parents and grandparents. Our community group followed a six-student delegation from Evergreen that spent Spring quarter in Santo Tomás.

I wish all of you could have attended a recent assembly

at Lincoln Elementary in Olympia where two of our young delegates shared their experiences with the other students, the teachers, staff and some parents. In the words of one grandparent: "I'm proud of Lincoln Elementary for taking the extra time to foster a sister school relationship with Escuela Rubén Darío and for introducing their students to the Spanish language [and for supporting the native Spanish speaking students], ... to students like John Paul, Mia and Zoe who muster the courage and confidence to share their cultural experiences in an all-school assembly.... Given what's going on in the world these days, today's assembly was such a hopeful hour well spent."



We visited and learned and enjoyed connecting with our friends and counterparts in our Sister Community of Santo Tomás. We are immensely appreciative to the leaders of the Student Delegation, Heather Earp, and of the Community Delegation, Grace Cox, and Emily Calhoun Petrie. We are indebted to María Isabel Ruíz who facilitated both delegations in Santo Tomás, in conjunction with coordinating committees there. We are also grateful for the hospitality and care provided by our host families and the members of the community who went out of their way to

make us feel welcome and to share their lives and experiences with us. These delegations are self-supporting projects that help us strengthen our connections.



*Spring 2015 delegation: Nicaraguan hosts and Evergreen students at the edge of Lago Cocibolco*

These types of exchanges and cross cultural learning have been a part of the mission of TSTSCA since the beginning of the sister relationship, when Nicaragua was front page news because of US funded *Contra* war. Ours is one group that has endured over the years through changes of administrations in both countries. This people-to-people connection has transcended politics and endured, to no small degree because Nicaraguans are resilient and generous people.

We want to be able to continue this relationship and our modest support of a scholarship program for (currently) eighteen *tomasina* and *tomasino* college students, that they develop the professional skills to support their families and rebuild their country. We continue to send salary support for

the *Comedor* (children's free lunch program) and the *Biblioteca* (library), and to create a fund to bring another delegation (our eleventh since 1990!) from Santo Tomás to Olympia. Please help us replenish the funds we send each year.

Please also mark the upcoming dates for our annual fundraisers: **Rummage Sale Extraordinaire** in the Lincoln Gym on Feb. 6th, and the **Perennials Plant Sale** on Olympia's Westside on May 7th, 2016.

I have to wonder if the conflicts in other parts of the world would be different if all countries had sister relationships with all other countries to help bridge the differences in religion, culture and language. I believe it would make a difference if we knew each other a little bit better and more people committed

to challenging and changing the power dynamics between governments as well as collusion with trans-national corporations. As a small organization we choose to focus on our long time relationship with Nicaragua, while as individuals we each do what we are called to do with our brothers and sisters here in the US and in other parts of the world.

This effort of support and exchange could not be possible without some key individuals and all of you who have been part of the sister network for all these years. We appreciate you choosing to be part of this relationship. Please give as generously as you can this year. *Thank you.*

Peace,

*Maureen P. Hill*

Maureen Hill, on behalf of the Thurston-Santo Tomás Sister County Association



*Summer 2015 delegation: Scholarship recipients and Olympia community members in Santo Tomás*