

# Thurston–Santo Tomás Sister Community Association

PO Box 561, Olympia WA 98507

January, 2023

Dear friends of Santo Tomás,

Hello! My name is Wyatt Warner, and I am writing directly to you from Santo Tomás, Chontales, Nicaragua where I have been living for the last three months. I'm so grateful to have inherited 33 years of *hermanamiento* (sisterhood) between Santo Tomás and our TSTSCA community in Olympia—made manifest in the support and warm welcome I have received here. I have gained, through working with inspiring people in the programs established through this long-standing partnership, a deep hands-on appreciation of the amazing impact your support and contributions over the years has had—and continues to have—on this community.



*Inside the comedor infantil during its Christmas party for the kids.*

I spend my mornings helping in the *Comedor Infantil*, the children's free lunch and cultural activities program, which serves a free meal to 130 kids every day! For 30 years, you and TSTSCA have helped to fund this program, as well as the attached public library which provides educational enrichment for all generations in this community!

I also volunteer in a new program that began with start-up funding from TSTSCA, called *Paso a Paso* / "Step by Step". It is a free rehabilitation center that helps people

with disabilities—the only such program in Santo Tomás. Here people have access to occupational therapy, physical therapy, equine therapy, speech therapy, and talk therapy. The success of this program has thrilled not only the working volunteers and staff, but also families throughout the community who eagerly share success stories: that their mother has improved her mobility, or their sibling has developed self-confidence and blossomed as a result of the therapy they received through the program.



*Scholarship students Osler and Lilieska. Osler studies architecture and Lilieska studies industrial engineering.*

One of the most important and far-reaching of the TSTSCA-funded programs is the *Programa de Becas* / university scholarship program. It's heartwarming to see our '*becados*' returning after 5.5 years of study and giving back to the community, like my friend Walkiria who is the physical therapist at *Paso a Paso*. Giving back to the community is a deeply cherished value here in Santo Tomás. The 21 current *becados* are a tight community, and this year they threw a party for 200 children and included a small gift for each one. These scholarships have benefited 52 scholars since 2010 in wide ranging fields such as medicine, accounting, engineering, teaching, business administration, and environmental science.



*Javier and Wyatt. Javier is deaf and goes to Paso a Paso most days to attend the sign language classes. His sister Javiera is a scholarship recipient and tells Wyatt that Paso a Paso has been a huge benefit for her brother.*



*Walkiria the physical therapist and scholarship graduate, working with Nohelsy who has hydrocephalus. The girl's mom carries her 2 hours by horseback and 3 on bus to arrive at Santo Tomás for the free sessions at Paso a Paso.*



*The becados and Wyatt walking up to the very poor Las Lajitas neighborhood to give out entry tickets to children for the scholars' annual giving-back party.*

Not only do our scholarship students return and benefit their community, the money they earn in their professional careers also often funds schooling for additional family members. A few thousand dollars goes a very long way. Beyond lifting one single person out of poverty, these scholarships will improve many lives through multiple generations.

Because salaries in Nicaragua are a fraction of ours in the US, your donations are so much more impactful here! Your money helps feed hungry children, helps people with disabilities, and helps young, low income students follow their career dreams. Finally, if there's anything my time in Santo Tomás has taught me, it is that

through TSTSCA and in the work of these inspiring programs we grow as much, or more, than those we support. Please dig deep and give generously. Thank you for the support that allows this work to continue!

**TSTSCA is an all volunteer, 501(c)3 organization. Please consider a generous gift** of \$600 for a scholar (1 year), \$350 for one month's salary (for each comedor and library staff), \$175 for a partial salary. **You can send a check in the return envelope or donate through our PayPal on [oly-wa.us/tstsc](http://oly-wa.us/tstsc).** Every cent of your donations will go directly to Santo Tomás.



*Becada Javiera painting faces of kids from Las Lajitas at the becados' December giving-back party. Javiera studies pharmaceutical chemistry.*

### ***Thank you!***

Wyatt Warner, *Evergreen State College student delegation of 2017 and member of the TSTSCA (I'll be back in Olympia by February. Let me know if you'd like to learn more about my experiences in our Nicaraguan sister community)*

### ***And a really big thank you from the rest of the active members of TSTSCA:***

Maureen Hill, Audrey Levine and Nels Johnson, Diane Dakin, Eddie Cates and Beth Doglio, Mike Harburg, Michi Thacker, Bill Zachmann, Emily Calhoun Petrie, Grace Cox, Russ Fox, Alan Mountjoy-Venning, Dirk and Dixie Havlak, Tom Newcomb, Harriet Strasberg, Jean Eberhardt, Lee Miller



*A big Christmas party at the comedor with a donated piñata, music, and paquetes/gifts.*

**Look out for our annual spring plant sale, coming up on the first weekend in May! Email [tstsc@gmail.com](mailto:tstsc@gmail.com) if you have perennials for us to come dig up and divide this late winter. And email us if you'd like to participate in fun potting parties...**

