

Olympia/Santo Tomás Update

US/Nicaragua Solidarity—Since 1989

May 2015

An update
from the
Thurston–Santo Tomás
Sister County
Association

Summer 2015 Delegation

*From Grace Cox and Emily Calhoun Petrie
(delegation trip leaders)*

We're pleased as punch to announce the impending departure of our summer Community Delegation to Santo Tomás, Chontales, Nicaragua! Eighteen members of our community will travel together to Nicaragua for a two week stay in our sister town, followed by a trip to the island of Ometepe. We're excited to visit Ometepe and learn more about their Sister Island relationship with Bainbridge Island. Every delegation has its own flavor; Community Delegation 2015 has a number of families, with young folks ranging in age from 16 years old to 6 months. We plan to spend time with each of the community projects in Santo Tomás, meet the college scholarship students, connect with the students and teachers of Escuela Rubén

Darío (Lincoln Elementary's Sister School), visit the Museo Lovigüisco, and meet with the mayor and other town leaders. We'll plan to report back in the early fall to share what we've learned.

Since the delegation is large, we can take quite a few suitcases filled with material aid. **Do you have any lightweight upright, rolling suitcases to spare?**



Spring 2015 Evergreen Student Delegation in the good company of Nicaraguan friends at the edge of the great Lake Cocibolca in Masaya. Front row: Caroline Holler, Olendia Duarte, Marissa Carter, Walter Jose Bonilla (Mollie's cousin from Managua!) Back Row: Alex Moises Arragon, Maria Isabel Ruiz, Heather Earp, Mollie Gaitz, Allie Deaton

Can you help fill any of the requests we've received?

- blenders and food processors for the students of the cooking school;
- metal book ends and small whiteboards and dry erase markers for the small public library;
- mannequin/wig heads and haircutting
- scissors for beauty school/barber students;
- soup spoons and kitchen knives for the Children's Free Lunch Program;
- miscellaneous office supplies such as staplers and pens and post-its;
- children's scissors and art supplies for preschools.

We've already secured medical supplies from Providence (thank you!) and some soccer and baseball equipment. Your donations should be new or in great shape. Email us at santotomasdelegation@gmail.com for

information on drop off or to request a pick-up. It would be very helpful for us to know what you can give, ahead of our packing date on June 6th. You can also gift money, with which we'll purchase items to fill in gaps. As always, your donations to the TSTSCA are tax-deductible to the extent possible.

We can also carry down small gifts and letters to your friends and host families in Santo Tomás. Same deadline, same email!

Greetings from Two Scholarship Students

Marilyn Aguilar Oporta

It's a pleasure to write this letter and tell you how my life and studies are going.

First of all I would like to give thanks to God and everyone who has made it possible for me to pursue my education at Universidad Martín Lútero here in Santo Tomás. I grew up with my three sisters in the care of our grandparents. Because my father did not provide for us, my mother had to move far away to find work to send money to her parents to feed us. I survived with the help of God and my family. I am anxious to start my career, so my mother can finally retire and I can give back some of what she did for me. I will serve my community here with everything I have.

I am studying to be a public school teacher and am in the last semester of the five year program. I am doing well academically, but some of my studies have imposed real hardships on me. Two years ago, I took a class called PROJECT. It was really difficult because it was challenging to find the information for the theoretical part and I had to buy the professional suit necessary to present my findings, food for the jury that reviewed my defense, print the documents, etc. God helped me and I was able to pass the class.

Once I graduate in August of this year and secure a job, I hope to continue my studies with a specialization. I am told that after earning my Bachelor's degree, I will need to study something more specific to have a better chance at finding a permanent job in the educational field. Wish me well! I send my blessings to you and the whole organization. Thank you.

Letter translated by Allie Deaton, Evergreen student delegation of 2015, with additional interview material via Maria Isabel Ruiz Taleno



Gheyling Lisbeth Murillo Miranda

Hello, my name is Gheyling Lisbeth. I am currently in my fifth and final year of law studies at the Universidad Martín Lútero. I send you cordial greetings and to thank you for the immense help you've given me in these past years, not only for the financial aid, which has of course been a great help, but also for believing me worth funding in addition to the other youth receiving scholarships in Santo Tomás, each with their own bright vision for the future.

Thanks to the support I've received from you I have been able to focus and do well in my studies. I know I would not be about to earn my law degree if it weren't for this scholarship.

It hasn't been easy for me, but with great determination I have been able to keep going forward. I hope to finish my studies successfully and then provide legal help to people that need it here in the same way you have helped me. I hope I can also help others with the career I have chosen

I know that I will have to keep working very hard to perform my job successfully but I will keep fighting to see my dreams completed.

For me, the scholarship has been a great help. Please know that I appreciate it deeply.

I say farewell with great satisfaction and a sense of completeness.

Letter translated by James Hibbs, Evergreen student delegation of 2013



Thanks for Supporting the Scholars from Santo Tomás!

A big thank you to everyone who donated plants or came to buy plants (or both) at our 3rd annual spring plant sale on May 2nd! People were excited about the kinds of perennials available, but also wanted vegetable starts. Let us know if you have a green thumb and could help out by growing starts to sell next year (call (360) 943-8642 if you can help). We heard our prices were remarkably low and yet we still raised \$1,700! All of these funds will support college students from Santo

Tomás with partial scholarships in five year programs. Please consider an annual gift or a monthly contribution to this vital project. At this moment, there are 16 students receiving \$480 each year, which is approximately half of their annual need. They were chosen by a broad committee of educators in Santo Tomás and are committed to serving their community.



Over 25 Years of *hermanamiento* with Santo Tomás

Some excerpts from a speech written by Jean Eberhardt and delivered by Evergreen students at the public anniversary celebration on April 11 in Santo Tomás:

On this special occasion, with the brothers and sisters of Mol, Belgium, we observe another anniversary with the people of Santo Tomás and the Committee for Community Development. Just over 25 years ago, people in Olympia created a non-profit organization, with the love and energy of many people volunteering to strengthen solidarity ties with Nicaragua through our relationship with Santo Tomás.



Significant historical context was shared and then followed by:

It was a privilege to be with you and develop our consciousness, with the goal of ending U.S. aggression and the *contra* war, and experiencing in our bodies the meaning of solidarity: the accompaniment and how much we learned from the exchange of ideas, the mutual respect, the songs, the shared work shoulder to shoulder, the pain as well as the moments of happiness, the loss of our loved ones and the victories...

We created the *hermanamiento* when Padre Ignacio González headed up the new Committee for Community Development. The unforgettable, action oriented and beloved liberation theologian was part of the first delegation from Santo Tomás that visited Olympia in

1990. Since then, more than 30 people in ten delegations from your community have come to Olympia to share their histories, their perspectives, their skills and experiences with us. You've hosted eleven delegations from The Evergreen State College, and eight community delegations from greater Olympia. You extend unparalleled hospitality to us and we are grateful to each family that hosts us. We attempt to offer to same to you when you come to Olympia...

It was doña Olendia Duarte who, in thinking about the Evergreen students who've left Olympia after they graduated and decided to make their lives elsewhere, that they take with them what they learned in Nicaragua, organizing and making change, benefiting from the seeds you planted which have grown to produce positive results, multiplying their commitment to seeking justice everywhere. The struggles continue and we are indebted to you for what we've learned in Nicaragua...

We are also inspired by the beneficiaries of the Sandinista Revolution, who today are nurses and doctors, economists, accountants, teachers and professors, engineers, lawyers, authors, poets, etc. There are many "graduates" of the *comedor infantil* who now have professional careers that bring them a salary and deep pride from contributing to the progress of your beautiful country. You know who these members of your community are and we congratulate all of you for your successes!...

May we always work together for peace with justice and dignity...

*Together we are a volcano!
¡Juntos somos un volcán!*

TSTSCA works with a sister community organization in Santo Tomás, the *Comité para Desarrollo Comunal* (Committee for Community Development or CDC) on projects that support basic needs, education, and human dignity. TSTSCA provides ongoing financial and other support for these three CDC projects: *Comedor Infantil*, the Children's Free Lunch Program; *Biblioteca*, the library; *Becas*, Scholarships.

Delegations to Nicaragua are self-supporting and generously hosted by the people of Santo Tomás.

Delegations from Santo Tomás are generously supported by the Olympia community.

See our website at <http://www.oly-wa.us/tstsc/> You can also friend us on Facebook

The TSTSCA typically meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7pm (6:30 potluck) at Lincoln Elementary at 21st and Washington in Olympia from September through June. and elsewhere in the summer months. Call ahead (360) 943-8642 or email tstsc@gmail.com to confirm date and location if you'd like to attend. You are invited to join us!

**Thurston–Santo Tomás
Sister County Association**

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Yerlin and Caroline share some laughs during a game of pass the balloon, at the first meeting of Santo Tomás scholars and Evergreen students in the Biblioteca del Comedor Infantil.

This powerful logo *together we are a volcano* was created by two Thurston County artists in support of TSTSCA's 25th anniversary of sister ties with Santo Tomás, Chontales Nicaragua. A large delegation from Mol, Belgium celebrated their 30th anniversary with Santo Tomas in April just after the arrival of our 11th student delegation from The Evergreen State College. The Women's Sewing Coop in S.T. produced 200 bags with this logo that we gifted to members of the various community projects under the wing of the Comité para Desarrollo Comunal. The Belgians had a bunch made up for their members as well.

Here's a big thank you to Jason Snow of Evolution Ink Tattoo and Cullen Balch of Insanity Shack! Please let them know you also appreciate their skill and gift.

Thank you Allie Deaton, for making the connection that made this happen.

juntos somos un volcán



Olympia ▲ Santo Tomás ▲ Mol

¡Solidaridad!