



Chacocente News

PO Box 128, Lexington, MA 02420

www.outofthedump.org

Spring 2022

UPDATES ON CHACOCENTE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND STAFF

Chacocente Christian School (CCS) has enrolled 135 students for this academic year, which began in late January. Chacocente employs 26 Nicaraguans, including 15 teachers, our librarian (who also teaches reading skills, and one might say, *literary enthusiasm!*), and our Christian Education teacher, who also serves as part-time administrative assistant to the school Director and Assistant Director, Jacqueline and Karen. Oswaldo is our full-time school psychologist; see his "Success Story" piece about Erick, below. Juan Carlos, as our Family Coordinator, is liaison with the original "Chacocente families," whom our founder, Cheryl Avery, helped relocate from the city dump of Managua to establish Project Chacocente in 2003-2004.; Juan Carlos also directs our campus maintenance and is the genius behind the construction projects that have made Chacocente the "jewel" of the greater Chaco community. We employ two security guards, Marcos and Santos, and an accountant, Edgard, who also helps Omar, our in-country Director (and sometimes visitor to the States!) maintain our compliance with exacting government regulations.

A SALARY INCREASE!

In January Chacocente's Board of Directors voted unanimously to increase employee salaries by approximately 12.5%, starting with this new school year. We refer to our *Nicaraguan* employees, of course, since the stateside crew, the Board of Directors, is all-volunteer. The decision to raise salaries was not a difficult one, for two reasons. First, the substantial salary increment makes life better for our employees and their more than 100 dependents, especially in this time of worldwide inflation. These wonderful people are not "overhead" but are at the heart our Mission! Second, the faithfulness and generosity of our donors has allowed us to extend this blessing, with gratitude.

WATER

As most of you know, Chacocente has its own well, 400+ feet deep, that has faithfully supplied fresh potable water to our school and the families of Chacocente since it was drilled 15 years ago. Last fall, the well that supplies water to the community surrounding Project Chacocente stopped working, and for several weeks, Chacocente provided water to meet the needs of our neighbors. Eventually the community's well was fixed, but it remains inadequate; it is over 100 years old, we have learned! Fresh water is often available for only a few hours, twice a week, and then only at a trickle for families living near the ends of the water lines. For years these families have collected water in old soda bottles and in open drums where mosquito larvae are visible on the water's surface.

Wait, isn't providing water the job of local government? One would think so, but the community's entreaties have yielded no remedies. For this reason, Chacocente has now engaged "Living Water International," the same non-profit that drilled our well in 2007, to study formally the feasibility of Chacocente providing a new, permanent well for the greater community. We do not know where this project might take us. Many questions must be answered. We appreciate your prayers as we discern how we might help.



MEET NORLAN - PROJECT CHACOCENTE'S NEW ACADEMICS OFFICER



We are honored to welcome Norlan Xavier Ruiz Robleto to the Chacocente team. Norlan is an attorney who has worked closely with us since 2016 on land titles, employee issues, and – in concert with Omar and Edgard - maintaining our harmonious relationship with the Nicaraguan government.

He has degrees in Law, Business and Project Management, and his extensive post-graduate work has encompassed family law, gender studies, violence prevention and the rights of children, adolescents, and youth.

As Chacocente's "Academics Officer," Norlan will...

- Provide academic, college and career counseling to CCS students and alumni.
- Follow our students after graduation. Where do they go and what do they do?
- Address the causes of attrition. Why do students sometimes drop out of school? What happens to them? Could their departure have been foreseen or prevented?
- Administer Chacocente's Scholarship Program for CCS students, alumni and Chacocente staff. In this capacity, Norlan will interview scholarship applicants (and their parents where indicated) and evaluate their applications, track grades and other measures of academic success, administer funds, and ensure that the chosen curricula are accredited and likely to yield or enhance meaningful employment.

NOTE: Chacocente's Scholarship Program is different from our Child Sponsorship Program. Both are funded by faithful friends in the U.S., whom we connect with the unique, inspiring stories of individual students. However, Sponsorship funds are directed toward the operations of CCS and the Chacocente campus, whereas Scholarship funding is used for educational pursuits that take place beyond our walls.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER: ROBIN DAL SOGLIO, J.D.



We welcome Robin as the newest member of the Chacocente Board of Directors. She is an attorney, licensed in California, Oregon and Washington, who specializes in employment law, especially issues of workplace legal compliance, discrimination, and harassment. Robin has extensive trial experience in state and federal courts and advises small and large companies and organizations in almost every aspect of the employment relationship. Robin traveled to Chacocente in 2013 with her oldest daughter and immediately fell in love with the people and the work being done there. Her husband also traveled to Chacocente with their daughter in 2012 and 2015, so Chacocente is very much a family passion in their home. It is clear that Robin has unique skills and experience that promise to make her Board service a blessing to the Chacocente community. We are grateful to have her working with us.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING PROJECT CHACOCENTE

Your prayers, donations and efforts to share the unfolding Chacocente story make all the difference in our shared work. Without your care and support, we would not be able to continue to offer help and hope to the people of Project Chacocente and Chacocente Christian School.



CONTACT US

To learn more about Project Chacocente, including donations and sponsorship, visit www.outofthedump.org

Donations may be mailed to: **Project Chacocente, PO Box 128, Lexington, MA 02420**

We welcome your questions! Email us: projectchacocente@gmail.com

“THE CHACOCENTE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IS LIKE MY SECOND HOME!”

- Erick Guillermo Vargas Mercado

The following is taken from a report prepared by Oswaldo, School Psychologist

Erick is a young man committed to his classes, currently with excellent academic performance in Grade 10. He comes from a stable family consisting of a father, mother, and younger brother. His younger brother also attends Chacocente Christian School. Despite his economic difficulties, Erick Guillermo dreams of attending college after graduating from high school in 2023.



In his eagerness to help his family, he sells peanut candies once or twice a week to help with expenses. In Nicaragua, hundreds of children drop out of school each year to contribute to the daily sustenance of the family. Particularly, first born sons are most often called upon to quit school and help provide family income.

Erick is an avid reader. In addition to the classic books assigned at school, he has also enjoyed reading *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, *The Twelfth Angel* by Og Mandino and many others. His sporting interests include basketball, athletics, and chess.

Erick shares with us the following about his years of study at Chacocente: "I have observed positive changes, first in the infrastructure, which makes me very happy. When I was studying in Elementary school, the facilities were not the same and now they are more pleasant and better, thanks to the support, affection and effort of the donors." "One of my big goals is to be an architect, to have my own company, being in charge of great constructions, being good at my job."

"Currently I consider myself a good son, although I do not always help my mother. I try to be proactive in my difficulties, I do not let myself be overcome with obstacles, since life will always have obstacles. It is not always easy because 'What you achieve easily, easily goes away'."



VISITING CHACOCENTE....VIRTUALLY!

So much of the last two years has been done virtually – Sunday morning worship, job interviews, classroom instruction, and endless meetings. We've Zoomed and then Zoomed some more. Luckily, we were able to even visit Chacocente virtually this year. Thanks to board member, Rev. John Shaver and two supporters from California for sharing their recent trip to Nicaragua. For a suggested fee of \$100 each, forty-three individuals and two churches joined the February 7-15 trip without leaving home.

Besides accomplishing several board related tasks, Rev. John and friends were able to begin construction on two projects using funds collected from virtual participants. The first being a chicken coop at the home of Chacocente Christian School teacher José Luis Paiz who plans to raise chickens to supplement income for his growing family. He hopes to eventually employ some of his neighbors, thereby helping them to provide for their families as well. The second project was the building of a much-needed storage shed for the school. Located next to the School Director's office, it will hold books, medical supplies, donations and more.



The visitors also spent time with students, families, and staff. Valentines were given, toothbrushes delivered, basketball was played, meals were shared and a 5K was held for all. Despite the dust and hot weather, many students and staff took part. Each was given a t-shirt. The team was particularly impressed with the School Chapel noting that it was beyond expectation thanks to the staff, families and parents who worked together to make it a reality. Rev. John and Omar met via Zoom with virtual trip participants and a video with beautiful music of the week's events was emailed to each. Many thanks to Rev. John and friends for sharing their trip and many thanks to all who participated virtually!