

¡Dale Pué Nicaragua!



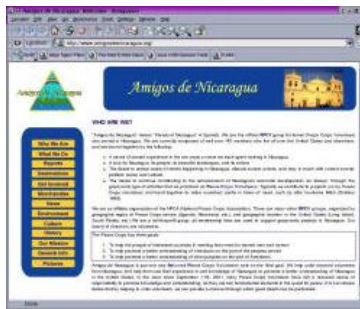
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS OF NICARAGUA

January 2003

What's New with the Amigos de Nicaragua By Randy Wood (San Diego & El Hato, Esteli, 98-00)

A warm hello to all our current Amigos de Nicaragua. The year 2002 has been a busy one for the Amigos de Nicaragua, and we've grown in many ways we're proud to be able to describe to you. We hope, as always, that the Amigos de Nicaragua will be our vehicle (our rusty, smoke belching bus, as it were) for keeping Returned Peace Corps Volunteers from Nicaragua in contact with Nicaragua and in contact with each other. With that goal in mind, the Amigos have been re-shaping and reworking how our group gets things done. On the surface, not much has been happening here, but we're proud to say that behind the scenes the Amigos have gotten stronger than ever, and we hope 2003 sees us grow even further. Here's a little of what's new:

- We have begun two projects that keep us in contact with Peace Corps Nicaragua:
- The first, an **Artesania Project**, gives current PCVs that are working with an artesan group, the ability to market that group's products to the RPCVs. To date we've had sales of ceramic necklaces from San Juan de Limay, and guayaberas from Masaya. Other opportunities will arise as PCVs contact us



www.amigosdenicaragua.org



Limay Pendant

from time to time, and keep an eye out for our chinela sale sometime in early 2003.

- The **Adopt-a-Project Program** allows RPCVs to make limited, one-time contributions to PCV projects, on terms they establish with the PCV. For example, if a volunteer teaching gardening could benefit from a roll of barbed wire, that volunteer can strike a deal with an RPCV for the wire. Amigos plays the role of "liaison," putting interested RPCVs in contact with Volunteers with good project ideas. Some projects have already been posted on our website; take a look and see how you can be useful!
- Amigos are keeping in contact with Nicaraguan news courtesy of Ana Bilik and my wife Ericka Briceño, who every two weeks post a **news summary** of articles RPCVs would be interested in to our listserv. Just click on the links to be taken to choice selections of articles from English language and Nicaraguan news services on-line.
- We've had several **staff changes**. See the

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side bar article for names of current board members. Amigos de Nicaragua encourages you to contact board members for any reason. The Board is, as always, composed of volunteers interested in making the Amigos worth taking part in. Make your opinions known!

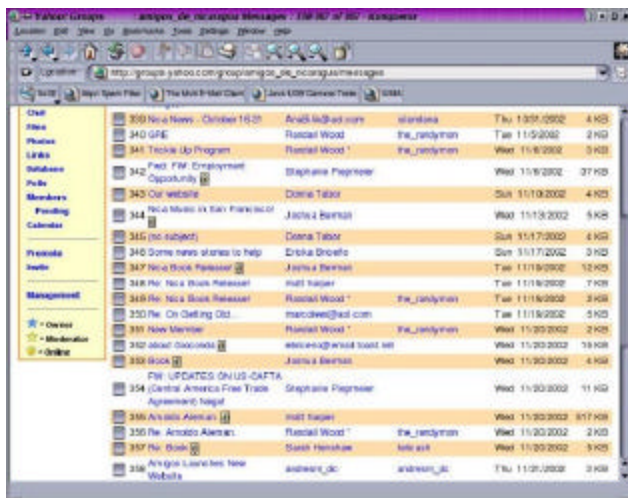
Please Join Us On-Line!

The Amigos de Nicaragua is growing and organizing. We have around 150 members, about 75 of which join us on-line for discussion, news, job postings, and more.

While we're growing, much of the benefit we have to offer to our members will be on-line, because there is no expense incurred. That leaves us greater ability to fund projects in Nicaragua.

We will continue to provide DalePue Nicaragua twice a year to all our members.

If you're receiving this newsletter but aren't currently on-line with us, please join us where, for the moment, all the action—job postings, biweekly news updates, and discussion— is. We look forward to your participation with the Amigos.



The view of our listserv message board:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/amigos_de_nicaragua/



Amigos de Nicaragua Board of Directors

Electronic Media Coordinator:

Andrew Middleton

andresm_dc@yahoo.com

NPCA and Peace Corps Liaison: Ana Bilik

anabilik@aol.com

Newsletter Coordinator:

Sarah Henshaw

telicash@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Marty Clifford

pargorojo95@yahoo.com

Secretary: Dave Hiegel

dhiegel@myexcel.com

Database Coordinator and Acting Membership Coordinator:

Randy Wood

rsw22@cornell.edu



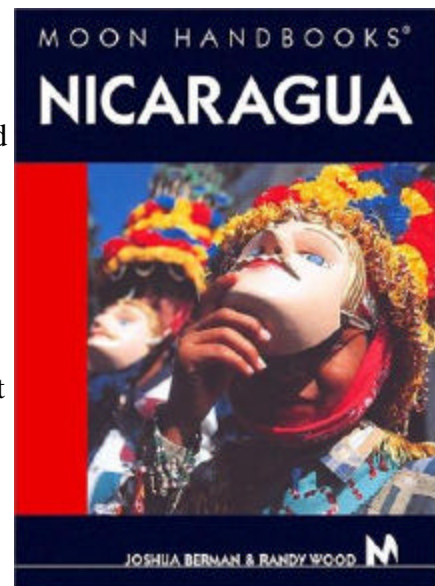
A Brief Summary of Recent News Events in Nicaragua

These were first posted to our listserv. While the Amigos de Nicaragua is not primarily a news service, we hope that RPCVs trying to stay in touch with Nicaragua will find some benefit from our bi-weekly news summaries on line.

- Ernesto Cuadra, Nicaraguan painter, has an exhibition at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange
- Nicaraguan cinema triumphs at the ICARO festival in Guatemala
- Remnants of a primitive settlement dating back to time of Christ were found near Kukra Hill, Atlantic Coast
- Bolanos accused of campaign finance fraud for \$4.1M. Business leaders urge him not to face charges, in fear of economic turmoil the case would cause.
- Town of Niquinohomo was declared a Historic National Site
- Zoilamerica continues her lawsuit against Daniel Ortega.
- Coffee crisis of Matagalpa worsens; several starve and many families line the highway to beg for food.
- Over 50 archaeological pieces found on a campesino farm in Telica, Leon. The relics are several hundred years old and were turned over to the government.
- Aleman's son dies due to an undetected medical condition.
- Aleman and 17 other government officials have their American visas revoked, in a strong signal of support for Bolaños' campaign against corruption.
- Oil discovered in the Costa Atlantica. American and Canadian companies have been given the exclusive rights to explore.
- Arnoldo Aleman found guilty and sentenced to house arrest. The crowd goes wild.

New Nicaraguan Travel Guidebook by Randy Wood

Josh Berman (La Trinidad, Esteli 98-00) and I (San Diego and El Hato, Esteli, 98-00) have completed our travel guide to Nicaragua and Avalon Travel Publishing has it on the shelves of every Borders and Barnes & Noble in the nation. At 438 pages, with hundreds of illustrations and well over 50 maps, this is the guide to Nicaragua we wish someone had made available for us when we were volunteers in Nicaragua. Whether you're heading back to Nicaragua for a trip or to visit your old site, or just curious to see what has become of Nicaragua since you did your Peace Corps service, we invite you to check it out. Look for us in the travel section of your favorite book store, or on line at <http://www.moon.com/catalog/nicaragua.html> (with a link to Amazon.com)



Return to Nicaragua

by Trisha Fields, (Matapalo, Esteli, 99-01),
27 December 2002

I went back to visit Nicaragua. I had left with the thoughts that I would probably never go back, that I wanted to cut all ties and just let my memories be memories, but barely a year and a half later, my traveling feet started to point back to my other home. What would it be like to see my friends again, walk around my town, play with my kids, sit in my venta drinking Coke, ride buses, hitchhike?

I had idealized my time in Nicaragua. I remembered the smiling faces, the great food, the time to think, the ability to grow, the freedom of being able to do what I wanted to do and living a little outside the rules. I had pushed away all the problems of actually living and working in a completely different world and forgotten the poverty and hopelessness.

Going back to Matapalo, Pueblo Nuevo, Estelí, I expected only good happy times. Instead, I crammed 2 years of Peace Corps emotions into one week. At first, I was excited and raring to go. Once in Managua, I walked out of the new part of the airport and started smiling. I felt right, I was home. The heat, the humidity, the smell of Nicaragua hit me and I was happy. I arrived in my town the next evening after a great bus ride from Condega. I knew all the people on the bus and they all seemed happy to see me. At the same time, I was nervous. How would the people in my town react to seeing me again?

I shouldn't have worried. My best friends were waiting for me and we hugged so hard I almost lost my breath. We talked and talked

and they gave me food and I

went across the street to visit and then I was tired so I went to sleep. What elation in being with everyone again!

In the morning, I started visiting all my friends, learning about what had happened since I'd gone. Kids were taller, people had gotten married and had children, and lots of people had

gone to Costa Rica.

I cried when I found out that Leka, the girl who had worked for me, had gone. And I kept crying whenever I thought about it. I hadn't realized that I had wanted to see

her so much. But basically, life in Matapalo was the same. Boredom set in.

I went to Pueblo Nuevo the next day to see people I had worked with and other friends. Almost all my friends owned ventas, I realized. I sat in the park and read a book and wrote in my journal and watched kids play baseball. And I got really, really, get-me-the-hell-out-of-here bored. I saw the next four days stretch out in front of me and I almost couldn't stand it. How was I ever going to have the same conversation 50 more times and not go insane?

In the afternoon I went up to other communities for more visiting and started to feel a little better. Walking around, looking at the beautiful green hillsides, enjoying the fabulous weather. The next day, I was off to Ocotal with a friend to visit her mom. We took the



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bus to the carretera and then hitchhiked up. Her mother made me chicken soup with meatballs. Yum. We visited for a little while and then hitchhiked back. That night, I sat on a neighbor's porch and talked with my favorite girls and watched all the boys as they congregated under the big tree. That day was the high point. Everything seemed to make sense. Why do we worry and work so long and have to be doing something all the time? All that mattered was enjoying the moment and being with friends.

The next chapter in the cultural transition: I was ready to move on. I had a good time walking around with my kids the next day, enjoying being with them, but I was looking forward. I even made a list in my journal of what I wanted to do when I got home. I started to say goodbye to everyone. I was sad to leave my friends, especially the kids, but in all, I was ready to leave. I was glad I had come and seen

everyone, had seen that their lives had continued, that my life had continued. That they continued being Nicaraguan, with all the complexity that involves that I will never understand, and that I continued being American, more than I want to be. From knowing them and living with them, my world got larger and I opened myself to learn more. Hopefully the same is true for them.

I'm glad I went back. I realized how much I didn't fit in, how much of their lives that I will never understand, and what I value about my life as an American. I also remembered what I value about my life in Nicaragua: the friendships, the freedom, the personal learning process, the time to read and think and dream. I am glad I experienced Nicaragua, but I am equally glad that I am not there anymore. My traveling, growing, learning feet are pointed in a different direction now.

Peace Corps Nicaragua....A Little History & the Current Situation

by Sarah Henshaw (Telica, Leon 98-00)

Peace Corps returned to Nicaragua in May 1991 after a twelve-year absence. Peace Corps Volunteers originally served in Nicaragua from 1968 until the program was suspended in February 1979. Following the democratic elections in February 1990, the Government of Nicaragua requested Peace Corps' assistance and the original country agreement was re-instituted. The program was officially reopened in May 1991, upon the arrival of the Country Director, Administrative Officer and four transfer/extension Volunteers. The first full training class in more than a decade followed in December 1991. Volunteers were originally placed entirely in or near the capital, Managua, and began working with host country agencies in vocational education and small business development projects. Since January

1994, all Peace Corps Volunteers have been assigned sites outside of the capital city, Managua.

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch ravaged the country, leaving widespread flood damage, roads and bridges destroyed, and farmland devastated throughout the Pacific and North Central regions of the country. As a result, Peace Corps increased funding to support an additional agriculture program, as well as initiate the entrance of the Crisis Corps to the country. Immediately following Hurricane Mitch, Volunteers helped organize emergency relief and prevent outbreaks of disease and continue to work in reconstruction efforts. While the last Crisis Corps Volunteers left in 2001, training in disaster preparedness and mitigation is being

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expanded for all Volunteers.

Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers in Nicaragua are working in the agriculture, small business development, health, environment and youth sectors.

Small Business Development

The small business development project is designed to improve the administration and management of micro businesses, cooperatives, and NGOs and promote the development of new businesses to create employment and income, as well as to raise the living standard of the community. The goals of this project are to improve the competitiveness of micro businesses through technical assistance, contribute to the development of new businesses, and support the sustainable development of local organizations that give credit, technical assistance, training and other services to micro-businesses. In support of these goals, Peace Corps Volunteers facilitate training and advising with local organizations, individuals and their clients to strengthen institutional capacity and develop and write business plans. The small business development project has two components: business advising and information technology.

Health

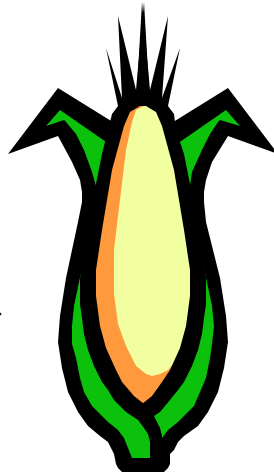
The community health project is designed to improve the health of individuals in poor, rural communities throughout Nicaragua. Volunteers teach community members basic prevention techniques that will help them avoid or diminish the effects of some devastating, but controllable diseases. The preventive health education program focuses on informing community members about cholera, malaria, nutrition, drug and alcohol abuse,



AIDS, maternal/child care, vaccinations, first aid and oral rehydration techniques. Volunteers also provide training and assistance to the staff of Community Health Centers and local Health Educators. Peace Corps Volunteers have also been involved in disaster preparedness and mitigation activities. Efforts include working with various Ministry of Health, UNICEF and NGO officials to prevent domestic violence and promote better treatment of children.

Environment

The community environmental education project is designed to increase the public's awareness of environmental problems and solutions for Nicaragua. The Peace Corps Nicaragua environment project collaborates with municipal committees and the Ministries of Education and Environment to focus on increasing the government's capacity to communicate its environmental policies. Volunteers work in a variety of resource management and environmental activities, including classroom environmental education, recycling, school gardens, agro-forestry extension and protected areas. Volunteers work with rural teachers, organizations and community groups to increase their non-formal environmental education activities and membership base at the community level in an effort to rehabilitate and conserve natural resources and the environment in a collaborative way.



Agriculture

The sustainable food security project focuses on improving the standard of living of rural farming family in the departments of Esteli and Nueva Segovia though improved agricultural techniques. Volunteers work closely with field technicians

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from the counterpart agency, the National Agricultural Technological Institute (INTA), to help members of rural households learn and develop skills in the use of suitable techniques of sustainable crop production, environmental protection and integrated backyard management. Specific Volunteer efforts include helping rural farm families improve food production through soil improvement, pest management, and better care for farm animals, especially chickens and rabbits. The first training class of agriculture Volunteers were placed in sites in December 1999.

Youth Development

The Atlantic Coast youth development project was launched in July 2002. The overall purpose of this new project is provide the Atlantic Coast youth with the skills and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives as model citizens of their region. Volunteers will cooperate with a counterpart agency providing direct support to youth and local organizations that serve youth. These organizations include: youth-led groups, churches, NGOs, ethnic identity groups, cultural groups, schools, and local government institutions.

Peace Corps Day: Friday, 28 February 2003 Celebrate a Legacy of Service from the NPCA

To commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the founding of the Peace Corps, returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) will celebrate Peace Corps Day on February 28, 2003. RPCVs will be visiting classrooms, community organizations, and workplaces throughout the United States to share the knowledge and insights gained from their overseas experiences. As every RPCV knows, part of the Peace Corps' mission is to educate Americans back home about the people with whom they lived and worked.

When RPCVs speak about their Peace Corps experiences, they enrich the lives of students, neighbors, and colleagues. RPCVs also raise awareness of the Volunteers' ongoing global contributions and plant the seeds of community service.

Peace Corps Day is your opportunity to promote a better understanding of the people of your current community. You can participate in a variety of ways: Perhaps you have photographs, artifacts, music, or folktales that you could share with students or other groups. Consider asking another RPCV to make the presentation with you. Two or more viewpoints will give your audience a broader perspective of the work of Peace Corps Volunteers and might make the experience more

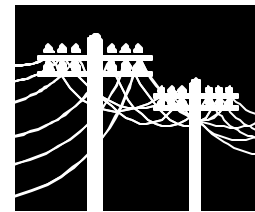
Get Included!

People move, marry, change addresses, ditch their email providers. Please take the time to contact us with your updated information, so we can help keep you in touch with your RPCV buddies and with Nicaragua! Send your contact information to Randy Wood, database coordinator:

3131 Village Blvd. #107, West Palm Beach, FL 33409

561-615-4238, email: rsw22@cornell.edu

Or send us your information by way of our convenient online form! Simply visit <http://www.amigosdenicaragua.org> and click on the "Contact Us" link at the bottom left corner of the site. A web form will allow you to send us your new contact information.



enjoyable for you. You might encourage your local newspaper to run a story about your experiences in the Peace Corps or to publish a letter to the editor about Peace Corps service. You might also want to participate in one of the events being organized by Peace Corps recruiting office. If you would like to get involved in planning local Peace Corps Day events, contact Amigos de Nicaragua by posting a message to our listserv.

Last year, more than 6,000 RPCVs shared their overseas experiences in elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges and universities throughout the United States. Nearly 500,000 students were visited by an RPCV. RPCVs also gave presentations to community groups, at their workplace, and in places of worship. Through the reporting of their overseas experiences, RPCVs continue to build bridges across cultures – bridges to friendship, cross-cultural understanding, tolerance, and ul-

timately, peace.

Whether you choose to bring your Peace Corps experience to a local school or take part in one of the activities mentioned above, participation is key in helping Peace Corps achieve its third goal. Sign up to participate today! Online registration is available on the Peace Corps Day website (www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/peacecorpsday). All respondents will receive a free presentation kit. The presentation kit includes souvenirs for your audience and materials to help you prepare for and promote the day.

Visit the Peace Corps website for more information. If you have any questions, contact the Peace Corps Day Coordinator (pcday@peacecorps.gov) or call 1-800-424-8580 (press 2, then ext. 1961).

Amigos Note: We are unfortunately, not planning anything special this year.

RPCV Group: Amigos de Nicaragua

3131 Village Blvd. #107

West Palm Beach, FL 33409

