



## HOW ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

by Charlene Meyer

It has been more than 20 years since my first trip to Nicaragua. I can still remember that first trip like it was yesterday. The fear of the unknown, the heat, the bugs, not knowing the language, the poverty that I had heard so much about were all thoughts swirling around in my mind. I wondered why in the world I was getting on that plane. After all, there were far more qualified people to help than me. I don't know if hearing all the stories from Al after his first trip, or if I just didn't want to admit defeat before even trying, but for some reason I found myself on the plane heading to an unknown country. It was about to change my life forever.

### SHOULD I LISTEN?

My first images after getting off the plane were raw sewage running down the streets, homes made of an assortment of cardboard, tin, and pieces of rotten wood, and scores of listless children with runny noses and coughs that were deafening.

My first thought as I looked around was "when does the next plane leave for Cincinnati?" Hopelessness and despair flowed through my very being. My heart had been broken. Should I listen to what God was whispering or should I listen to logic?

My story today is one of hope and the belief that one person really can make a difference. We have witnessed a few such people in this country we have grown to love, women and men who give selflessly of themselves and their meager treasures to help others. You will read about two such women in this issue. You will also see some of the children whose lives were



saved because of these extraordinary folks.

We first met Marlena walking the steep hills in Matagalpa, a city nestled in the mountainous northern region of Nicaragua. Although the city with a population of over 100,000 is bustling in the coffee picking season, there are few employment opportunities, especially for families with children with special needs. Marlena has first-hand knowledge about special needs. This is her story, a story of how one person changed a city.

### JOIN HANDS

Marlene Hernández Argeñal is 56 years old. She and her husband, Adrián Gonzales, have two daughters, Adriàna and Nancy. Adriàna is 34 years old and lives with her husband and two children in Waslala, a half-day's journey from Matagalpa. Nancy, the second child is 33 years old. Nancy was born different. She would be the reason

*Continued on back page*

Join Hands  
November 9  
for Nica Noche  
in Cincinnati  
See page 3



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- 100% of your gift goes directly to the project
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## OUR CHALLENGE:

*"We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history."*

—Sonia Johnson



You and I really can change the world. We can follow the example of Mother Teresa and Marlena, by sharing the time and talents we have been given with those who need a helping hand...one at a time.

In this issue you can read about the immeasurable commitment of teacher María Inés López on page 6, then join with The Tin Roof Foundation and our supporters for the major charity event of the year on November 9 at Nica Noche—see the next page for more information.

Be that person helping to make the world a better place. Please send in your gift today. On behalf of the children, Thank You!

## JOIN HANDS WITH TIN ROOF — NOVEMBER 9 FOR NICA NOCHE 2013

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS TODAY!



## A NICARAGUAN FAMILY INVITES YOU INTO THEIR HOME

If you don't know about Nica Noche, you will have the perfect opportunity to find out why so many people look forward to this exciting annual event.

This GREAT BIG NICARAGUAN FIESTA is fun for everyone who likes an entertaining party, enjoys great food, or just likes to shop.

On **November 9** the Sharonville Convention Center in Cincinnati will be transformed into a Nicaraguan home and you are invited in through the front door for the 7th annual Nica Noche.

You will experience the daily life of a Nicaraguan family and visit a marketplace to make really cool ethnic purchases, like Nicaraguan art, coffee, rum, and cigars.

Of course, the always exceptional Tin Roof silent auction will be filled with treasures for distinctive Christmas gifts and must-have treats for you and your family. Enticing gift baskets, restaurant gift certificates, unique handmade home decorations/artwork, alluring vacation trips

and so much more will fill the tables.

Music is always an important part of the evening and again this year a variety of live music will fill the room. Kalynn Delorenze, the musically gifted 12-year-old, whose rendition of *Somewhere Out There* touched our hearts at Nica Noche 2012, has agreed to return. Her enchanting voice is sure to inspire you.

Jim Poe, Poe Auctions, LLC, promises to keep things moving during the live auction to promote excitement and top dollar for our now famous traditional offerings plus some great surprises.

Special selected items will be unveiled over the next weeks on our website ([www.tinroof.org](http://www.tinroof.org)) and on Facebook...but a few mysteries might be kept secret until the night of the event. So be sure to keep following us to find out what will be awaiting you on Saturday, November 9.

Back by popular demand, Peter Schaller, Executive Director Rayo de Sol, will be our featured speaker. Peter, with the backdrop of a

realistic Nicaraguan home scene, will guide us through the trials and tribulations as well as the joys of life experienced by many of the families he encounters daily. His nearly 19 years working in the country with many desperately poor families provides him with a realistic perspective on life in Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Americas. Peter's passion for the people, especially the children, will touch your heart. His positive approach about what is happening now, and what is needed in the future, guarantees an inspiring and entertaining note to your evening.

Come join us and bring an amigo; tickets are \$75 per person, or bring ocho amigos (8) and fill a table for \$600. The celebration starts at 6 p.m. Purchase tickets at [www.tinroof.org](http://www.tinroof.org) or call (513) 474-4540.

Watch for regular updates on our website and Facebook page for more information on our exciting auction items. With your help we can help many children **Break Out of Poverty**.



# FACES FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS: STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

As we think back to those 20+ years ago, our thoughts no longer focus on the many challenges we faced that first day. The images we now carry in our minds are the faces of the scores of children who now have hope for a better future. The piercing eyes that once broke our hearts now dance with joy. It all started with one person. It may have been Marlena, María, or another individual who was willing to extend their hand to help.

We have been able to change so many young lives. Wilder received a kidney transplant. Nancy had eye surgery and is now able to see. Gabrielle, near death, is now playing like other children in his community. Fatima is healthy enough to attend school again. Hesler is jumping with normal legs since his surgery. Carlos continues to receive ongoing medical help. Meal centers and school kitchens were built while students are learning skills to become entrepreneurs within their own community. Scores of

**CAN YOU IMAGE BEING  
THE PERSON WHO  
CAN SAY THEY ARE  
CHANGING THE  
WORLD?  
YES, IT IS POSSIBLE!**

children are receiving scholarships and are now able to attend school. Water was made available to schools and communities, and school gardens are being introduced. Thousands of children are eating a hot, nutritious meal each day at school, and individuals with special needs now have a chance to have a productive life.

We each are a part of the Tin Roof Team; using the gifts we have been given to help children overcome overwhelming obstacles. It all started with one person, then another, then another. It feels really great to be a part of a winning team! However, more important than being a winning team are the words we hear over and over again, "You are an answer to prayer. Thank you for not forgetting us."

As you look at the many faces of the children who have been touched by helping hands, please remember how important one willing person is in the life of a child.





## THE IMMEASURABLE COMMITMENT OF MARÍA INÉS

Schools can be built with cinder blocks and roofs that don't leak. Schools can be built on muddy slopes with classrooms filled with colorful books and posters. But a building is not really a school unless there are compassionate and dedicated teachers to guide children in the initial stages of their educational journey.

Teachers provide us with stones to lay the foundation on which we will construct our lives. Even though teachers are often low paid and undervalued, they are extremely dedicated professionals, often supplementing or substituting the role of parents or other family members.

We can all think back on our early years and remember a couple of key teachers that helped to form the people we are today. One teacher can impact thousands of lives during her or his career, guiding students with love and understanding.

María Inés López has been a teacher for 29 years and has provided foundational stones to many generations of students. She decided she wanted to be a teacher when she was in the fourth grade. She had a teacher who inspired her to develop her natural gifts and to reach her potential. María Inés has worked in rural and urban schools in every corner of Matagalpa, sometimes having to walk for more than an hour to get to her classroom. She has worked for low pay, with extremely

limited teaching resources, though that has never been an obstacle.

María Inés lives with her husband and their three daughters, just a block down the road from the 15 de septiembre school in the city of Matagalpa, where she works. Her husband works in the municipal government and her oldest daughter, Joselyn, is already following in her mother's footsteps—she is a preschool teacher at the same school.

Because she lives in the neighborhood, María Inés is better able to understand the difficulties that her students face. She also has excellent relationships with the parents, which is vitally important to keeping children in school and guiding them towards success.

When you speak with her or see her interacting with the children, there is no doubt that she is driven by a profound love and respect for



children. She is just as concerned about each of her students as she is about her own children. She wants to see all of them grow and succeed. María Inés focuses all of her love and attention on the student that is in front of her, making each feel special and cared for.

María Inés was promoted to be the director of the school five years ago. Her years of classroom experience are helping guide her team of 15 teachers. Although she struggles every day to overcome the challenges of working with a population that is subject to the cycles of chronic poverty—where domestic violence, teen pregnancy, and child labor are as common as showers falling each afternoon during the rainy season—María Inés faces each day, every parent, and all the children with a smile.

María Inés is an exceptional example of how one person, driven by compassion, is transforming lives within her community, and can ultimately change the world. We are grateful to work with such a committed professional.



### THE TIN ROOF FOUNDATION WHO ARE WE?

The Tin Roof Foundation is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to "Bringing Hope to Kids" by providing educational opportunities, meal programs, healthcare to facilitate learning, and economic development assistance for their families, thereby enabling children to escape the spiral of poverty. There are no salaries. All administrative costs are funded by Tin Roof Foundation founders Al and Charlene Meyer and special designated gifts. The Tin Roof Foundation, Inc. is incorporated in the State of Ohio. It is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.

## GARDENS, GREENS AND GROWTH

In the kitchen at the 15 de septiembre school in Matagalpa, there are three mothers preparing the school lunch. One of them is leaning over an enormous pot, stirring enough rice to feed the 450 children who will soon be lining up with their plates. The second mother is stirring a 5-gallon bucket, with a wooden spoon as long as a broom.

The bucket is filled with a cereal mixture that is used to make a tasty drink. The third mother has an enormous knife in her hand and is busy cutting up...lettuce?

In addition to a basketful of lettuce, she is also slicing cucumbers and tomatoes. By the time she is done, she has a mountain of salad in front of her, just in time for the first group of students.

Not surprisingly, most of the students have a mound of salad on their plates as they head back to their classrooms. A lot of children would turn up their noses at the sight of so much green on their plates, but this is not just any salad.

### GARDEN GROWS MORE THAN JUST FOOD

All of the vegetables in their salad have come straight from the school garden, which has been lovingly planted and cared for by the students and teachers and their parents. Every day, a group of students spends their recess time weeding, watering, and fertilizing.

The garden grows lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and squash. Using nothing but rocks, old tires, bamboo, and lots of love, this garden is a testament to their creativity and patience.



Ariel Hernández, an 11-year-old fifth grader, is the student coordinator for the garden, and he smiles with pride as he explains why the garden is so important to the students.

"We love to work in the garden, because the fruits and vegetables that we harvest will help us to grow and stay strong and healthy!" he says with a smile. "We are also learning how to take care of plants and how to take care of the earth, so that it can keep producing nutritious food for us to eat."





# HOW ONE PERSON CAN CHANGE THE WORLD...

*Continued from front page*

Marlene would begin her quest to help other mothers, in addition to bringing change to the way her community views children with special needs.

In 1996 Marlene met Rebecca Trujillo. Together they walked the streets of Matagalpa talking with mothers in each neighborhood. They soon discovered many families within their community had children with special needs. They talked with mothers for more than three years, sharing their stories and changing myths of 'my cross to bear' or 'sins of the family.'

At an early age Marlene knew Nancy was different. She was unable to see unless the object was inches from her face and her reactions were much different than her older sister. Marlene was told Nancy was handicapped and would never have a normal, productive



life. Since that time Nancy has received corrective eye surgery and therapy and currently has a job working at the Familias Especiales yogurt facility.

"My story...in spite of having a child with special needs, don't quit trying to help. Be an example to your children. Never give up. We cannot change the way they are, but we

can make their lives more comfortable and, in many cases, more productive," says Marlene.

Today in Matagalpa there is a center that provides much-needed therapy and job training for individuals who are faced with the challenge of special needs. One person, Marlene Hernández Argeñal, HAS made a difference in our world.

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## JOIN HANDS WITH TIN ROOF TO HELP CHANGE A CHILD'S WORLD

Tin Roof is effective, efficient, and focused in its mission to help the "poorest of the poor."

Working with partners in Nicaragua we strengthen schools, provide daily meals, educational opportunities, and help with medical needs.

Donate to The Tin Roof Foundation today.

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Photo: Peter Schaller