

NEWS FROM THE ROOFTOP



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Spring 2011

MEMORIES FROM THE PAST, TODAY'S REALITY

by Charlene Meyer

We were driving in the mountainous Matagalpa region of Nicaragua on a narrow dirt road scattered with rocks the size of small boulders. On the left is a steep ravine covered with lush tropical plants, which then climbs upward to a beautiful blue sky sprinkled with an occasional fluffy white cloud. On the right is the continuation of the mountain we are climbing.

It was 10 years ago when we first climbed these rural mountains. Today we are searching for two children we met several years ago. Would we be able to locate them after so many years? We realize people in these mountains are forced to move to find work.

I am filled with emotions. What if we do find them? What would their life be like today? Would it be better today than when we first met? Or would we find their life no different than six years ago, or perhaps worse? Or will our search be in vain. I am anxious, but hopeful.



Hesler, above left, as a 4-year-old with severe club feet, and today Hesler, age 8, jumping with Al Meyer, with his feet and legs all well thanks to the generosity of Tin Roof donors.

HAPPINESS AND HARDSHIP

It is day 17 of our trip. My mind is filled with so many images of the past few days. We have traveled to several different locations throughout Nicaragua, from Cusmapa, near the Honduras border, to Bluefields on the Atlantic Coast. We have traveled by truck, four-wheel drive vehicles, cars, taxis, three-wheel mini car, small plane, and panga (small boat).

We have witnessed young people attending school, doctors treating patients in village clinics, and hundreds of children receiving hot, nutritious meals. We have also witnessed many hardships along these paths...hungry children, both children and adults with special medical needs, and hundreds of families still living in makeshift tents.

A SPECTACULAR RECOVERY

However, today my thoughts race back in time to when I first met Sonia and Hesler. Sonia, the oldest of four siblings was a shy, little malnourished girl living in a mud and bamboo home in the village of La Corona. Hesler was a little 4-year-old boy with severe club feet living in El Carmen. The images of these two children are as vivid today as they were those many years ago.

As our four-wheel drive vehicle comes to a stop at a primary school near El Carmen, Peter

Schaller, Fabretto director of operations, points to a boy in front of the classroom. He looks so healthy, much taller than I would have imagined, and his legs are as straight as an arrow. Can this be Hesler? As I look closely I can see the face I remember.

I am speechless. Hesler begins to run and jump, just as fast as his friends. He takes Al's hand and they jump from the school sidewalk to the ground below. What a glorious sight! With your help, another miracle has taken

Continued on back page

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WILDER'S JOURNEY

OVERCOMING THE ODDS WITH YOUR HELP

By Diane Douglass

This story begins in 1985 when a Nicaraguan boy named Wilder and his siblings lost their young mother. She suffered from a rare hereditary kidney disease that has since also claimed the life of his sister and a brother, all before the age of 30. The remaining children were taken in by Father Fabretto, a Silesian missionary, and became part of his family.

Today, Wilder Torrez serves as our liaison in Nicaragua. He is also employed as Operations Supervisor for La Familia Padre Fabretto overseeing distribution of all shipments of food and other donated supplies and warehouse management.

All Tin Roof travelers know him as a helpful interpreter and friend who is always available to ensure that everyone has an enjoyable experience in his country. His dedication to the mission of The Tin Roof Foundation and his love for the children being served inspires everyone—co-workers, donors, and especially the children and families to whom he has dedicated his life.

A MOTIVATED YOUNG MAN

Wilder became part of the Tin Roof family as a child when Charlene and Dudley Farrell began sponsoring a scholarship for him. This relationship continued through high school where his potential as a leader was recognized. He was awarded a scholarship from USAID to attend college in Modesto, California. After graduation Wilder returned to Nicaragua and to his position with the La Familia Padre Fabretto. He then married in December 2008.

Through this, Wilder suffered with the disease that stole his family. When his health began to deteriorate due to the kidney disease, we knew we needed to bring him to Cincinnati for a comprehensive evaluation. Dr. Judson Pollock, a urologist, donated his services. The result of this evaluation was a death sentence for Wilder. He would not likely live beyond his 30s; Wilder was already 29. His only hope was a kidney transplant from a live donor.

MANY, PULLING TOGETHER

Wilder returned to Nicaragua while his Tin Roof friends began learning about the transplant process.

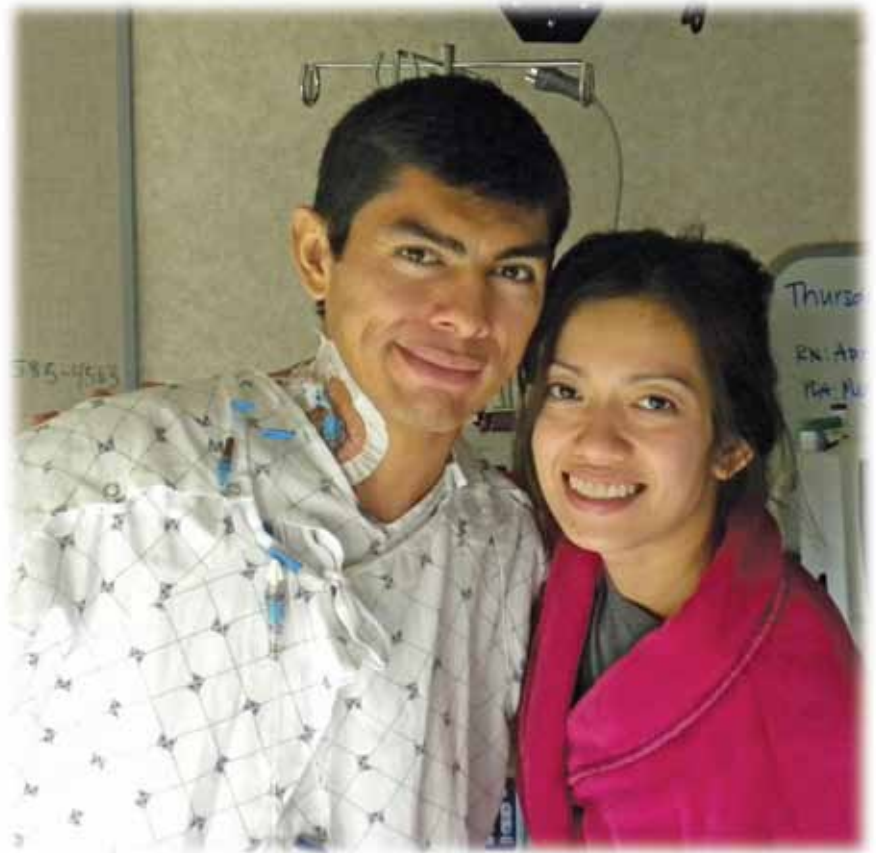
With Tin Roof board member Kathy Lisner leading the drive, pieces began to fall into place. Doctors were lined up, spearheaded by Dr. Pollock and Paula Franckhauser, Christ Hospital Transplant Coordinator. Three donors volunteered to be tested and against all odds, all three were matches. What was first thought to be a death sentence for Wilder was now getting closer and closer to an unbelievable opportunity for his long and healthy future.

On February 4, 2011, Wilder Torrez got a new kidney from Quan Truong, a *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter, who had traveled to Nicaragua with Tin Roof and fell in love with the country and our mission there. The bond she felt with this special young man gripped her heart as it has for so many of us. Quan truly gave part of herself, her healthy kidney, to save Wilder's life. "Quan was my angel," says Wilder. The surgical procedure went smoothly for both the donor and recipient and both are doing well in their recovery.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Wilder will need to take anti-rejection medication for the rest of his life. The projected cost of his medication is approximately \$2,500 per month. The logistics of assuring an uninterrupted supply are still being worked out both in the U.S. and in Nicaragua.

Designated donations have covered a portion of post-surgical costs and anti-rejection drugs while he is still in Cincinnati, but because the need will



continue for many years we hope to be able to fund an endowment large enough so that the proceeds will cover Wilder's medicines and other possible medical needs in perpetuity.

Wilder's life has been difficult due to conditions in his beloved Nicaragua and his health. He has overcome so much to achieve his goals. He strives to repay the kindness of those who have helped him along the way by working to improve living conditions for his country's poor families. God's hand in this story is obvious and He has held Wilder in His arms along the way. Medical attention will be an ongoing need but we are confident that the prayers of so many will carry him, in health, to whatever great things God has planned for Wilder Torrez.

If you would like to help, or need additional information, please contact Kathy Lisner at (513) 325-6103 or e-mail klisner@fuse.net.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF CHARLENE FARRELL

Charlene Farrell was the first Tin Roof Foundation supporter to serve on our Board of Trustees. Since the very beginning her wisdom, faith, and loving guidance helped direct our mission. We will all miss her unreserved kindness, but the good work done through her generous support and her commitment to the lives of children in Nicaragua will live on for generations.

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, health-care 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.

NEW SCHOOL BRINGS HOPE TO COMMUNITY OF DUMP WORKERS

by Charlene Meyer

North of the city of Esteli lies the La Cruz city dump. Following the dirt road off the Pan American Highway, makeshift homes dot both sides of the road. They are homes for families working the La Cruz dump.

We have reported in past issues of *News from the Rooftop* about La Chureca, the Managua city dump. La Cruz gives you that same desperate feeling, only on a smaller scale. Because of very limited job opportunities in the region, many families turn to making a living by picking through garbage to find sellable items.

As we think back on our first visit to La Chureca, Managua's dump, we think of the scores of children we witnessed sorting through smoldering mounds of garbage. Swollen stomachs, flies swarming around open sores, and filthy bare feet are images hard to forget.

Today more than 600 children in and around La Chureca are attending school,

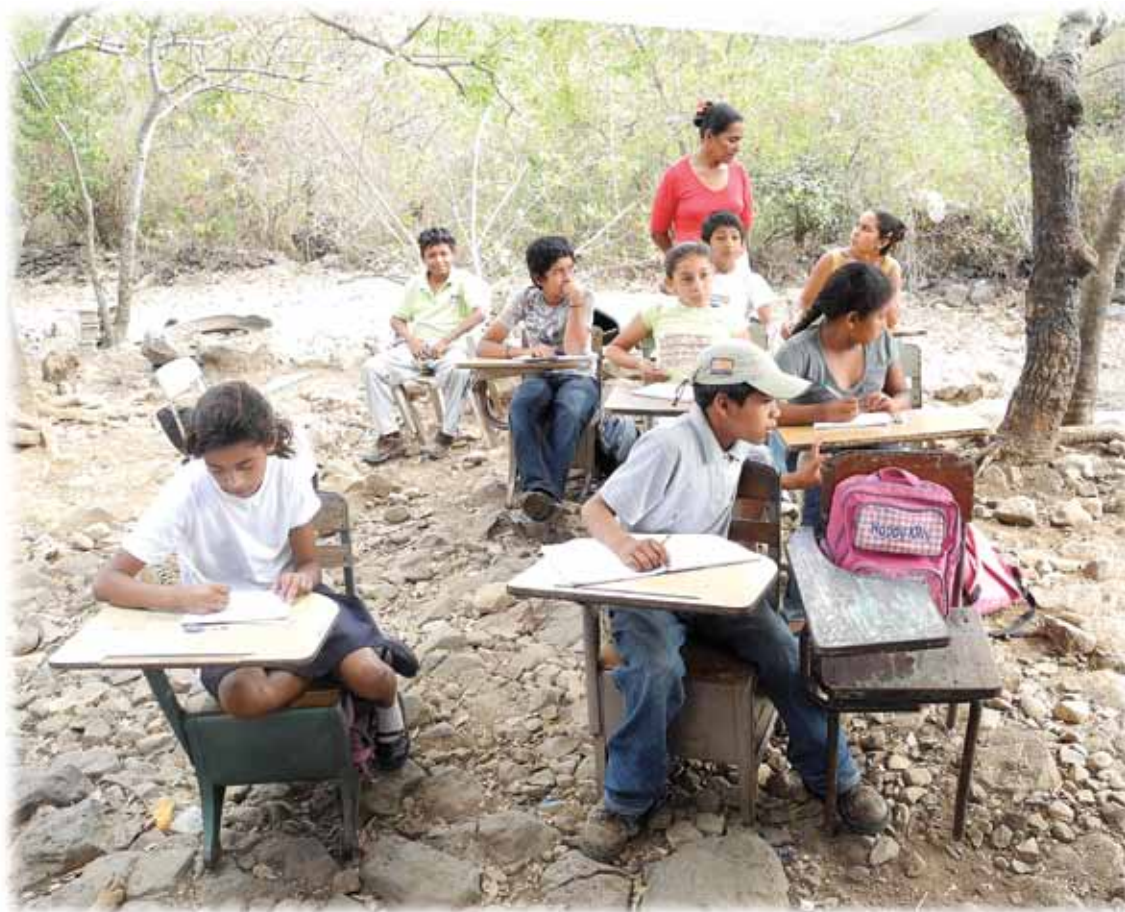
learning job skills, and eating a hot nutritious meal, thanks to Tin Roof Foundation and its partners. The children in La Chureca are now looking forward to a future outside the dump.

Because of the incredible success at the La Chureca dump, we believe that with your help we can provide the same opportunities to the children living in and around Esteli's La Cruz dump.



CHILDREN EXPOSED TO SQUALID CONDITIONS

Approximately 30 families are living in the La Cruz community and more than 100 children and adults are working in the dump. This year prior to the intervention of Fabretto (one of our partners) no public or private program had been implemented in La Cruz. There was only a small school building, built on borrowed land out of sheet metal and wire fencing. The 40 children who attended the school were forced to attend classes in severely inadequate conditions in the mornings and generally spent their



is working in partnership with the organization Build On (formerly Building with Books) and they broke ground on the new school in January 2011.

The community will provide all of the labor for the construction of the school building, which will strengthen their commitment to their children, to education, and to the future of La Cruz. The classrooms are scheduled to be completed by the end of April, before the rains begin.



Children study at the La Cruz school outside and inside. Workers prepare meals in the school's kitchen and water is pumped from a well. The new school building, began in January, should be complete in April.

afternoons after classes working in the dump.

Because of the poor environmental conditions, the majority of the children in La Cruz suffer from chronic malnutrition, which makes them more susceptible to common illnesses and diseases. The community's public health infrastructure and hygienic conditions are appalling, thus subjecting hundreds of children to unnecessary health risks.

Fabretto's years of experience in implementing programs has proven that health and nutrition problems have a direct impact on school attendance rates, academic performance, and retention rates.



These problems, coupled with the lack of decent infrastructure, limited educational supplies, and poorly trained teachers, add up to a deficient system that cannot guarantee decent educational opportunities for children and adolescents.

SCHOOL "BRINGS HOPE TO KIDS"

In October land was purchased in the community to build much needed classrooms. Fabretto

PLEASE HELP THE LA CRUZ CHILDREN

Today we have a new challenge—giving the children working in the dump in La Cruz the same opportunities as the children of La Chureca. The land and building have already been funded.

Still needed:

- the construction of a small equipped kitchen, which will make it possible to provide a hot nutritious meal each day;
- drilling a well, since there is no water source close to the school;
- adding fencing around the school building.

These small projects will cost a total of approximately \$25,000. Once again we have the opportunity to impact the lives of scores of children, giving them hope and a belief in a better future. Please consider helping the La Cruz children by sending your gift today.

SONIA, CHAPTER 2

by Peter Schaller, Fabretto
Director of Operations

It occurs to me, as we're driving through the mountains towards the school in La Corona, that it was 10 years ago that I made my first trip to San Ramón, under much different circumstances. In 2001, the bottom dropped out of the international coffee market, and small coffee producing countries like Nicaragua were suffering from the aftershock.

Families were coming down from the coffee plantations to beg for food on the highway because they had been months without pay, and the plantation owners had decided that it was cheaper to let the coffee fall to the ground than to pick it.

In 2001, there were thousands of desperate and hungry people, more than half of them children. In 2011, San Ramón is less desperate, though the lush mountains are still witness to the cycle of chronic poverty.

Today we are looking for Sonia, the little girl that shook my world when we found her and her siblings in a hut made of sticks and mud, about the size of the tool shed that we had in my backyard when I was growing up.

Our tool shed was made of aluminum and painted like a red barn. Sonia's house was the color of earth and washed away a little bit at a time with each drop of rain. There was a fire burning in the corner to boil some green bananas and the entire house was filled with a thick cloud of smoke.

JOURNEY TOWARD TODAY

Sonia and I became fast friends, and she accompanied me every time I visited her community, La Corona. It was like having a miniature shadow. She moved silently and spoke very little but always had the hint of a smile on her lips and a look of curiosity in her eyes.

Thanks to a Tin Roof-supported housing program, Sonia and her family moved to a new home in La Corona. She and her siblings were going to school and cooking outside on an energy-efficient stove. Life was getting better for Sonia and that's about when I parted ways with Sonia. But, I knew her story was only beginning.

Today, we are going to meet her at her high school. According to what we have been told, she is in



her third year of high school now, the equivalent to 9th grade in the Nicaraguan education system. When we arrive at her classroom, I spot her immediately. Her face has changed very little, though at 14 she is certainly on her way to becoming a young woman.

She is still very small, the results of chronic malnutrition, but her uniform is impeccably clean and pressed, and she wears a long beaded necklace. She has not lost her shyness, and glances back over her shoulder towards her classmates every few seconds. It occurs to me that she may feel embarrassed by this encounter, on her turf.

We talk for a few minutes in the hallway; she tells us about her siblings and her parents. All

of the children are still in school and her father has a steady job on a nearby coffee plantation. It is only chapter two in her story, but she is racing towards a fairy-tale ending.

I am so relieved to see that she is doing well, that her family has prioritized education. She tells us that she wants to be a teacher, and I imagine her in front of a classroom, smiling humbly at her students.

WHAT ABOUT TOMORROW?

Sonia's story is not over. As we get into the car, I wonder if she will graduate from high school, if she will fulfill her dream of becoming a teacher. A couple of hours earlier, a former colleague shared with me the story of another student from San Ramón, a young woman who managed to graduate from high school, but had a baby shortly after. She is now a single mother working as a maid in Managua, while her mother cares for her 1-year-old. I suspect she gets to see her baby about four days a month.

Sonia will face those same risks and temptations. It happens all too frequently in places like San

Ramón. As we pull away, I send her as much energy as I can through the window, across the mountains. I vow to visit in the near future, to do my part to support her in her dreams, to guide her towards success.

Nicaragua has many young girls with the same hopes, dreams, challenges, and temptations as Sonia. I'm convinced Sonia will make it, but wonder how many other young girls will make it out of the shadow of poverty that hovers over them. We can help. We can support The Tin Roof Foundation and know that, if we try, we can make a difference. Help change these precious young lives—send your donation to Tin Roof Foundation today.



We first met 7-year-old Sonia and her family in 2003 in La Corona. Through programs supported by The Tin Roof Foundation, we provided educational supplies and meal programs for her and her three siblings—all malnourished—and helped her family move into a better home.

NICA NOCHE FUNDRAISER HUGE SUCCESS

What an amazing evening! Nearly 300 guests (many first-timers) were greeted by an outstanding brass ensemble, scrumptious food, Latin music throughout the evening, entertainment from Shane Harden and the MCC Worship Arts Team, a spirited live auction conducted by Bill Bockstahler, and concluded with an inspirational message of hope from Kevin Marinacci, Executive Director, La Familia Padre Fabretto.

Thanks to Chairperson Kathy Lisner and her committee, donors, sponsors, and many volunteers' hard work, we more than qualified for the \$25,000 matching grant provided by a very generous Cincinnati family. We raised a total of \$108,310.

Nica Noche 2011 will take place November 5 beginning at 6:30 p.m. It's much more than a festive evening spent with good friends; it's a way you can help The Tin Roof Foundation bring hope to thousands of very poor children in Nicaragua. Save the date. It'll be another amazing evening!

This year's event would not have been possible without our very generous sponsors and donors:



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The Cincinnati Reds
Tri-Health Fitness & Health Pavilion
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SAVE THE DATE

2011 Nica Noche

Saturday Evening, November 5

Sharonville Convention Center – Cincinnati, Ohio



Far left, the MCC Worship Arts Team; left, auctioneer Bill Bockstahler with Carl Marinacci; bottom center, Don and Linda Teasdale; below, Kevin Marinacci guest speaker with Charlene Meyer.



WHY GIVE TO THE TIN ROOF FOUNDATION?

- 100% of your gift goes directly to the project
 - No salaries (all volunteers, all the time)
- No administrative costs paid from your donation

Note: We will never share your name or information with any other organization.

MEMORIES FROM THE PAST, TODAY'S REALITY

Continued from front page

place in the life of an impoverished family in rural Nicaragua. Hesler, now 8 years old, is not only running and jumping, he is attending school. Many prayers have been answered!

SONIA'S DREAM COMING TRUE

Our next stop is the village of La Corona. We see a new school ahead. The high school was built by the Japanese government. It is one of the most impressive high schools I have seen in rural Nicaragua. It is built on the same property as the primary school. There are hundreds of children in the classrooms.

We were told Sonia was attending class in the high school building on the second floor. As I climb the steps my mind is racing. Will she remember us? Will she still be as excited about school as when we met those many years ago? Will she be healthier and stronger than when she was younger? Within a few minutes I will have my answers.

There she is. I would have recognized her in a crowded room. Her face has changed very little. She is now 14 years old, but still very petite. She is still a bit shy. Peter begins the conversation.

She is in her third year of high school. She

helps her brothers and sister with their school work each day. She loves school and still wants to become a teacher. We know Sonia's dream from those many years ago of wearing a school uniform, attending school, and becoming a teacher will become a reality in the not-so-distant future.

THE POWER OF HOPE

I only wish you could have been there with us to witness firsthand the thrill of seeing how lives are being changed...one at a time. As these children grow up and have rewarding, successful lives, they will inspire their younger siblings and friends.

We need to keep bringing hope to these children because it *is* making a difference in their community, their country, and to future generations. Please help children like Sonia and Hesler realize their dreams. Send your donation to Tin Roof Foundation today.



THE CHILDREN NEED YOUR HELP!



Average family income in Nicaragua is less than \$800 a year. You can help bring hope to the children with your donation. Your monthly gift will help provide:



- Well-balanced meals
- Education/scholarships
- Medical care
- Special-needs assistance
- A better life; a better future

Please, let them know you care today.

**PLEASE MAIL YOUR
CONTRIBUTION TODAY**

The Tin Roof Foundation, Inc.

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