

NEWS FROM THE ROOFTOP



**THE TIN ROOF
FOUNDATION INC**

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Spring 2017

RELATIONSHIPS BRINGING US TOGETHER AND MAKING IT ALL POSSIBLE

by Charlene Meyer

As I was preparing for our trip to Nicaragua a couple of weeks ago, my thoughts kept returning to the images of so many wonderful friends we have made over these many years... Wilder, Kevin, Carlos, Peter, Gabrielle, Jessica, Rolondo, Annabelle, Becky and so many more. I then realized our mission is not only about scholarships, providing meals to students, and healthcare; it is also about building relationships. None of our programs or projects would even be possible if it weren't for the relationships we've built.

Through our programming, Tin Roof helps to equip people with the tools—educated minds and healthy bodies—to become self-sufficient and escape the cycle of crushing poverty that has plagued Nicaragua and Latin America for decades. The relationship between these two concepts, therefore, is that knowledge and self-determination can turn impoverished individuals and communities into self-sufficiency and positive productivity.

As another way of illustrating how relationships work for Tin Roof, let's take a look at two physical objects: a school uniform and a bag of roasted coffee. Attending school past the primary grades is a challenge for many rural Nicaraguans due to the logistical challenges of just getting to school and having to start contributing to your family financially from a young age. Even those families who understand the value of education and yearn for their kids to attend secondary school are often unable to send them because they can't afford the required school uniform. You see, the government funds public schools in Nicaragua but they require kids to wear specific uniforms they have to purchase—so it definitely isn't free.

Through the Tin Roof scholarship program, a secondary (high school) student is provided with a uniform, backpack filled with school supplies,

a pair of shoes, and a transportation stipend so he or she can get to school, in exchange for tutoring younger kids or helping in the school gardens. Once in school, the young person learns about the broader possibilities beyond his or her small village—and eventually may decide to seek vocational training; perhaps learning new techniques in cultivating organic coffee. After years of attending school—only made possible by that school uniform supplied by Tin Roof—this young man is now tending to his own small coffee farm



and supporting his family.

And, finally, Tin Roof is about nurturing the relationships between people. After all, our organization wouldn't even exist if it weren't for that strong tug-at-the-heart-strings that Al and I felt for the kids of Nicaragua back in those first trips in the early 1990s. Since then, we've been fostering all sorts of relationships between people, including:



- North Americans who visit Nicaragua for the first (and oftentimes, many subsequent) time and forge a special connection with an individual.

- We have many loving church families who are loyal supporters of our mission. Sometimes, a church feels called to fund a special project or provide something specific for a family or community. Working in conjunction with Tin Roof to assess and meet needs, church groups often forge deep, long-lasting bonds with those they've helped.

- When Tin Roof identifies a special, urgent need—such as with our young friend Carlos and his medical issues—we work closely with that child and family until we can seek resolution to the issue. Even after we have helped the child with their issue, we often continue to follow up with him or her for many years to come.

- And, we can't forget the relationships between Tin Roofers themselves! Whether it's assembling mailings, mailing thank you cards, IT support, helping with our annual Nica Noche fundraising event, or designing News From the Rooftop layout, and contributing articles for our newsletters (a special thanks there!), our all-volunteer team always steps up to help, together. The relationships that we've developed amongst ourselves solidify our mission in helping bring hope to kids.

Continued on page 8

BRINGING HOPE TO KIDS

MEETING MY SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT: PRICELESS!

by *Mary Butler, first-time traveler*

I had no idea last May when I signed up to sponsor a high school student through The Tin Roof Foundation that I would get to meet the student. On a recent trip with Tin Roof, I met Johana, the beautiful 5th-year student at Rayo de Sol School in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. I was beyond excited.

Johana and I spent two days together visiting the school, walking through her neighborhood, and making bookmarks with the younger students at the school. She is very good at working with the younger children and loves to teach them about health and nutrition. Meeting her mother who sews tote bags thru a Tin Roof project, and her brother, a student, was an added bonus.

After seeing a picture of Johana and me together, a friend wrote: "Does that beautiful gal know the VALUE of her gift?"

My answer: Yes, I hope so. It is a gift of opportunity and the value that can be placed on education cannot be given a dollar value. Hopefully she will become a leader in her community and continue in the program in order to gain practical experience and pass along the importance of an education to others.

Since my ability to speak Spanish and Johana's ability to speak English were limited, there were lots of smiles and hugs. This is the international language of two people, sponsor and student, that will forever be in our memories and bond us together.

Why not complete your application today and sponsor a student through the High School Scholarship Program at The Tin Roof Foundation? You never know when you may get to meet him or her!

For more information about Tin Roof's Scholarship Program, contact Peggy Monjar at email: pmonjar@cinci.rr.com.



THANKS TO AIMS INTERNATIONAL BOOKS FOR YOUR AMAZING GIFT

Thank you AIMS International Books for your amazing gift of 3,000+ Children's Spanish Books that are currently being distributed to scores of schools in rural Nicaragua. On behalf of the children and their communities, Thanks for your awesome gift!



RELATIONSHIPS CREATE POSSIBILITIES THROUGH TRUST, RESPECT, AND EMPATHY

by Peter Schaller, Executive Director,
Rayo de Sol

Martina is a quiet woman in her forties. I first met her when she participated in a parent's meeting when we began the high school scholarship program. Her son, José Luis, was just entering into his first year of high school and she was silently hopeful that he would receive a scholarship. At that point, she was making and selling tortillas, which barely generated enough income for the family's basic needs.

José Luis was indeed given a scholarship and I began to see Martina more frequently. She was always one of the first to arrive at the parent's meetings, though she rarely spoke. I could tell, without question, that she was very committed to her son's education. It was apparent by the expression on her face that she dreamed of a future in which José Luis would have the opportunities that she never had.

When we organized the first meeting for the women's sewing group, I was surprised to see Martina sitting in the back row. She sat quietly, as was customary, and looked a little nervous. From that moment on, our relationship with Martina began to grow. Although she felt uncertain about joining the sewing courses, she made a commitment and successfully completed six months of training. She also signed up to receive a sewing machine, which she would have to pay back over 24 months. Although she did not have a steady source of income, she knew that she would find a way to make payments.

FULFILLING A DREAM

Joining the sewing group gave Martina the self-confidence that she was lacking to make substantial change in her life. We began to get to know her better, her



fears, her dreams, and her desire to make a better life for her family. They don't own a home and have been renting substandard housing for years. We discovered that she really wanted to save enough money to purchase a small home for her family. She began to see that the sewing group could be a vehicle to take her to that destination.

Martina continues to sew and is one of the most responsible and punctual members of the group. The quality of her work has improved significantly and she has become much more creative with her designs. She is still quiet but opens up more, now that our relationship has grown and developed. José Luis is now in his third year of high school and doing well. He will graduate in two years and will hopefully have the opportunity to continue his education. Martina is a great example of how diligent work and perseverance can lead to substantial life changes.

Community development is all about relationships. We could have the best-designed projects and programs in the world, but if we don't work to build personal relationships with the people who will benefit from those programs, our impact is severely limited. Martina wants to make many changes in her life and in the life of her family, though she lacked the tools and resources to make them. Working together, we have been able to guide her in that process. However, it would not have been possible without the trust, respect and empathy that characterize our relationship.

Like Martina, there are thousands of other women in Matagalpa who also want to make great changes in their lives. Working together, building relationships, we can change the world.

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.

WALTON CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND TIN ROOF: MEANINGFUL LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP, BIG LONG-TERM IMPACT

by Kevin Russell, Pastor, Walton Christian Church, Walton, Kentucky

It was a recent hot afternoon. And it was a bumpy, back-and-forth ride up the side of a mountain to a modest village above Matagalpa, Nicaragua. The van was packed with folks so that we would have enough weight to make it up the slippery gravel road. When our group arrived, the village was there to meet us. And after introductions, we were assembled in a classroom at the local school, planning the next steps of relieving the issue of an under-abundance of water in the community.

The next hour or so was spent in conversation, asking for ideas from the crowd. Should a well be dug? Should rain reclamation tanks be installed? Should it be some hybrid combination of the two? Everyone had the opportunity to speak up. Everyone had the opportunity for their voice to be heard. From the ideas gathered, a plan is coming together. And sometime soon, our hope is for families in the community to be able to have a more reliable source of water (especially during the dry season).



ESTABLISHED TRACK RECORD

Our church has partnered with The Tin Roof Foundation for the better part of a decade through student sponsorships, food, education, and water endeavors. Tin Roof's collaborative model of ministry with an emphasis on developing long-term relationships is a major reason for our continued involvement. This approach of working with folks instead of over folks enables trust to develop in the relationship. And over time, the trust factor becomes huge as the partnership grows.

Many years ago, I traveled to Asia with a group that included a former missionary to Africa. And during the trip, he shared his opinion that many ministries from the U.S. come to an area or country and fail to develop relationships that enable long-term sustainability. Trust never develops, the partnership is one-sided, and as a result the ministries have low impact long-term.

That's why Walton Christian Church is so excited about our connection with Tin Roof, and through Tin Roof, our connection with folks in Nicaragua. With over 25 years of involvement in Nicaragua, Tin Roof has developed long-term sustainability. That's why it's amazing and absolutely wonderful to go on a trip with Al and Charlene Meyer to Nicaragua. To



experience first-hand the purpose and trust that has evolved over the years. And to experience first-hand the ongoing long-term impact The Tin Roof Foundation continues to effect.

Whether it's water in a remote village or schools in Matagalpa or a school kitchen in Estelí or a coffee coop in Las Sabanas or medi-



cal care in Somoto, Tin Roof has an established track record of collaborative ministry in Nicaragua. And we give thanks to God and to Tin Roof for the opportunity to be a part!

A NEW CONCEPT TO MISSIONS

LISTENING FIRST TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

by Pastor Susan Ward Diamond,
Senior Minister, Florence Christian Church
Florence, Kentucky

As a pastor, I've been on my share of mission trips. We've done plenty of bricks and mortar projects, VBS, landscaping...all producing lots of sweat and "getting dirty for Jesus!" But Tin Roof introduced me to a whole new concept to mission through building relationships and partnerships that are so crucial to the kind of lasting transformation communities need. For this newsletter, I'd like to lift up one of those partnerships called Familias Especiales.

Familias Especiales (Special Needs Families) is led by Sister Becky. And let me just say...I really want to grow up to be her! Because she's amazing.

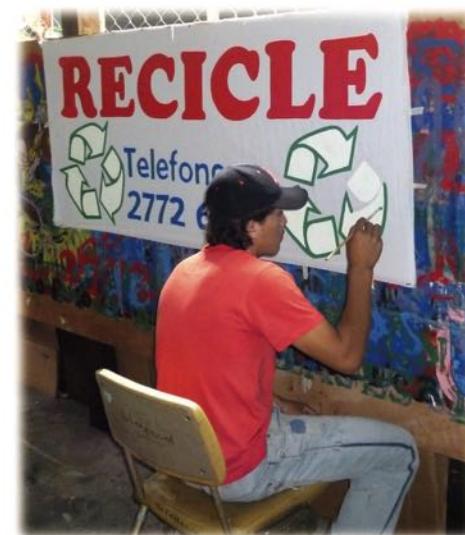
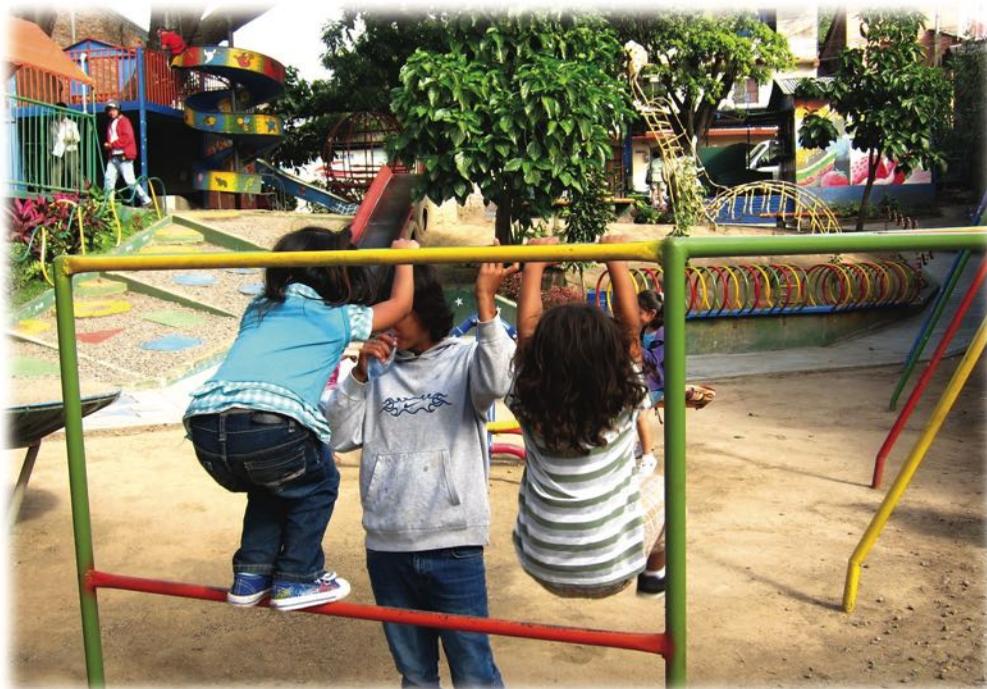


guess who's making that yogurt? Moms are! Yogurt con Amor. Yogurt with love! But there's MORE...

- Because the environment and stewardship of the earth is such a core value for the people as they try to live and thrive, Familias Especiales has a recycling center, where teens and young adults and several of their mothers learn to recycle, create art from trash, sew, garden, and sort out what can be reused from what must be thrown away—all in the name of God's love.

But there's MORE...

- They also have a restaurant, again



BUILDING TRUST

Twenty-one years ago, Sister Becky's bishop called her and said, "The people of Matagalpa have many children who are disabled and have no support. Go there and do something about it." So Sister Becky went. She went to Matagalpa...and the first thing she did was meet with a group of mothers of disabled children.

She wanted to know them. She wanted to learn about what their lives were like, to learn what their needs were, and, most importantly, to build trust and relationship with them. And guess how long she did that? She met with those moms for four years! She didn't just come in and tell them what they needed; she didn't just come in and say, "We're going to build a school for your children."

No—Sister Becky took the time needed to go deeper and learn what was really needed. Then, slowly and methodically, she began partnering with these families and with the larger community (with whom, by the way, she had also been

building relationships) to develop the kinds of resources that would address the deeper needs of these precious children and their families.

GOING DEEPER TO CHANGE LIVES

So what has Familias Especiales and The Tin Roof Foundation done over these last 21 years as a result of building those partnerships and relationships?

- They did see the need for education, so together they built a school for younger children. But there's MORE...

- They recognized that one of the health needs in their community was proper nutrition, so they created Yogurt con Amor, which employs mothers of the children and provides nutrition not only for their school, but for other schools and businesses throughout the country of Nicaragua. We got to visit the place where the yogurt is made. I sampled the tapioca yogurt, which was really yummy. And

which provides nutritious food and employs mothers and special needs young adults where they sell the products that they've made at the recycling center.

So think about this: when Sister Becky first received her commission from the bishop—to do something for the disabled children in Matagalpa—she could have just raised money and built a school for elementary-aged children, which certainly would have been a good thing to do. But instead, she went deeper. She listened to the people, she built relationships with them. As a result, Familias Especiales is changing not only the lives of special needs children and their families, but also their community through education, nutrition and environmental care.

Building relationships. Listening to the needs. Partnering in ways that make a lasting difference. That's what Sister Becky does. And that's what Tin Roof does! I give thanks to God for giving me the opportunity to be a new partner with this amazing ministry.

A TRIBUTE TO JONI LIPSEY

7/22/1957 — 2/16/2017

by Linda Teasdale, a fellow traveler

In 2011 Tin Roof had the pleasure to have Pastor Tom and Joni Lipsey travel with us to Nicaragua. While there Joni demonstrated her Jesus-In-Skin attitude:

- Her unconditional Love for the children
- Her Prayers:

For the coordinator at Familias Especiales (Yogurt Te Amo) had fertility problems. Shortly after we returned home we received news she was pregnant.

For Carlos to find answers to his bladder condition. Today Carlos is doing much better.

For Wilder, who was having problems following his kidney transplant. Six years later he is doing great.

- Her Servant Attitude, always with a captivating smile.

We will miss you, Joni.



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IN HONOR OF:

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Al & Charlene
Riley "Old Dog" Groh
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IN HONOR OF:

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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.

A "SOULMATE" IN MATAGALPA

SISTER BECKY REFLECTS ON TIN ROOF'S RELATIONSHIP

by Rebecca Trujillo

Tin Roof founders Al and Charlene Meyer recently received this letter from Sister Becky, who runs Familias Especiales in Matagalpa, which provides therapy services to handicap children as well as a yogurt program for at-risk pregnant women and children. Al and Charlene have established a close relationship with Sr. Becky and her program over the many years that Tin Roof has provided support. Here, Sr. Becky shares her thoughts about what that relationship means to her.

Al and Charlene,

This is my Christmas letter to my favorite couple. You are almost like soulmates to me, because it is our faith that we share and our love for children and for those most in need. Now I can tell you that there aren't very many people who share those values in the way that we have over the years... The name Tin Roof means hope to me and a great sense of knowing there are people as generous and caring as the two of you...

You two are one of the first groups to visit me here in Nicaragua, in Matagalpa. I remember thinking these people hardly know me and here they are like long lost friends. What a beautiful experience it was for me when you told me you were at my meeting with Saint Peters parish in Cincinnati, and decided to visit me in this country that I was just getting to know. You were like an oasis for me.

I find it really important that we don't give just anything to people in need. A sister called me from the cloistered group of sisters in Dario and she asked for a wheelchair. She said, "What we have is really worn and doesn't really serve for us."

I said, "Okay, why don't you send it to us to repair?"

She interrupted me saying, "Well, we want a new one and we want to give this to a poor old woman, who needs a wheelchair."

I said, "Well, sister, you know we want to give you a new chair but we want to give a new chair to this woman also, because that is the reason we exist. We can't give her an old broken chair. There are plenty so we can give you both new wheelchairs. Now, help me to get the measurements and needs of this woman first and then we can work out how we will send you a chair for general use."



She asked, "But wouldn't it be easier to just give her the chair that we have and then we can pick up the new one?" She did not understand that our priority was the older woman in need. Oh well—Tin Roof would have understood.

I was doing a presentation called Our Mobility Journey about our wheelchair workshop and there in the first file of photos was Al talking to the kids in the distribution workshop. Al's gift is to make everyone feel like they are his best friend and many of our young people feel that way.

Xooche asked, "When is Tin Roof coming back?—because I have been praying for Al." Fatima asked, "When is Techo de Zinc (Tin Roof) coming back because I have been praying for them. I want them to know how my new life is going." It's that Techo de Zinc spirit of dignity

which people remember...

In my congregation we have a tradition for the last three days of the year and we always try to take them as days of reflection no matter what else is happening around us. December 29th is a day of gratitude to God for all that has happened during this year. And first on my list is Al and Charlene. December 30th is a day for forgiveness and December 31st is a day for resolution. So, as I go into these last three days of 2016, I wanted to write this Christmas letter to two friends who have helped many children have a tin roof over their heads and have treated each person with great dignity and respect.

Peace,
Sister Rebecca

RELATIONSHIPS

Continued from page 1

There you have it—the articles and perspectives in this issue have provided a glimpse into how Tin Roof does relationships. Recalling the definition of relationship shared in this issue’s cover story, we are all truly in a state of interconnectedness. The kids of Nicaragua not only need us to help equip them with the tools for future success; we also need them to remind us to find joy in the little things, to hold fast to hope even when times get tough. Indeed, we are grateful for each relationship we have.



Please join us in continuing to nurture these important relationships. Your tax-deductible gift enables Tin Roof to continue to foster and support the relationships that create the link between current circumstances and hope for a better tomorrow for thousands of kids and young people in need. On behalf of the kids, THANK YOU!

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