More than ever, we’re grateful for you, the community of Pathway to Progress (P2P) supporters, who have funded, volunteered, celebrated and advocated for Pathway to Progress Nicaragua through the years. At a time when everything feels uncertain for all of us, we find comfort and encouragement knowing that you are with us.

While Covid-19 continues to surge through the country of Nicaragua, our mission has not been placed on pause. Yes, we have had to adjust and change the way we do things, but thanks to your continued support, our program has remained strong.

Recently I heard someone say, “When one door closes, another one opens…. the trick is not to stare at the closed door, but step through the newly opened one.” That is what we are trying to
do now as we continue to educate children without being able to see them and do our best to help families to protect themselves from becoming sick and from going hungry.

NEW PROGRAM INITIATIVES... YOUR GENEROSITY OF TIME AND GIVING HAS MADE THESE THINGS POSSIBLE

FAMILY SUPPORT AND HEALTH EDUCATION

WE ARE NOW BUYING FOOD for 24 families in great need and this number is sure to increase. We are purchasing the staples of the Nicaraguan diet which include cooking oil, rice, beans, eggs, and yes, sugar. We are supplying personal hygiene products - soap, toothpaste and toilet paper – and we are also giving each family a HOUSEHOLD DISINFECTANT, made from bleach and water, which we’re making at the Center and bottling in re-cycled coke bottles.

THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES NEEDING FOOD BASKETS IS GROWING.

Pictured above is the Lopez family, a family of 5. All three children are in the program.

LETTER-WRITING INITIATIVE We’ve had a very positive response to this! We thank each and every one of you who has sent letters of encouragement to the kids! At the beginning of the campaign, the letters were all printed at our Center and hand-delivered to the kids but now, we are sending them via WhatsApp. The kids love hearing from you and it’s never too late if anyone still wants to write to a child. Covid-19 is still spreading in Nicaragua and the kids and their parents love the care and concern they receive from you.

HANDWASHING AND OTHER PROTECTIVE PRACTICES are being reinforced with the kids and their families through the letter campaign and by our staff through social media messaging on the Ministerios Mano a Mano Facebook page and through WhatsApp. We have printed Covid-19 colouring pages for the younger kids and flyers in Spanish from WHO on Helping Children Cope during the Covid-19 outbreak.

As both school classes and our tutoring program are now online, one of our biggest challenges is helping parents navigate the platforms that their children’s classes are on, using old outdated cell phones or antiquated laptops. Our staff have been working very hard with our families to try and iron out all the
wrinkles. **WE HAVE LENT OUT ALMOST ALL OF THE COMPUTERS AT OUR CHILDREN’S CENTER, 6 IN ALL**, to families in the most need. Additionally, we are paying for internet time and some computer repairs. It's a far from perfect situation but everyone is pressing ahead!

**SOCIAL DISTANCING IS TRICKY FOR NICARAGUANS** There is nothing easy about life in Nicaragua if you are poor. Poverty does not allow you much space of your own – multiple generations under one roof and shared beds in crowded rooms are common - and in Nicaraguan culture it’s almost impossible to tell your neighbours who live just steps away, not to come into your home. People need to work to eat. There is no social safety net. On top of the economic turndown of 2018, the virus has cut deeper into the economy. Parents have no option but to work in whatever way they can to feed their families. Crowded markets are the cheapest places to buy food and crowded buses are the only transportation option for most people. **Wearing masks is key and the good news is people are doing it.**

**MASK-MAKING PROJECT** At the beginning of the year, we launched an ambitious sewing project with 7 brand new sewing machines that were donated to us in January. We held a sewing class with some of the girls in the program before the 2020 school year began and then invited other women in the community to come and learn. The lead teacher on this project, one of our moms, Darling Sandoval, held the classes in her home until the pandemic forced us to shut everything down. Darling then went to work with several women on our staff to make masks for the kids and their families. They made and distributed **over 250 cloth masks** until that project too, had to stop.

**THE CURRENT SITUATION...**

**THE CHILDREN’S CENTER**

The children’s Center is closed for all children’s programming until further notice. In the early days of the pandemic, the center remained open to staff, 3 days a week, and some of the children and their parents were still coming to sit quietly and do homework, use the whiteboards and the internet. Once the virus began making serious inroads into the community, that all stopped and now we’re only open on Wednesdays for families to enter one at a time to pick up food baskets.
STUDENT TUTORING... ADAPTING TO THE NEW REALITY

Our lead teacher, Juan Avendano, is coordinating all online tutoring with our students. We have two teachers, in addition to Juan, who are working hard to supplement the classes the kids are receiving online from school. They are doing a GREAT job. In fact, one parent commented recently, “The tutoring my children are getting from P2P is better than the instruction they are getting from the school.” Juan is also making video lessons on math and physics for the different grade levels. He created his own YouTube channel two years ago for extra help and review and is now upping the content to meet the current needs of the kids.

Luvy Martinez, our reading coach, is also making videos that are being shared with the kids. She is doing oral story-telling as well as reading aloud with the elementary school kids.

DUOLINGO... Thankfully the virtual classrooms for each high school grade level have been in place for over a year now. I originally set them up for extra student practice with English in addition to my regular class time with the kids and now, it’s really all they have. I did some online tutoring with some of them last month in preparation for their English exam so I know firsthand how challenging it can be!

FACILITATOR FAMILY VISITS

All weekly family visits are now being done by phone and have become a very important source of social and psychological support for our kids and their parents. Group messaging via WhatsApp with news and tips on how to protect themselves and their families are also being posted regularly. Our facilitators, Conny, Dalieska and Darling, in Managua, and Anielka in Leon, have teamed up with Juan to do some fun activities online with the kids too – from Physical Fitness Day to a Talent Show to Take-a-picture-of-your-pet-and-share-it Day – all thoroughly enjoyed by the kids and their parents! Here is 14 yr old Alejandro with his sisters and their beloved puppy, bunny and birds.
LOTs of good things

Happened this year before coronavirus...

- We hosted two groups in January – The First since March 2018!

1. **Our Medical Team** was back this year, providing great care for all the kids in the program and their families. We hosted 9 physicians, 2 retired nurses, a lab tech, a dental hygienist from the U.S. and a dentist from Port Williams, Nova Scotia, Dr. Andy Nette and his wife, Linda.

   Our medical team has been coming every year since 2011, with the exception of 2019, due to the political uprising of 2018. They said this year was the best one yet!

   ABOVE: Sunday visit to a friend’s coffee farm with the group... Dr. Andy Nette in white t-shirt 😊

   LEFT: At the clinic, Linda did vision tests on all the kids and worked with me on health ed activities. 😊

2. The second group was a Small group of 8 from Louisville KY including 2 child sponsors and several Hand in Hand staff members. One member of the group was an accomplished pianist and she headed up a very special mini music camp for the Grades 5 and 6 kids, complete with a little concert for the parents and other students on the last day!
• **TRIP OF A LIFETIME** Hellen Ramirez has been a student with us since she was 6 yrs. old, all the way through grade school and high school. Now a 3rd year law student in Managua, she boarded an airplane for the first time in her life and flew to Canada! She was invited by her former sponsors to spend 3 weeks with them at their home in snowy Alberta. She arrived back on Feb 24, just weeks before the virus was declared a pandemic.

• **ENGLISH 4 LIFE** Kevin Jose and Pedro Pablo, who have also been with us since they were 6 years old, both landed jobs at call centers! These jobs are considered very good jobs in Nicaragua. They pay relatively well and the working environment is clean, safe and respectable. This was made possible by two Canadian donors who sponsored their enrollment in a live-in English 4 Life immersion program in Managua. They completed the 8-month course in November. Kevin was hired in January and Pedro Pablo in April. In fact, the ‘campaign’ Pedro Pablo is working on is HBC (Hudson Bay Canada)!

**ON A PERSONAL NOTE...**

We left Nicaragua on March 22, 2020 just 2 weeks ahead of the shut-down of all international flights in and out of the country. This is still the case now, 4 months later. News was scarce about the existence of coronavirus in the country at that time but rumours of hospitalizations and deaths were flying. The schools where our students go, Instituto Loyola in Managua and Colegio Asuncion in Leon, closed their doors in March and remain closed to this day, with classes being given online.

Several Pathway children, as well as people in their immediate families have had the virus, and there is one person on our staff who currently has it. I would say that **most of the families we work with, if not all, know someone that has been sick or has died from Covid-19**, be it a family member, neighbour or co-worker.

Through this unprecedented health crisis, our program has remained amazingly strong. Our children continue to receive the best education we can provide because of your support. Top quality education has, and always will be, our primary focus. Our continued excellence now depends on additional support for food for families, tech support to enable successful access to online education that has become the norm for now, and continued full salaries for our staff of eleven who are working hard and whose families depend on them.

We are continuing to work remotely from here. We hold weekly meetings via Zoom with our staff in Nicaragua. They participate from home or from an internet server. These meetings have become very important for maintaining our focus and keeping all of our spirits up!
Thank you everyone. Let’s keep each other in our prayers. We will get through this.

Barbara & Ed