

Muchas Gracias for more than twenty years

Ted Copland

It started by accident in 1984 when I was working in Central American and met Miriam Lazo in the office of the Episcopal Church in Managua, Nicaragua. She was in charge of non-governmental relief work for the country, and for the next six years I volunteered with the Ecumenical Refugee Council to bring desperately needed medicines to hospitals and centers for orphaned or street children.

By 1988 I had helped the Diocese of Chicago form a companion relationship with the Diocese of Nicaragua and a priest from Chicago, Grant Gallup, moved to Managua. 1990 brought a new government and the end of support for those centers, so Miriam and I and Grant incorporated Casa Ave Maria to continue the work. They both lived and worked in Nicaragua, and I was the USA fund raiser, with the help of many of you. At one point we ran the largest independent agency for children in Nicaragua, very difficult work during times of war and natural disaster and grinding poverty. Teams from Chicago and Sarasota became regular visitors and volunteers included teachers, medical workers, and a youth mission trip to build houses.

Donations came from all over the world, through Saint Boniface, and then on to Managua. I never did add it all up, but it was hundreds of thousands of dollars. Stable grants from large donors were hard to come by until we finally obtained a piece of land in Masaya, bought with gifts from St. Boniface, to build a permanent training school. Then donors like the Duchy of Luxembourg, Canadian Christian Children's Fund, a Swiss Roman Catholic group, and the government of Japan allowed the whole project to go forward with buildings, food and training programs, staff, and a hostel for street kids. After more than twenty years I resigned from the board, now completely in the hands of Nicaraguans. Just before Christmas I sent the last gift in the CAM fund at St. Boniface: \$1,000, and recently received this communication from Miriam.



In another message I will send the you photos of the project supported by the Saint Boniface gift of \$1,000 to Casa Ave Maria. All of the electrical system was fixed and the learning centers and classrooms in which the children receive instruction changed to high voltage cables including the computer laboratory, which was completely illuminated and now there is security in the system of internal lighting system of the center. Your gift has special significance for the work which is in development in the center. Thank you very much Ted, for your solidarity with the work we have realized since the beginning of Casa Ave Maria and for your spiritual presence which we count on. Greetings to all the friends who made possible this effort.