



Bridges to Community



ANNUAL REPORT 2005

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

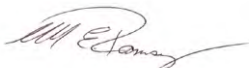
According to Webster's Dictionary a bridge is "a structure spanning a river or a valley in order to afford passage." Each of you that have traveled with us have been "afforded passage" to a new understanding of the world around you and passage to a new understanding of yourself. We have all benefited from meeting the joyful Nicaraguan people that have graciously allowed us a glimpse into their community of hope.

The Nicaraguans with whom we work have been "afforded passage" as well to a new house, a child in school, a family vegetable garden planted, among numerous other projects which have often changed the course of their lives. They also have gained a new understanding of the world around them and the generosity of the people of North America.

2005 was indeed a great year for Bridges to Community. We have much for which to be thankful. The organization made a smooth and successful leadership transition. The 100th house was built in Ticuantepe and the 200th house in Masaya. Those were special milestones for our friends in Nicaragua and the North Americans who helped with the work.

Our annual report this year tells the stories of individuals and families who have been impacted by our work together. These are but examples of hundreds of people who have made the passage across the bridge.

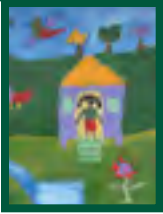
We are grateful if you have been through the unique and special experience that a Bridges trip offers and we hope you will join us if you have not. We are asking for your help to keep the momentum going. We sent 577 people to Nicaragua in 2005 and we will be sending 700 people in 2006. But it is not enough. There is so much more work to be done, so many more lives to be touched, rivers to be crossed, homes to be built and lives to be changed for the better. Please, won't you join us as the journey continues across the bridge?



Chuck Ramsey
Chairman



Don Hammond
Executive Director



YARDSTICKS IN '05

- 577 North Americans with greater global awareness
- 200th House Built in Masaya
- 100th House Built in Ticuantepe
- Twenty families with vegetable gardens in Siuna
- Three new trucks for our sites
- Almost 100 houses built in 2005
- 52 students receiving scholarships to continue their education



Bridges to Community

IMPACT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE “BRIDGE”

NORTH AMERICA

Steve Smith was searching. He was searching for a way to connect with his teenage son and although he didn't realize it at the time, he was searching to reconnect with himself as well. His son Ryan was 16 then and Steve wanted to spend some quality time with him before he went off to college.

It was then that the brochure arrived which read, “Join us on a powerful journey to build houses in Nicaragua.” Steve thought this might be just the opportunity for which he was looking. This type of trip might bring them closer together. So he packed his bags and headed south to scout out the trip and see what it was all about before bringing Ryan with him. It was a third world country after all and he didn't know what to expect.

What he found that March of 2004 was a community of people filled with warmth and grace. As he worked side by side building a house with the family that was currently living in a dilapidated shack, he began to see how rewarding an experience this would certainly be for his son. And as the days passed, he began to receive rewards also by witnessing and connecting with the grateful homeowners, the curious and hard-working masons, his fellow trip participants and the humble grandmother who donated the land to her grandson so that he could have a home for his family.

Upon his return from that trip, Steve immediately booked his trip with Ryan. And that trip worked its magic. Besides being a wonderful experience for father and son, the trip had a significant impact on Ryan.



Ryan, as a then 17 year-old high school student, was already very active in helping the less fortunate. His trip to Nicaragua solidified his desire to help others and led him to Clark University where he is now majoring in International Development with a concentration in Latin America. Ryan



also participated in his second Bridges trip to Nicaragua with Clark earlier this year.

With one son off to college, Steve decided to share the Bridges experience with his 15 year-old son Connor in 2005. Upon their arrival, Connor jumped into the house building with enthusiasm; as he did playing with the Nicaraguan children and devouring the Nicaraguan food. Connor came away from his experience not only with the joy in helping others, but also with a better understanding of a new culture and the struggles that many people in this world face each day. Steve smiled when, immediately upon arriving home, Connor asked him when their next trip to Nicaragua would be.

Perhaps the best thing that occurred as a result of these two trips was the common bond that developed between Ryan and Connor from their mutual experience. Steve does have two more children, Tyler and Jenny, who are sure to follow in their brothers' footsteps and join their dad on the powerful journey to Nicaragua. How great to see how this one experience has reaped so many rewards on one caring father and continues to spread to the rest of his family. All of them seem to have found (or will certainly find in the near future) something of themselves in Nicaragua.

NICARAGUA

MASAYA

There is a community just down the road from the village of Las Conchitas called Los Lopez. It was three years ago when Bridges first started building houses there. Ten houses were built then, but the community was not well organized at the time. House payments were rarely made and there was not a strong sense of leadership. Recently, the community asked Bridges to return to Los Lopez to build more houses. We challenged them to form a strong community with strong leadership.

It is in Los Lopez that Luisa Jarquin lives with her three children, Jeffrey, Ricky and Isamara. While she is the caretaker of her family, she has also taken on the role of caretaker of the community. She helped them organize and encouraged Bridges to return to Los Lopez and build the next twelve houses. She currently serves as a point person providing guidance, information and support to the staff.

On a recent Bridges trip, Luisa was chosen to speak for the community at the dedication of a new house saying, "My name is Luisa Jarquin and I have been chosen by the committee to welcome you. I welcome you in the name of the community of Los Lopez. It is an honor to meet you and to shake your hands... You are an example of love and unity and brotherhood and friendship, leaving your country and the comfort of your homes and families to come share with us." Luisa is testament to the renewed commitment of the community.

Now when a group comes from North America to Los Lopez on any given day there are fifteen members of the community on the work site. They come to work and to share in the experience. They come to keep the movement going forward. They come to invest in their future.

Today, the villagers of Los Lopez are not only paying their house payments on time, they are paying them in advance. We have seen this community come full circle and become an active and engaged partner in its future.

SIUNA

The Manzanares family is one of 90 families that live in the rural agricultural community of Santa Rosa. The family includes six children aged thirteen to two years old and is led by Santos and Lucrecia. As agricultural producers, the life of this family is defined by hard work, and at times, struggle.

In 2005 the Manzanares family received a loan through Bridges to Community's sustainable community development program: De Alla Para Aca (DAPA) to buy one *manzana* (1.72 acres) of land to plant. They used the land to cultivate cocoa and vegetables. These crops will generate alternative household income as well as increase family nutrition.

Every time a brigade of volunteers meets Santos they cannot help but comment on the honest pride that beams from his eyes when teaching about his crops and the excitement navigating his children's movements when pointing out the cocoa trees and cabbage seedlings they helped plant.

The difference the land will mean to the family won't be fully felt until 2008 when the cocoa trees begin to produce fruit, allowing the family to sell their organic beans at a fair buying price to a grower's cooperative in the town of Waslala. The vegetables will be used to supplement the family's staple rice, bean, corn, and yucca diet with more vitamins. Produce remaining after the family's consumption needs will be sold in the town of Siuna to further augment income.



The benefits to the Manzanares family from working with Bridges extend beyond the farm to the education of their children. Three of their school-aged children attend

a primary school with teachers who are receiving educational training through the assistance of Bridges' scholarships. The eldest daughter in the family receives a high school scholarship to study in Siuna, as Santa Rosa does not offer education beyond sixth grade. Santos and Lucrecia's eleven-year-old daughter participates in an ecological brigade. With other youth she is becoming a leader in Santa Rosa through planting trees and teaching community members about the importance of reforestation and environmental stewardship.

In 2004, to reduce the risk of prevalent water-borne illnesses, the Manzanares received a water filtration system through a collaborative project between a Bridges intern and Save the Children Canada. Now Santos is the promoter of the Water and Sanitation Component of DAPA and trains other community members about water source protection, proper water treatment and hygienic waste strategies.



For the Manzanera family, owning land and being a part of the DAPA program signifies hope: hope generated through seeing their own potential to create more options for their family's future. Likewise, throughout Santa Rosa the thirty families participating in the DAPA program are learning new strategies to work towards sustainable economic and social development based on community-articulated needs.

TICUANTEPE

Amparro del Carmen Ortiz Mercado is a 27 year old single mother of five. In July of 2005, the life of Amparro and her family changed for the better. It was then that Bridges, the St. Anne's Belfield School in Charlottesville, Virginia and the US Naval Academy, joined as partners with Amparro, her family, friends and neighbors in the community of La Borgona to build her first safe and stable house. Amparro's house was one of forty-five houses that Bridges built in partnership with families, communities and volunteers in the municipality of Ticuantepe in the year 2005.

Today, Amparro no longer lives in fear that the community's gray-water sewage canal that flowed adjacent to her scrap-metal, dirt-floor home will over-flow into her living space, potentially poisoning her children. With a new house, Amparro was further motivated to continue to improve the quality of life for her children and she opened a fruit-stand in the front of her property. With the profits, she has not only managed to make all of her housing payments, she

has also purchased mosquito nets and screens for her windows.

Amparro's efforts didn't end there. Recognizing that safe and stable housing is but one of many dire needs within her community, Amparro has involved herself in La Borgona's "community development committee." Under local, elected leadership, the committee works hand-in-hand with Bridges, the municipal government, the local Ministry of Health, and other NGO's to determine and execute projects in education, public health, safety, and economic-growth, along with Bridges' on-going housing projects.

And with the real possibility of more projects comes the need for more volunteers. 2005 brought more than twenty groups and over 350 volunteers to Ticuantepe... all of whom can testify to the struggle, hard-work and hopeful convictions, like that of Amparro del Carmen Ortiz Mercado, that inspire us to continue working towards a better quality of life for all...in Ticuantepe... Nicaragua...and the whole world over.



LOOKING AHEAD - GOALS FOR '06

We have accomplished so much in the last thirteen years, but there is still more to be done. With your help we can:

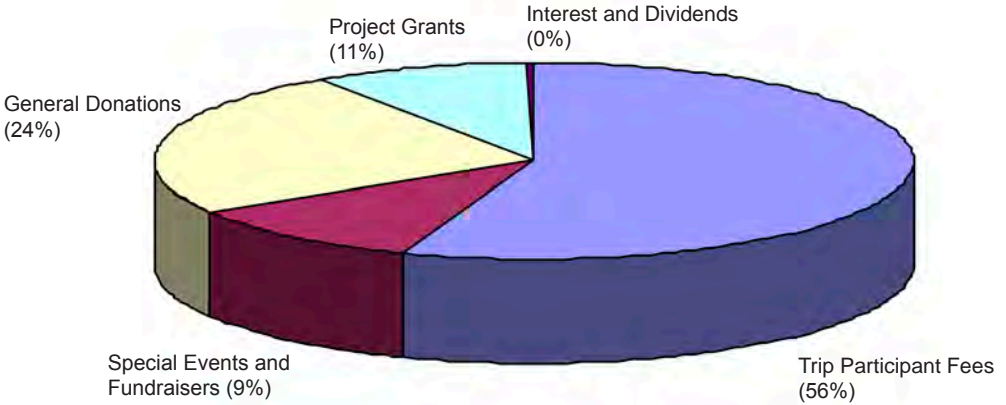
- Enlighten almost 700 trip participants
- Open a new site to accommodate more groups
- Build 100 more houses
- Send 52 children to school to continue their education through scholarships
- Provide loans for citrus trees to enhance nutrition, commercialization and reforestation
- Work with communities to cultivate cinnamon, aromatic pepper, garlic and coconuts
- Distribute revolving loans of chickens and pigs
- Offer adult education classes in conjunction with Bridges' scholarship students



FINANCIAL REPORT

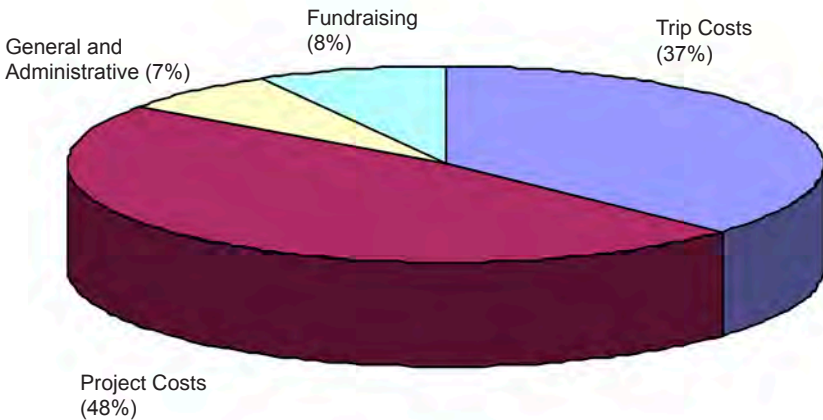
REVENUE 2005

Trip Participant Fees	\$ 941,519
Project Grants	\$ 184,320
General Donations	\$ 410,193
Special Events & Fundraisers	\$ 156,103
Interest and Dividends	\$ <u>2,877</u>
Total Revenue:	\$1,695,012



EXPENSES 2005

Program and Project Services	
Trip Costs	\$ 596,995
Project Costs	\$ 772,874
Support Services	
General and Administrative	\$ 108,449
Fundraising	\$ <u>131,718</u>
Total Expenses:	\$1,610,036



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Bridges to Community, Inc. is a registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible.



Bridges to Community

95 Croton Avenue
Ossining, NY 10562
P: (914) 923-2200
F: (914) 923-8396
www.bridgestocommunity.org



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