

# 2011 Mid-Year Report

## Bridges to Community

*building communities, changing lives*

As a direct result of your ongoing commitment to Bridges to Community's programs during the first six months of 2011, **56 new houses have been constructed, over 5,000 patients have been seen for medical care, and 85 students have been awarded educational scholarships.** It is because of your generosity—with your time as volunteers and your contributions as donors and fundraisers—that we have been able to expand our efforts and launch new projects. We are thrilled to share with you some of the exciting highlights from the first half of 2011:

Our **Housing Program** continues to grow having seen a 20% increase in construction over the same period last year. Many new families in Nicaragua wake up each morning feeling safe and secure and proud to own their home.

In our **Education Program**, we are very excited to announce the construction of two school libraries built by Bridges. For the first time ever, two of our rural communities will have a lending library for students and parents to use. The construction of additional classrooms at the Maria de Jesus School in Fonseca is close to completion and will welcome a group of excited young learners this fall. Our **Education for Leadership** program is currently providing scholarships to 85 young people who are studying hard and looking ahead to new and exciting opportunities. We were delighted when one of our past scholarship recipients completed his degree in architecture and was hired to oversee one of our school construction projects. What a wonderful way to give back to his community!

Our **Health Program** has seen some very exciting new developments this year as well; we were able to successfully dig a 200 foot deep well on the grounds of the new school in the community of Fonseca, Siuna. Operated by a solar panel, this new water source provides potable water to the school and immediate community. With additional funding, the well has the capacity to provide water to an additional 32 families living nearby.



Another critical project initiated in 2011 will address the dire conditions at the **Siuna Regional Hospital**. Lack of running water and intermittent electricity are but a few of the issues staff and patients face daily. In partnership with the University of Virginia Engineering School and Building Goodness Foundation we hope to implement a comprehensive rainwater catchment system at the hospital, which in turn will be able to supply potable water to the surrounding area. Be on the lookout for updates on this project.



Our **Economic Development Program** continues to provide funding for small business loans to individuals and families. Seventy-five loans have been issued since the beginning of the year to businesses ranging from a women's corn husk cooperative to a bicycle repair shop to a variety of food selling operations. In addition, 28 families in Siuna are participating in a Cacao Project, designed to improve agricultural practices in the region.



And of course our **Service Learning Program** provides us with something very precious—the time, energy and hard, hard work of all of our volunteers. Since January we have hosted 576 volunteers on 36 service trips. During the same time period, we have continued to support our community members with local training workshops.

Even as we are engaged in these exciting new accomplishments, we are also committed to constant improvement with our programs. This year, we've begun exploring options to start working in a new municipality in Nicaragua in 2012, where the needs are greater and our projects can have more impact. We have also engaged a non-profit management consulting firm to evaluate our projects and guide our long-term strategic planning process. We think that this process will be invaluable as we continue to grow our model and expand our reach.

All of our work is a result of the incredible partnerships we have with each one of you. Your support provides the foundation for Bridges to Community as we continue our long-term community development efforts. "Building Communities...Changing Lives" continues to capture the essence of our work. Together North Americans and Nicaraguans can make a difference, one house at a time, one relationship at a time, one community at a time.

Once again we want to extend our heartfelt thanks, on behalf of all our community members in Nicaragua, for investing in Bridges to Community. Together we are making a difference. **Thank you!**

In peace and gratitude,

Kevin Mestrich,  
Executive Director

**Key Numbers**

- 56** Homes built
- 5,341** Patients received medical treatment
- 28** Water-filters distributed to families
- 3** Latrines built at Siuna Hospital
- 6** Smoke reducing stoves were installed in homes
- 85** Students received scholarships
- 478** Students attended computer classes
- 75** Small business loans
- 576** Volunteers participated in 36 trips
- 1** New school construction
- 1** Elementary school kitchen
- 1** Elementary school library
- 2** Potable water projects benefiting 42 families
- 1** Solar panel operated well
- 1,800** Mahogany seedlings planted as part of a reforestation project