

2010 Mid-Year Report



Dear Friends and Supporters,

THANK YOU! With your help, commitment, and generosity, the first six months of 2010 has been a time of tremendous excitement and growth at Bridges to Community. Our volunteers, staff, and Nicaraguan community partners have worked side-by-side to launch new projects, and to extend our important community relationships. From January to June of this year, your donations have empowered individuals and families to take charge of their lives, give back to their communities, and feel a renewed sense of pride.

There have been many milestones and new developments along the way. Our **Housing Program** increased 24% over the same period last year, and we've made new efforts to assist Nicaraguan home recipients in acquiring legal titles to their land. In our **Health Program**, we've hosted medical clinics in Siuna, Ticuantepe, and Masaya, where we've attended over 4,500 patients. We've also helped increase overall health and well-being with water systems and filters, vegetable gardens, smoke-reducing stoves, and latrines.

As you may have already seen on our website or in our Spring newsletter, our **Education Program** has made some impressive accomplishments with the construction of two new schools and a third scheduled for this fall. We've also been able to add new software and equipment to the computer school in Masaya where over 300 young people and adults have received computer education. And we've helped over 80 students to continue their schooling through our Education for Leadership program.



We've also made new efforts in our **Economic Development Program**, holding workshops and training sessions designed to help our Nicaraguan partners start small businesses, work with fair trade sellers for agricultural products, and manage community funds. In addition, we've provided start-up loans to 37 independent businesses in Nicaragua so far this year.

Our **Service Learning Program** has also seen some exciting developments in the first half of 2010. We've already hosted more than fifty groups of North American volunteers with over 600 participants in just six months. At the same time, we've hosted several community conferences for Nicaraguan families and individuals to share their wisdom, knowledge, and experience. These

included a twelve-week Youth Leadership Community Workshop Series covering topics from fighting poverty to the power of youth to building leadership skills. Twenty-five young people from the communities where we work attended these workshops, and as a result of their participation, many of them have recently been elected to leadership positions in their communities.

All this goes to show how your support is much more than a one-time investment. It provides a foundation for Bridges to Community's long-term community development plans. The Nicaraguan beneficiaries of these projects pay back a portion of the project cost with no interest into community funds. These funds are then reinvested by those communities for future projects, creating a vehicle for long-term sustainability.

Bridges to Community's tag line "Building Communities...Changing Lives" captures the essence of our work. Together Nicaraguans and North American volunteers are not only physically building communities, but continuing to forge meaningful personal relationships and a real world understanding of our global connection. As one teen volunteer recently stated at the end of his visit, "community service isn't about the service, it's about the community".

On behalf of our community members in Nicaragua, we extend our heartfelt thanks to you for investing in Bridges. We are proud of our collective accomplishments these past six months. It is the conviction we all hold — that community development must be accompanied by the creation of equal and just human relationships — that makes Bridges truly special. Thank you for continuing to partner with us.

In gratitude,

Kevin Mestrich
Executive Director

KEY NUMBERS:

January - June 2010

- 47 homes built
- 4,668 patients received medical treatment
- 23 water storage containers distributed to schools and families.
- 15 water filters distributed to families
- 7 gravity fed water systems installed providing 10 families with potable water.
- 7 latrines built.
- 9 smoke reducing stoves were installed in homes.
- 83 students awarded scholarships.
- 2 new school buildings completed
- 1 high school renovated
- 300 students attended computer classes
- 37 small business loans granted
- 12 small business workshops conducted
- 80 community management trainings conducted
- 624 volunteers participated in 51 trips.