



# Esperanza

## Newsletter



Winter 2022

## Our Mission

**COMMIT** is a team of dedicated volunteers from Southwestern Ontario working under the umbrella of the Rotary Club of Stratford Charitable Foundation. Our team's mandate is to provide long-term support to some of the poorest villages in Nicaragua. Our focus is to provide medical clinics, and other outreach services such as clean drinking water, sanitation, eco-friendly stoves, sustainable agriculture as well as educational and social justice.

*Our newsletter name  
Esperanza translated means  
"Hope"*

*We (COMMIT) have hope  
that our efforts will improve  
the lives of our friends in  
Nicaragua.*

**COMMIT Website:**  
[Click here](#)



**Rotary**   
Club of Stratford  
Charitable Foundation

Canadian Outreach Medical & Mission Team (COMMIT) is a project of the Rotary Club of Stratford Charitable Foundation and works in partnership with NPH Nicaragua.



## Stove Project Update

As you will recall many members of the COMMIT Team raised in excess of \$50,000 during 2021 to support the Stove Project. Additional funds continue to dribble in, either from profits of our coffee sales or Rotary clubs that would like to help. In January 2022 we submitted a Global Grant Application to Rotary International. If we are successful then 70% of the initial part of the project, included in the Grant Application, will be paid by Rotary International. For this Application we committed about \$20,000 of the funds that we had raised in 2021. If we are successful (that would almost triple the amount of money we have raised) we will apply for an additional grant with the remainder of the funds over the next 2 years. If we do not get the grant, we will still use the money for stoves but will not be able to build as many.

We hope to hear within a few months if the Application is successful. Meanwhile, we have been meeting with our Stove Team International representative, Mike Hadfield, to arrange for expertise in stove building for 5 or 6 Nicaraguans. Working with Edgar Avila, we have also planned for the mortar, bricks, sand, metal plates, combustion chambers and stovepipes to be purchased. We plan to install the energy efficient and safe Justa Stove in up to 200 homes in 5 villages during this Phase but over 600 total over 3 years..

We may also be assisting 3 or 4 other Rotary Clubs to initiate a similar stove project in the north of Nicaragua, a significant distance from the villages that we serve.

A new direction for COMMIT is the use of Solar Energy for cooking which would be a carbon neutral solution. We may try a Pilot Project with a few families. The major concern is that sunshine is likely inadequate during the rainy season in Nicaragua but technology is expanding that method of cooking and we may be able to use a method called stacking where both methods can be used.... However, as members of ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group), we are investigating other areas in the world where solar energy cooking would be viable. This will provide clean cooking that is best for the environment. We have also learned about pay as you go schemes that will allow these methods to be more affordable.

Either way we are making cooking more environmentally friendly and safe for the mothers and their children as well as improving their lives in many other ways. We hope to have additional information to share with you in our next COMMIT Newsletter, in the spring of 2022.

David Knoppert



## Garden Project Update

Our hard working agronomist Jimmy Espinoza has updated us on the progress of the agricultural project he is supervising in the villages and in the NPH home where we work. The worm composting project has been expanded with the completion of seventeen worm boxes each filled with two kilograms of worms for the production of highly fertile compost used in the farmers garden plots. The newly introduced Bee Hive project in Nandarola is being supported by Moises Guillen of the Nica Bee Project. The installation and training of the project with two of the farmers, Francisco and Pedro, will be on track for producing honey for the village of Nandarola and expanding this in the coming years. The expert Bee Farmers from Wisconsin are expected to arrive on site the end of February for a week of training. The original seventeen members of the farming co-op are re-organizing into a more structured organization with a board to support their goals for future growth, efficiency and transparency. The co-op has established a system whereby they grow beans collectively and save a portion each year to ensure sustainability year by year. The collective have successfully repaid their existing loan to COMMIT, for the bean project started two years ago. In keeping with the goals set by COMMIT, the co-op has agreed to support any of their members who experienced a bad harvest. For example this year Anna and Emigdio experienced poor harvests and the remaining farmers each contributed eight pounds of beans to cover their losses and each member will provide seventy pounds of beans as a direct fund to be self sustainable and achieve economic growth. As well each member will provide thirty pounds of beans as seed for the next year. An additional ten members are being trained by Jimmy to come on side with the collective in a neighbouring village of La Vigia. The irrigation project in Nandarola is seventy percent complete. This will allow for the planting of tomatoes and peppers. The corn mill purchased for the village of Nandarola will be set up shortly and the building to house it has already been completed. This will allow the farmers to grind their corn in the village for their own use and for sale. Jimmy is also involved now with an expanded agricultural project with NPH, the home base where COMMIT has a long-standing relationship. The goals of the project are to develop a viable agricultural crop to sell in the grocery chain market in Nicaragua. They will be growing tomatoes, bell peppers and passion fruit. A full time farm staff worker, Esterling, will be hired to undertake the planting and on site management of the project. COMMIT is investing a one-time payment of \$10,304 US and the expected return on the crop is \$22,500 US per year. The venture is set to be self-sufficient after one year. This is a small step with the goal and expectation to expand the type and number of crops in the future as success allows. The farming project in Nandarola and NPH is truly inspiring. The farmers are becoming skilled, self-sufficient and are acquiring both food security for their families and financial security for the community.

Pat & Jane Feryn



## Water Project Update

### ACCESS to Water Saves Lives

Well (pun) the water project is completed. Six villages have clean water five have electric pumps and tanks as reservoir. Three have distribution systems but two are spread out and may need further modifications. We can do that going forward. It is always difficult to work remotely especially during COVID but it has been a big success. Our thanks to the Rotary Club of Granada, host Rotary Club of Stratford and special thanks to Edgar and Gustavo in Nicaragua for making this happen.



Water tank being installed



Edgar with villagers in El Jabilo  
proud of new water well



### New Corn Grinder

We purchased a new corn grinder for Nandarola; two villagers are going to run the grinder as an entrepreneurial project. The Grinder was financed partly on a Rotary Club of Stratford District Grant. A microloan was extended for their part of the contribution to be used for sustainable repairs and the villagers will share the proceeds in some form. Now they do not have to take their corn 1 hour away into Nandaime to be ground and will be able to grind cheaper on site and attract business in the vicinity. The village works very well as a co-op and when one farmer became sick recently they all volunteered parts of their crop to help his family out.





Community Centre started in San Luis



Beans a plenty!



Plastic Recycling Project



Students receiving donated lesson books



Garden planning meeting in Nandarola



## Partnership with NPH

NPH (Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos) asked us to do a fundraising project to help them out financially. NPH is where we stay and they provide the infrastructure for our mission teams into the communities. They no longer run an in-house orphanage but do outreach education and other medical and social services. Because of that and COVID they have had to cut back considerably on their services but still manage to bring in a number of children from the community for education into the compound and meal program (breakfast and lunch) and support students in post secondary education.

We used our farming expertise (Mainly Jimmy) to set up a farming project. They are fertile land rich and cash poor but can use a hand up on farming practices and marketing. We have set up 4 plots with irrigation to grow Passion Fruit, Tomatoes and Bell Peppers. The first crop will be in the dry season and with their irrigation infrastructure there should be a good market for their produce. They are excited to start and Jimmy and their farm employee have worked out a good plan for success. We are encouraging as much sustainable farming as possible so will be micro loaning part of the profits (30%) to ensure continuation of the project in the future.

We are replenishing some of the bee suits for the NPH Bee project and that is going well with the hives expanding.

We are also about to start a bee project in one of our communities. Luckily we have an expert who lives in the US and travels to start these projects in Central America. He started the one at NPH about 5 years ago. Although it had its growing pains it is now thriving. He to is coming down in February 2022 set up a similar operation in one of our communities. Since these are African Bees and good producers but very dangerous so the hives will be set up well away from the village. COMMIT has grubstaked the operation and are excited to have it happen.

A hand up to a very grateful group of villagers and hope for a future free from poverty.



## Coffee Fundraiser Update

### **UPDATE FOR OUR COFFEE FUNDRAISER FOR OUR NICARAGUAN ECO-STOVE PROJECT**

Our coffee sales have been underway since May 2021. We have sent just over \$3,200 to Nicaragua to buy eco-stoves.

Patrick's Beans continues to be an excellent partner for us. For Christmas we added chocolate-covered coffee beans. This turned out to be quite a hit. These 90gm boxes of happiness made great stocking stuffers. We are sure some of them actually made it to the stockings.

We now have a consistent customer base which keeps our sales progressing. Several customers have been able to take advantage of the 11th bag free after buying ten units of coffee or tea. This next month we are adding a Patrick's sample pack which has all six of his coffee blends and a small box of the chocolate covered beans.

If you are interested in supporting our fundraiser and satisfying your caffeine urges you can contact Mark or Jo-Anne Edlund at [jmedlund85@gmail.com](mailto:jmedlund85@gmail.com) in the London area. If you are in the Stratford area contact Kim Neeb at [kim.neeb58@gmail.com](mailto:kim.neeb58@gmail.com). We offer free delivery within these cities.

Mark Edlund

Self-appointed VP of Regional Sales

## Project Trip September 2021

Project Trip September 2021, one of COMMIT's team leads traveled to Nicaragua with her sister to check on the projects. While in Nicaragua, Janice and her sister Cathy were able to visit all of the villages that had been the recipients of a drilled well, in addition to the village of Nandarola where they had received piped water to their homes. The well inaugurations were both humbling and at the same time exciting to experience. The people of the villages were welcoming with smiles and thanks for the gift of clean water that they had received. Together with the Rotary Club of Granada, we visited a total of six villages, inaugurated the wells and enjoyed seeing the children dance under the pinatas, trying their best to be the ones who broke open the candy loaded dogs, cats and stars. We also had the pleasure of visiting Nandarola and La Vigia to see the progress that the farming teams have made with their private gardens and community fields of corn and beans. They proudly showed us their crops and even made the most delicious cornbread I have ever had. School visits were made and we were able to see how well they are doing with the music program and the recorders. They have asked for more and we plan to supply them when we return with our building team. The leader of the sewing co-op proudly showed us some of the pieces that they had sewn and shared that they have been able to sell some for a profit. Most of that money has however been used up to help families that were suffering from COVID. The women in San Luis, 17 of them, are thrilled that we plan to build an addition on the pink house, which will give a dry, less dusty place to sew. Help was given to both the NPH home and the Nandaime hospital in the purchasing of needed



items. We are so thankful to NPH for always giving us such a warm welcome and making us feel like part of the family. The trip was made all the more special after being invited to the wedding of a NPH student who has worked with COMMIT for years as a translator. It was a fun and special experience to join in celebrating their day with them. All in all a very successful trip with lots of needs identified.

Hasta Luego, Janice



## Mission Trip March 2022

All aboard. The mission trip to Nicaragua 2022 is taking shape. As you know we pay entirely for our trips so no donated funds are ever used.

Our main objectives for this trip are to check on our projects and build an addition and refurbish a community center in San Luis. Their community center has sat desolate for many years after being built by a Spanish organization many years ago who apparently never returned and the layout remains dysfunctional and insecure. We did the same a few years ago in Nandarola and changed the face of the village. More activities took place there and a medical brigade started to visit the area and maintain an office there. It is like having a town hall in any community, it becomes the focus of the town. We have an active sewing program in San Luis but it needs a home as does a medical brigade. Lunch is provided to school kids on the site but their Kitchen is a rickety shack with open fire cooking stove at moment. It will be scheduled for an ecofriendly modern cooking stove when our Global Grant for our Stove project goes through.

We also have to check on other programs that have been happening. The hospital in Nandaimé has requested some urgent medical supplies; the school has requested more musical recorders for a thriving music program we started. We just distributed schoolbooks to the school for each class in each subject and they have an operational printer if they need to copy parts of the curriculum books because we cannot afford to give one to each student. A report to Rotary International has to be done on our large water project to ensure the wells we drilled are functioning and the water committees for sustainability are operational.

We are also starting a large garden project on two sites at NPH, the home where we stay to give them some sustainable income for the outreach school program, which has been very successful.

I could go on but one notable project is plastic and garbage collection by the schools to recycle rather than burn. We are awarding prizes to the school and teaching their youth about climate change and conservation.

There are nine of us and we are looking forward to the trip.

Doug Thompson

## Team Member Highlight

Edgar Avila, fondly described as our “gentle giant”, is a native of Mexico but has made Nicaragua his home. He has been a key member of our COMMIT Team for 10 years. Edgar began when he was the designated liaison with NPH home, where we stay during our trips to Nicaragua, as well as with the rural villages that we serve. Edgar, whose native language is Spanish, is fluent in English. Edgar’s presence, whether at the customs department at the Managua Airport or in the middle of the country on barren roads, always provides a sense of security for our team members, many who were on their first trip ever to a developing country. He has a great sense of humor and a kind, welcoming personality.



Over time Edgar became the in country Supervisor of all of our programs, with the exception of the garden program, which is supervised by Edgar’s colleague, Jimmy Espanoza. During the past 2 years our projects, including a major water project, were able to continue, despite the fact that we have been unable to visit because of the pandemic. This has only been possible because of Edgar. He is an extension of the COMMIT Team in Nicaragua while we are here at home in Canada. Edgar is regularly on ZOOM calls with the COMMIT Core Team; he acts as a liaison with the rural villages to ensure that the projects continue and he handles all financial transactions on behalf of COMMIT. Edgar has been known to address and resolve any conflicts in a timely manner and always exudes a positive attitude. His attitude has a positive impact on those around him and he is well liked by all. This fair and firm, but still warm, approach has been so valuable to us when we have discussions with villagers and officials from the local municipality.

Edgar’s deep religious beliefs and concern for Nicaragua make him the perfect person to represent us when we are back home in Canada. He takes his job seriously and represents COMMIT with professionalism, honesty and integrity. We truly believe that Edgar loves working for us and helping his fellow countrymen. Edgar is literally the face of COMMIT in Nicaragua. Over the years we have gotten to know his wife Ana and his sons Bryan and Carlos. A closer and more devoted family would be difficult to find.

Edgar truly is a gem and we are super lucky to have him as a very active team member of COMMIT. Without his hard work and tenacity, we wouldn’t have been able to accomplish the work in Nicaragua that we have been able to do. We trust Edgar to keep our team safe and comfortable when in Nicaragua.

Thank you Edgar for your service.



## COMMIT Projects

Over the past ten years, COMMIT has delivered more than \$500,000 in supplies, equipment and aid to Nicaragua, including a bus to transport less fortunate children to a better education and nutritional meal program at NPH. Even with the challenges created by the COVID pandemic and difficult political times, we are committed to continue our work and support in Nicaragua.

Our focus over the next 3 to 5 years is to:

- Initiate our eco-friendly stove project in two villages (250 stoves) with accompanying reforestation project (3,000 trees) and related environmental spinoffs; and if possible obtain a Rotary global grant that may triple the number of installations.
- Expand our composting and garden project to other villages.
- Explore other microeconomic projects with loans to villages that through good planning can demonstrate sustainability and scalability (expand) and a way forward to decrease poverty.
- Continue to ship containers with desperately needed supplies and equipment.
- Continue to financially support natural disasters, COVID and other emergency needs.

**For more information or to donate please email:**

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**COMMIT Website: <http://commitwithnphnicaragua.simplesite.com/>**