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If you want to help for a day, give them rice;
If you want to help for a while give them a tree;
If you want to help for an eternity, give them an education.

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PROJECT NICARAGUA

TO OUR WONDERFUL SUPPORTERS: Many of you have asked for more information on our newest Responsibility focus. Here's the latest. You can view more photographs of the Project Nicaragua at www.responsibilitynicaragua.org, available starting December 15, 2009.

June 2008: Sister Teresa and I visited the garbage dump in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, with Leida and Rosita, our Nicaraguan project leaders. Teresa has known Leida for years and arranged with her to be our project leader before we arrived. Four hundred people scavenge this city's dump; most are women and children. Our mission is to help however we can. (We believed that building a school was of top priority. That is, until we met the people.)

At the entrance to the dumpsite, children stood waiting on the dirt road, hoping to find a treasure when they hopped onto the back of heavily loaded, slow-moving trucks. That day, their discovery was a black trash bag filled with ten pounds of cooked white rice, probably from a restaurant. Where it came from wasn't important to the kids, though; it was the taste that counted. It

must have been good. Many, like the boy on the right, grabbed handfuls, and shoved them into their mouths. After what one

called "lunch of this cooked rice," the scavenging continued. Found treasures included shoes, clothes, a mattress, aluminum cans, and plastic and glass bottles.



Nicaraguan boy eating rice from the dump.

Only Sister Teresa and I seemed bothered by the zillions of flies. Perched on tree limbs, waiting to devour animal carcasses buried in the garbage, were huge black vultures with wingspans of five feet. They were bigger in size than most of the children. Neither seemed to be afraid of the other. The vultures waited for the scavengers to clear an area, probably hoping they left behind an open bag of rotting meat.

When we gathered the workers together, many had the first impression that we were lost. Instead, we told them we had come from the United States to help. "How can we be of service to you?" Sister Teresa asked. "Water," they answered like a rehearsed church chorus. But this wasn't rehearsed—foreigners don't ever show up here asking this question. "We need drinking water," they said, pointing to the stagnant brown river that marks the boundary of the dump. "That contaminated river is where we get all our water." Whispering, Sister Teresa told me the polluted water is the reason for the yellow-tinted skin.

Now our first goal was clear: ***To provide potable water to this community.*** "After drinking water, we need a day care center," a leader of the group told us. "We bring our entire families to work with us and it is dangerous. Just yesterday a newborn baby sleeping in a box next to her mother was buried in garbage by a garbage truck that was unloading."

Our next stop was at a primary school founded by Leonardo Lux, a Nicaraguan who started his school on a BLUE TARP four years ago. Our meeting was meant to be! We continued to meet throughout our week-long visit, discussing ways we could work together. Leonardo reinforced the need for clean drinking water. "After the water, how can we work together?" I asked Leonardo. "We need a kindergarten," he said. "To build a Responsibility kindergarten is the purpose of our visit," I said. "Give me a year to raise the funds."

JUNE 2009: Fast forward a year! Araceli Moreno, my volunteer administrative assistant of ten years, and I were in



Matagalpa sitting with Leonardo and his wife in the home where Araceli and I were staying. I told him, "Here

are the funds to build three 5000-gallon potable water holding tanks on your school grounds and have water delivered for one year. Your 350 students now have drinking water." Leonardo attempted to hide his emotions, but his watery eyes gave way to tears. No words were spoken for a moment.

PROVIDING EDUCATION: Before Araceli and I left, we provided Leonardo with funds for three teachers. The kindergarten classes are temporarily using a classroom in Leonardo's primary school.

FUTURE FIVE-YEAR PLAN: We received a grant for the construction of a kindergarten. Our new school will be called **The Robert Keenan School** and the grand opening will be at the end of January 2010, the start of the new school year in Nicaragua. We will completely fund this school which means provide three teachers, purchase all the teaching supplies and books, and subsidize our director, Leonardo. Next, we will work on the community center, which will have adult education classes, a food distribution center with the help of other organizations, and a daycare center so that mothers no longer have to take their babies and toddlers to work. And of course, we will continue to fund drinking water for all.

Sincerely,

David Lynch, Sister Teresa, Araceli Moreno, and our Nicaraguan Staff

WATER AND FIRST BUILDING: Later that week, Araceli and I were with Leida, our local project leader. We were at the future site of our community day care/adult education center, just outside the dump and about five miles from Leonardo's school. While walking around this hilly underdeveloped area, I told Leida that I now have the funds for another two 5000-gallon drinking water holding tanks.

This water will be for the entire dump community. We also have money to construct the first building, earmarked as a daycare center during the day and an adult education classroom in the evenings. Leida informed us that she has petitioned the local government to donate the land to our nonprofit organization.

