

January 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year quite a bit late! My hope was to have this letter written in December, but with the busyness of the life in Nicaragua and then traveling to the States and enjoying time with my family; it never got done. We hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season celebrating Jesus' birth. We definitely had a wonderful time in Mississippi visiting my parents in their new home. It was great to have a couple of weeks to just relax and enjoy being with my side of the family.

Upon returning to Nicaragua we found that Thomas' older brother, Jairo, was in the hospital and was very sick. He already had some health complications, and we all knew that he may not recover. On January 10th he passed away. Thomas was able to hang out with him the last two nights before he died as did many of Thomas' extended family. Please keep Thomas, his mom and the rest of the family in your prayers as they deal with this loss.

Now a little news from the past four months from each of us...

From Nicole

This past fall my mom and her friend Julie were in charge of the feeding program on Tuesdays and Thursdays while Kathy was in the States. At first my mom was running it by herself until Julie got here. I think my mom was very glad to let Julie be in charge. I love the feeding program because while mom is so busy setting things up and helping the kids wash their hands and sign up for jobs, the older girls always stroller me around or take me out and let me sit with them. Once the food is served, the cooks always come find me and feed me my own plate in the kitchen. Tuesdays and Thursdays are probably my favorite lunches!

From Anthony

This year in starting back to school in August, Sami and I are now on different schedules so I take the bus home by myself. I don't mind it though. However, while my younger sister loves the feeding program, I am not so thrilled with the idea of such a large group of children. So when I come from the bus, I sit outside of the Ranchon until my mom is done helping out. I would rather help out at the end of feeding program in drying dishes or putting things away. At the house I enjoy being mom's helper and earn stickers for doing chores. In the afternoons I do often wander over to the sports center and enjoy it when I can find a couple of guys to kick the soccer ball around with. Soccer is my favorite sport, and I cannot wait until I am old enough to play on a team.

From Samantha

I am now in first grade and learning how to read. I told my mom the other day that I just cannot stop reading and that my head hurts from reading everything everywhere. Whenever we are out in Managua, I am always reading the signs and asking mom about new words. School this year gets out later so by the time I get home, have a snack and finish homework there often is not much time to play at the sports center. I sometimes go over for a little bit with Papi when he gets home from work. I do still love going to the library and doing crafts with Meraris, the librarian, and the girls. It was SO much fun having Julie here for the past three months. Sometimes Anthony and I would go over in the afternoons just to tag along with her. One evening we hung out with her while my parents went out on a date.

One of the highlights of this first semester was trying out for the talent show at school. Our school is 1st through 12th so there were not many other 1st graders trying out. And while I didn't make it, it was still exciting to memorize a song and sing it in front of the judges. I was actually a little relieved to not have to sing in front of the whole crowd, but I am already planning my show for next year.



From Thomas

These last couple of months I have been co-coaching a younger group of guys for a more official league in Managua. That league finished up and we placed 4th overall; however, we did earn “The Most Respectful Team” award which meant that our team had the least amount of yellow and red cards and overall was the most respectful team to the other coaches and players. As I often tell Anthony, you win and you lose some, but it is really *how* you play the game that counts the most.



With that league finished, it was time to start up my community league again. The teams were excited to get back to playing. Every Saturday when we play we also have a devotional time. I often share the devotion, but I also try to get other Christian men involved in sharing about their faith. It is a great way to reach out to young men who otherwise do not hear the Gospel much.



Besides soccer on the weekends I am always very busy at the Christian school where I work. Amanda and I have often reflected on how much my job and the school have changed in the ten years that I have been working there. I started in a small computer lab and was the computer tech guy. Now the school has two large computer labs, and I am teaching 10 classes a week.

From Amanda



What a treat these past couple of months have been for me. While I knew it would be different not having Halle and Kathy here for a while, I did not know whom they would find to take their place while they were gone. God worked it out for one of my closest friends, Julie, to be here from September through early December. She stayed at Halle and Kathy’s place, ran the feeding program and helped manage the sports center which can often mean mowing lawns, pruning, paying workers, etc. She also did crafts a couple of afternoons a week with the kids at the library and got involved in tutoring some children who live close by. We both enjoy running so it was a real treat to have someone to run with and help me get back in shape. We had lots of fun doing things together like shopping at Pricemart for the feeding program, planning youth group nights, washing dishes from the feeding program at my house when there was no water at the sports center and of course just hanging out playing games, playing ultimate Frisbee or watching football. And while we may not like the same football teams (she is a Packers fan and I love the Bears), we could still enjoy a game together.



In December we planned an end-of-the-year youth group dinner. We had 75 youth come for an evening of dinner, dessert, fun prizes and a time of reading the Christmas story. Overall, it was a great night! Julie left the next week and while it was hard to say good-bye to her, I know that God has great plans for her this next year. 2014 felt like one of the busiest years for me. I think having three children may have something to do with it! As the end of the year approached I was glad that we would be heading to the States to rest and relax.



Thank you so much for your continued prayers and support – we could not do what we do without you!



Seeking Him for life,

Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony y Nicole Gutiérrez

