

December 2023

Dear Friends and Family,

There is so much to be grateful for as we come to the end of 2023 - family, friends, our church community, a great school and good health - are just a few that we can think of. We have had a wonderful year in many ways, and here is just a brief summary of what all we have been up to.

In January we packed 823 bags of school supplies with the help of friends and many of Thomas' family. In February ten recently graduated high school students were given the chance to go to college with either a full or half scholarship. Overall, there are 40 university students receiving scholarships and another 28 students in various programs. The best part of managing a scholarship program like this is when a student is ready to take their final course and soon graduate. Most of the private universities have a large fee for this final course (\$400-\$800) and it can be a big hindrance for families struggling to pay. This year I was able to pay for three students to take their final course and then graduate. Many of the students who receive a university scholarship help me in January when we give out all of the school supply bags. It is a great way for them to give back and also be an example to the local kids. In looking ahead to 2024 I know that funds will be tighter from a church that has supported this program since 2005. If you are willing to give a gift to the scholarship program, that would be much appreciated!

In the Fall of 2022 I began teaching a sewing class to a group of women. I continued with that class until May of this year. In August of this year I started with a new group of six women, and we recently finished the 12-week class. In partnering with Christ for the City and their sewing ministry, I will continue to teach the class in a 12-week format twice a year. This allows me to have a better plan in buying fabric and sewing supplies and planning out the projects I hope to teach. This class is a highlight of my week! It is so fun to see the joy these women receive from learning a new pattern and taking their finished projects home with them. We have sewn little baskets, drawstring backpacks, zipper pouches, tote bags and even tried a small quilt! I have recently received funds to help buy sewing machines as Christ for the City decides to give them to the ladies as well as money for an ironing board. If you are interested in donating to help buy fabric or supplies, please let me know.

The other new responsibility that I took on earlier this year was coaching the high school girls' basketball team. It was a learning experience for me as I've never coached before but love basketball. I really enjoyed it and look forward to coaching again next year!

Our kids are excited to finish up the semester and enjoy their Christmas break. Alexander has had a great time in Kindergarten so far and really enjoys his friends. Sofia is in 2nd grade and enjoys gymnastics, drawing and playing with her friends. Nicole is in 5th grade and continues to be creative and love animals. Anthony is in 8th grade and played on two soccer teams these last three months. Samantha is in 10th grade and is ever the social one. She joined the soccer team this year and played very well on defense. We are very thankful for Nicaragua Christian Academy where they go to school and where Thomas continues to work as the main IT guy. There is a big need for teachers for the 2024-25 school year. If you know anyone who might be interested in teaching overseas, please don't hesitate to email me. It is a great school and a strong community!

As we approach Christmas I hope you will take some quiet moments to reflect on the birth of Jesus and who He truly is as our Savior. May this Christmas season be one of great joy as you

celebrate the miracle of God coming to be with us!

Merry Christmas from Nicaragua,
Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony, Nicole, Sofia and Alexander Gutierrez



