

December 2024

Dear Family and Friends,

What joy and hope there is in the Christmas season! This year we have experienced lots of moments of joy and hope throughout the various activities we find ourselves involved in. Here is a summary of what this past year has looked like for us in Nicaragua.

January is always a busy month for us as we pack up around 800 bags of school supplies and give them out in our surrounding neighborhood and to three small churches. We had special guests this year come spend a week with us and help pack and give out the packs – my sister and her three girls! My kids loved having their cousins here to experience our life in Nicaragua. There is always joy in working and serving together. Many families around our area have expressed such gratitude for this bag of supplies, so I know it provides hope for the provision for another school year. This past year 3 of my university scholarship recipients graduated with their college degrees and 3 more are in their final courses. There is great joy for many of these students in seeing their goal of getting a university degree finally become a reality. Please pray for them as they try to find jobs in their areas of study.

Throughout the year I taught two sewing classes, one from February to May and the second from September to November. Many of these women join the class knowing how to sew, but the joy they experience when learning a new pattern like a tote bag or zipper pouch is almost childlike and contagious which makes teaching them so much fun. The thing that brings me the most joy is when I hear some of these women say that they bought their own fabric and started selling things in their neighborhoods. For many women having a skill and a way to earn some extra money gives them lots of hope for their futures.

Along with coaching girls' basketball for the second year (and loving it!), I also found myself organizing and playing lots of pickleball! My oldest son, Anthony, and I have found lots of joy in learning the sport and getting better at it while playing with friends from school and church. This past year I have organized 8 different pickleball tournaments for our school and church community. Sometimes the best fellowship is getting together and playing!

Our kids are also discovering joy in the different stages of life that they find themselves in. Alexander is in 1<sup>st</sup> grade this year and has loved the changes that a longer school day brings. He enjoys learning and reading as well as playing soccer and trying his hand at pickleball. Sofia is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and has enjoyed doing well in all of the subjects at school. She enjoys going to friend's houses and practicing gymnastics. Nicole is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and has loved getting to go to youth group with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. She is super friendly and enjoys making crafts and gifts for her friends. Anthony is in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and still loves to play soccer. He was on the school soccer team and a club team this fall. Just recently he traveled to Honduras with his club team for a weekend tournament. Samantha is in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and cannot believe that next year she will be a senior. She has pushed herself more this year academically but definitely enjoys playing soccer and being social more than school work. She is very excited about an upcoming trip to Brazil with a HACIA Democracy.

Thomas just finished his 20<sup>th</sup> year of working at Nicaragua Christian Academy! He has been faithfully working as the main IT guy for all these years and also enjoys helping out with coaching the girl's soccer team. Around school he is definitely the guy everyone goes to when they want to know someone who

can \_\_\_\_ (fix your car, drive you to the airport, work on your washing machine, etc.) It's not because he does those things in his free time, but rather he knows more people than probably you and I do combined – haha!!

As we approach this new year may you find lots of hope and joy in God's goodness and grace! Thanks to all who support us financially and in prayer. We appreciate you very much!!

With love from Nicaragua,

Thomas, Amanda, Samantha, Anthony, Nicole, Sofia and Alexander Gutierrez





