

In March of this year, Steve and I traveled back to Nicaragua for our third trip to work along side a Baptist church outside the town of Tipitapa in a community on the outskirts of a landfill. This church also has an enrichment center which serves children three days per week. They focus on reading and math skills and teach Bible lessons each week. The Lord has given Steve and me a passion to use Life Skills Training to open physical and financial opportunities for families in poor communities. Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life and have it abundantly." Part of abundant living in Christ is to CREATE using resources that God has provided through His world. Part of abundant living in Christ is to WORSHIP through WORK. Teaching simple life skills in this community has opened doors for women and girls to create, and through that creation to provide for their family and be able to use those resources to help others. The scriptural focus was Proverbs 31:30, "Let her own works praise her."

Initially the trip's main focus was to enrich the church's established sewing ministry, teach the teen girls how to make bracelets and expand the bread ministry to making a yeast bread. Months before, a sewing group in North Carolina had made dolls for the children. Abby Saunders (pictured below) had painted faces on them. The children in Nicaragua had stuffed the dolls, but they still needed clothes. The first two days while in Nicaragua, the women made doll clothes. It started out very simple, and then eventually the



women began to take the simple and make it more complex, rafting in details to show off their learned skill. They showed such pride in their creation, honoring God in their ability to DO and to CREATE.



The bracelet making project was so simple but practical. Abby Saunders (left) and Sarah Hofheinz, both of which claim to be my adopted daughters, helped put patterns of bracelets together. Baggies of beads were assembled stateside and a copy of the pattern was inserted in the bag, creating a set. The girls in Solidaridad picked up the skill quickly. They created bracelets and had the opportunity to either keep the bracelet or sell it to me. All of them chose to sell their bracelet to me showing us their desire to earn money from their labor. In addition to beaded bracelets, Abby and I taught bracelet weaving. Everyone enjoyed learning to create with their hands.

Breadmaking was such a precious time of working and learning together with the young women. I taught a basic yeast recipe the first day, a sweeter rendition the second day, and the women were enjoying it so much that they asked to learn how to make pizza dough on the third day and pizza rolls on the fourth. What a treat it was to enjoy eating bread together. We spoke about the Bread of Life and the Old Testament passover command to throw out the old YEAST. They understood the New Testament connection to getting rid of sin and living righteously within their community. It was



through these moments of teaching that we formed friendships and relationships with the women and girls.

Steve's focus on the trip was to assist in the purchase of a vehicle for the church and school ministry along with helping to build and install a kitchen which would be used by the church to prepare meals and serve the community needs. He, Jamie Saunders and a few other men built kitchen cabinets from scratch. The community boys were curious and wanted to watch and help. Their interest created a new opportunity for the men to teach the boys elementary carpentry skills. Soon nearly ten boys were sanding cabinet doors and using the drill to secure pieces. Eventually Steve began to gather up scraps and teach them how to hammer a nail. This morphed into teaching the boys how to build boxes, and the intense



building began. We didn't have enough scraps for all of the children to build their OWN box. Those that completed one, like Angel (left), showed a sense of accomplishment. The carpentry opportunity opened up other doors. The men spoke about Jesus who was a carpenter. Other older teens who stood in the distance most of the time actually asked to create their own box. It has been difficult over the last few visits to reach the older teens who are uninvolved but curious. They are not in

school, have no employment and are likely in gangs. They need the Lord.

For many months we have been praying that the Lord would open up opportunities to plan Life Skills Training opportunities with the boys and older teens. This spontaneous opportunity erupted completely by chance. . .by chance in our eyes. . .but just as the Lord had planned.



We are grateful for the opportunities over the last year to work in Nicaragua. Unfortunately, because of civil unrest, our scheduled summer trip has been postponed. Currently we are looking at opportunities in Honduras and look forward to returning to Central America. Many of you have prayed and others have supported our mission trips there. We always minister alongside local churches and pastors so that those reached with the Gospel can continue to be disciplined in a local church.

Please continue to pray for us and consider supporting the Lord's work in Central America.

Steve and Celeste (Crowley) Bailey