



Summer 2021

Good News from Esquipulas! By David Hulefeld, Past President, Friends of Esquipulas

As we prepare to celebrate the tenth birthday of Friends of Esquipulas, we are so pleased to share welcome news from Nicaragua! The relationship between friends in Louisville and Esquipulas dates from the 1980's. Although both groups began about the same time to form a non-profit legal entity to manage our longstanding cooperation, the process in Nicaragua has faced major hurdles. Government red tape has been the principal obstacle. Creating the Nicaraguan equivalent of a tax-exempt corporation (an "asociacion") is an extended legal process, ultimately dependent upon action by the national legislature. With the generous support of St. William members, funding was provided to acquire the rights to an *asociacion* that had been partially set up. For various reasons the final steps to inaugurate their *asociacion*, named "Desarollando Comunidades," or Developing Communities—were deferred. But no longer!

A law firm has been engaged to finalize the organization. They will provide the necessary training to allow the existing committee and staff members, who have so ably led the various projects in Esquipulas all these years, to manage the new legal entity. An expanded 11 person board has been named to lead *Desarollando Comunidades*. The five individuals who have directed the work in Esquipulas for many years will serve as officers of the board, supplemented with long serving members of the staff, and additional people having relevant experience and connections with the town.

As an independent organization, the *asociacion* will be eligible for funding from additional sources, and will be free to partner with other NGOs. We anticipate that this will allow significant growth in the mission to serve the health, nutrition and economic needs of the people of the Esquipulas area.

In conjunction with the new structure, the health clinic and project offices have moved to new and expanded quarters. Our friends in Esquipulas are very proud of the new space and worked hard to make the necessary upgrades to accommodate their operations (see photos).

Yet another obstacle, sadly, has arisen in the meantime. Fearing outside intervention in political affairs, Nicaragua has enacted new laws making it difficult to transfer funds from the US. This led to delay in some of the farming projects and health care services normally funded by Friends of Esquipulas. Members of the Esquipulas community were able to provide short term loans, however, and the legal team anticipates a permanent fix this summer. We look forward to many positive developments in the future from *Desarollando Comunidades!*



Above and left: New location for St. William Pharmacy. Left: Board Directors and Officers including President - Juan Gea, Vice President - Elba Espinoza, Secretary - Mario Baldizon Zuniga, Treasurer - Francisca Martínez Flores, Parliamentarian - Pablo Hernandez



Friends of Esquipulas
1226 W. Oak Street
Louisville, KY 40210



Project Technicians (L-R)
Dr. Yuliza, Chepe, Sonya, Leonardo, Jose

An Outreach Ministry of St. William Community

How to donate!

Simply make your check payable to Friends of Esquipulas and mail to:
FE c/o St. William, 1226 W. Oak Street
Louisville, KY, 40210

NEW! Use Amazon Smile to designate a portion of your online purchases for us! Just go to smile.amazon.com and add Friends of Esquipulas as your recipient. Also there are instructions on our website.

Donate with Paypal on our website:
friendsofesquipulas.org

Register your Kroger Plus card to help us earn Kroger rewards! Instructions to register on our website or krogercommunityrewards.com

We happily welcome our new Board Members: Sr. Janet Peterworth OSU, Connie Martinez, Dawn Dones. Also, Fr. Bill Hammer, pastor of St. William Church has been attending our board meetings .

Projects Update



The projects in Esquipulas made possible by the generous supporters of Friends of Esquipulas continue to benefit the needy despite significant external forces. Continued turmoil in the national government has hurt the economy and reduced incomes, while the pandemic has contracted markets for organic produce.

Nevertheless, the Organic Project farmers met 80% of their production goals, providing a steady income and allowing participants to remain with their families rather than emigrate for work. The good work of the Nutrition Project likewise is continuing. 79 single women with young children and very little income are receiving the training and materials to raise vegetables and incorporate them in their diet.



Dr. Yuliza has recuperated from Covid and continues to offer full-time medical assistance. She saw nearly 1000 patients in the clinic in the first four months of 2021, and does regular checkups on the children in the Nutrition Project. She reports nearly all the children are growing normally and adequately nourished. Disruption of the fund transfer system related to activation of the *asociacion* and government restrictions interrupted the cancer screening and financial assistance for those needing specialized care. These services should resume by summer's end.



Hola!
Thanks for all your support for our projects in Nicaragua. See the Gallery of photos below with some of the participants in the **Nutrition with Vegetables** project with our single moms.



The Friends of Esquipulas Board provides funding for internal administrative costs (including this newsletter) so that 100% of donations go directly to benefit the projects in Nicaragua!

