NICAPHOTO:

From photography in NORWALK to working with disadvantaged youth in NICARAGUA.



"The most important things that have happened in my life have been connected in some way to photography."

- Photography was an interest since high school when my art teacher gave me a scholarship to study at Silvermine Guild School of Art.
- Undecided on what to study in college, I went to UCONN for a Liberal Arts Degree in Communication with a focus in psychology.
- When I graduated from UCONN I still hadn't found my path, but the need to work.
- Took an assistant job at **GENRE** which turned into Rate Analyst and later Treaty Underwriter.
- At GENRE I learned many important skills and met some really great people, many of whom currently support the work I currently do.

You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something - your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever.

- Steve Jobs

- During vacation from GENRE, I took a 2 week photography workshop at Maine Media Workshops. Through photography I found a new language, a new way of viewing the world and I decided it was time for a career change.
- I enrolled in a one year program at Maine Media Workshops.
- When I finished at MMW, my former boss at GENRE called offering me a job. I returned for a few years while working on my photography and beginning a freelance business.

- I discovered that I not only loved making images but I loved teaching photography. I soon connected with the Norwalk Art Community and a group of teaching artist.
- This group of artists strongly believed in the importance of access to art education for all children.
- I spent eight years working in Norwalk as a professional photographer while at the same time coordinating programs for a group of teaching artist and teaching photography to disadvantaged youth in various community based programs including: Briggs (Alternative) High School, The Carver Foundation, Family and Children's Agency, Norwalk Housing Authority, and Norwalk Public Schools.



While back in Norwalk, I collaborated with many community programs, activists, artists and non-profits and I began forming my idea of the ideal after school program for youth. A holistic program including education, art and personal development.

In 2005, while looking for a venue for a photography show of Norwalk student work, I met Dennis Bradbury, the former owner of 22 Haviland Street Gallery. It was Dennis who first introduced me to Norwalk's Sister City Project in Nicaragua.

October 2005, was my first trip to Nicaragua as a volunteer to teach photography at Norwalk's Sister City.



Norwalk native takes talents to Nicaragua, forms

after school program

Kaitlyn Krasselt

July 19, 2016 | Updated: July 19, 2016 6 p.m.



Ronnie Maher, founder of Norwalk-based nonprofit NicaPhoto, poses with photos from the Nicaraguan after school program in Norwalk on July 14.

Dennis Bradbury / Contributed photo



THE HOUR

Showcasing a sister city

R.A. Schuetz

May 30, 2018 | Updated: May 31, 2018 10:14 p.m.



Brief History of NicaPhoto

- NicaPhoto began in 2005 as a series of photography workshops by professional photographer Ronnie Ellen Maher, for disadvantaged youth in Norwalk's Sister City Project, Nagarote.
- In 2010, with 12 students and 3 staff, NicaPhoto became a formal comprehensive afterschool project for disadvantaged youth, including photography, tutoring in Math and Spanish, and a healthy hot lunch.
- In 2012, NicaPhoto received 501(c)3 non-profit status in the US and registered as an NGO (non government organization) in Nicaragua.



NicaPhoto, Inc. education, art, and personal development

Why NICARAGUA?

- 1. Norwalk's sister city is Nagarote, NICARAGUA.
- 2. Poverty exists in all countries, and the lives of the poor are difficult no matter where they live. But, the **neediest live in the developing world**, at a level of poverty that is hard to imagine. They have **NO social safety nets**, no access to services that are readily available to the poor in wealthy countries.
- 3. US dollars can go a long way and make a significant difference.





Nicaragua



NicaPhoto is located in Nagarote, Nicaragua, between the capital, Managua and Leon.

70% of NicaPhoto participants live in the barrio (neighborhood) Sonrisa de Dios (Smile of God), one of the poorest and most deprived barrio in Nagarote. Approximately 65% of our participants are girls.

History of Nicaragua

Nicaragua, the "land of lakes and volcanoes," is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In the past century Nicaragua has seen many changes; a revolution and violent contra war, earthquakes and hurricanes and an economic recession all devastated the infrastructure.

Nicaragua is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with approximately 32% of the population living below the poverty line. Many Nicaraguans struggle daily to obtain sufficient food for their families.

How?

Our focus is on **educational support**, as we believe the most effective way to break the cycle of poverty is through education.





Mission

The mission of NicaPhoto is to empower disadvantaged children and their families living in the poorest barrios of Nicaragua, allowing them to reach their full potential, and in doing so, to break the cycle of extreme poverty.

We do this in a holistic manner through educational support in the form of tutoring, art and enrichment to develop the creative spirit and critical thinking, as well as programs in health, nutrition and personal and community development.



TODAY, we have approximately 150 active students in elementary through college and 12 full time staff.

Our accomplishments include:

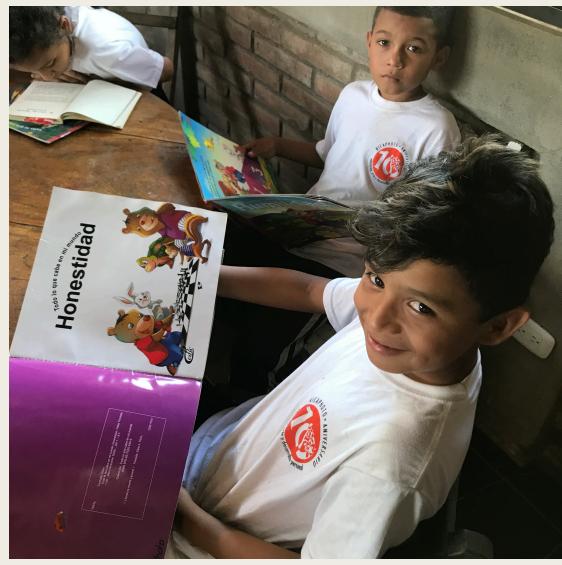
- 37 high school graduates.
- 4 university or technical school graduates.
- 23 currently studying at universities and technical schools, & of those
- 14 NicaPhoto scholarship students.

How we do it?

- Tutoring and reinforcement in Spanish, Math & English
- Photography, Dance, Chorus and Visual Arts & Crafts
- Workshops in health and personal development
- Robotics and computer classes
- Girls and Boys Groups
- Martial Arts (Soccer is on hold due to COVID-19)
- Bio-intensive Organic Garden
- Hot lunch TO-GO (due to COVID-19)
- Scholarships for school supplies, uniforms, and college/technical school.
- Monthly Parent Meetings
- Training for Staff & College Students

TUTORING & REINFORCEMENT - Spanish Language, Math & English





THE ARTS – visual arts, photography, dance, chorus







We provide WORKSHOPS on health, nutrition, disease prevention, and various issues related to adolescence.







Our Girls Group, Club de las Chicas de NicaPhoto, provides a safe and supportive environment where our preteen and teenage girls come together to discuss topics related to their lives. The goal is to provide a space that allows the girls to grow to become well informed, empowered young women.



Boys Club is a space where adolescents and young boys, find out about age appropriate topics of interest, and at the same time express their concerns and emotional needs.

It is a place where they share as a group their joys as well as challenges and difficult moments.

They also learn and practice values such as tolerance and respect.

Gender equality is also touched on to help bring about a change in thought to the historically "machismo" culture of Nicaragua.

MARTIAL ARTS



BIOINTENSIVE ORGANIC GARDEN

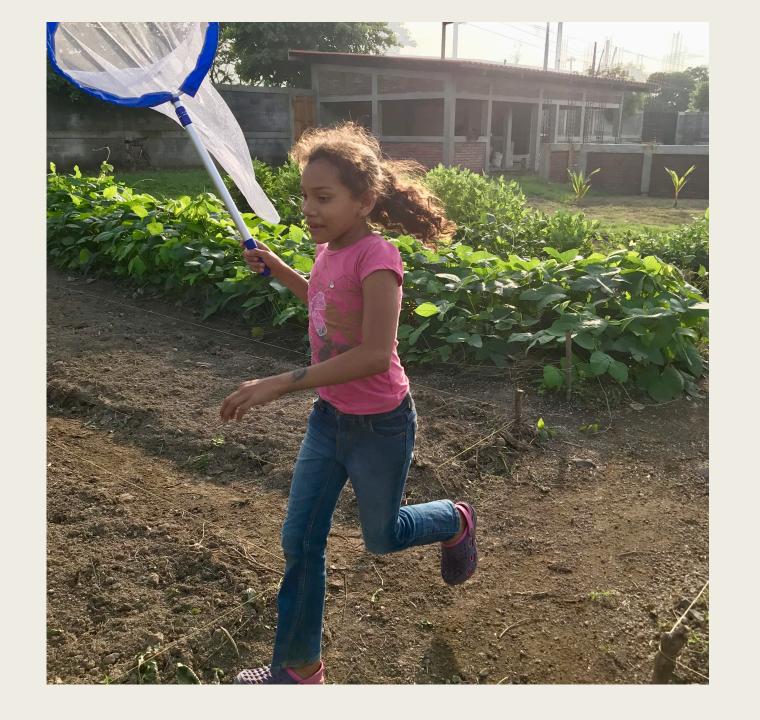
A center for learning and central to our holistic approach.

Students learn about growing their own food, organic gardening and healthy eating.

Subjects such as math, science, art and photography are applied in the garden, bringing classroom learning to daily life.

Maintained with the support of our college students.













HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE TODAY

- The first 10 years
- 10th Anniversary Our NEW Facility NicaPhoto 2.0 2020 – PRE-COVID
- Social/Political Crisis of 2018 & COVID-19: Two crises in two years and the impact.
- NicaPhoto 2021

The first 10 years...

Rented house - 1 large room, 3 small rooms, kitchen, ONE bathroom.

Connections, partnerships, visitors, growth and development.

KEY PARTNERS:

The Carver Foundation
Builders Beyond Borders
Westport Rotary Club
CT Quest for Peace
Level Up Village
Community Bots
Lesley University













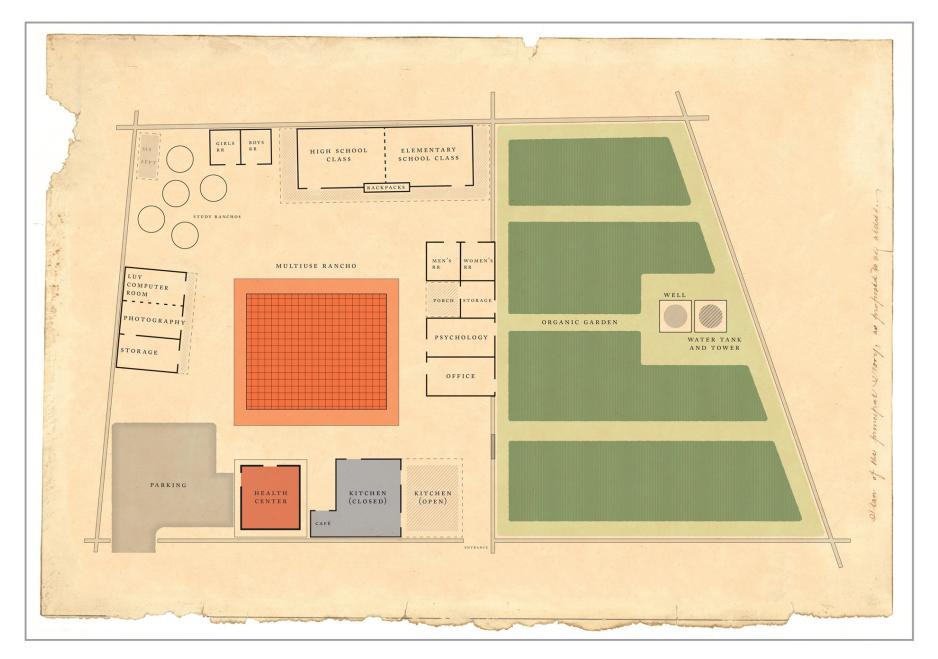


DECEMBER 2015

The NicaPhoto Board of Directors bought a piece of property, measuring just under one acre, on the highway in Nagarote, Nicaragua.

Development began JANUARY 2016 and ran through 2019.

























NICAPHOTO 2.0

2020 - Pre-COVID-19

































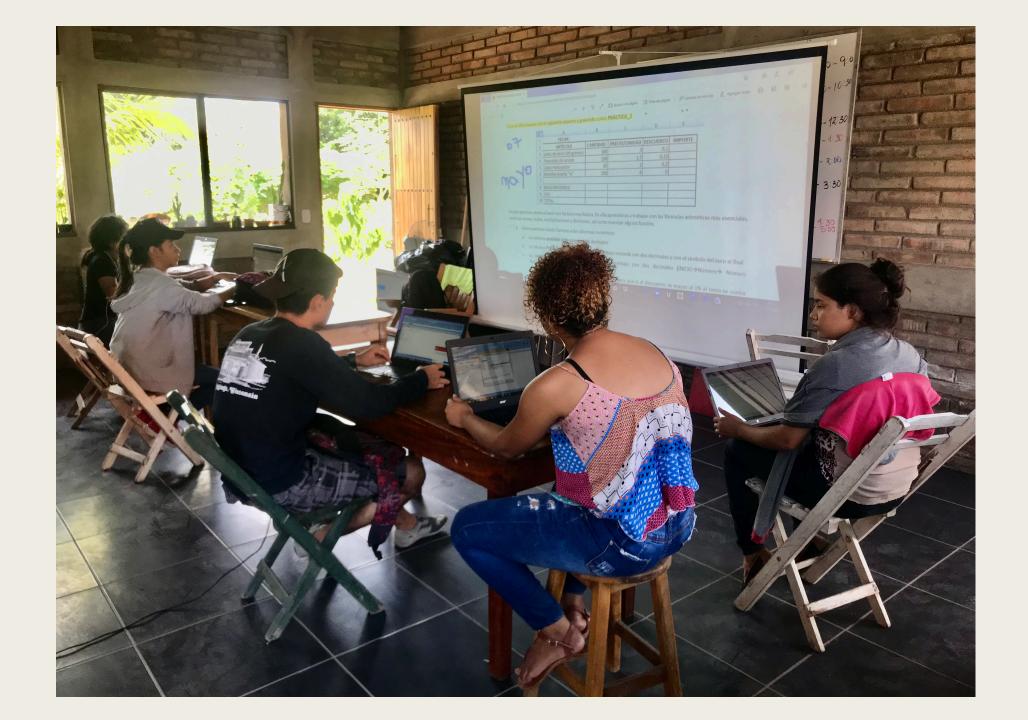












MARCH 6,2020 - 10th Anniversary & Inauguration of NicaPhoto













March 18, 2020

First COVID-19 cases reported by the Nicaraguan government.

Although NicaPhoto closed to students for 4 months we remained focused on our mission and became creative in how we would continue to achieve it.

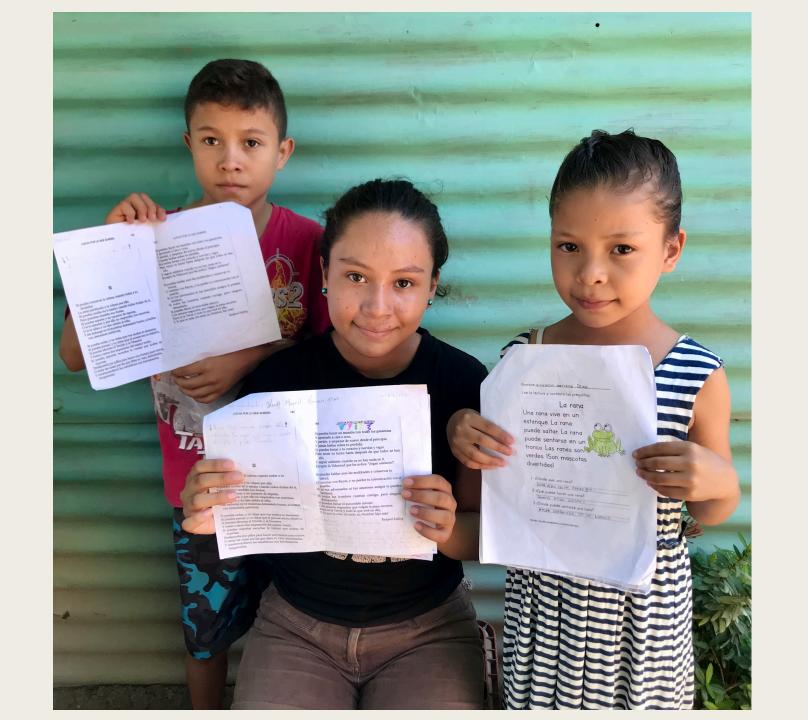
NICAPHOTO 2.0

& COVID-19, the second crisis for Nicaragua in two years.

The impact and our response.













LOS 8 MOMENTOS CLAVES DE LAVADO DE MANOS



DESPUÉS DE USAR EL BAÑO O LETRINA Y CAMBIAR PAÑALES



ANTES DE PREPARAR LOS ALIMENTOS O COMER



B DESPUÉS DE JUGAR O TOCAR ANIM-ALES Y SUS PERTENENCIAS



DESPUÉS DE HACER LIMPIEZA



D DESPUÉS DE JUGAR



d DESPUÉS DE ESTORNUDAR O TOSER



ANTES Y DESPUÉS DE TOCAR UNA



DESPUÉS DE VIAJAR EN TRANSPORTE



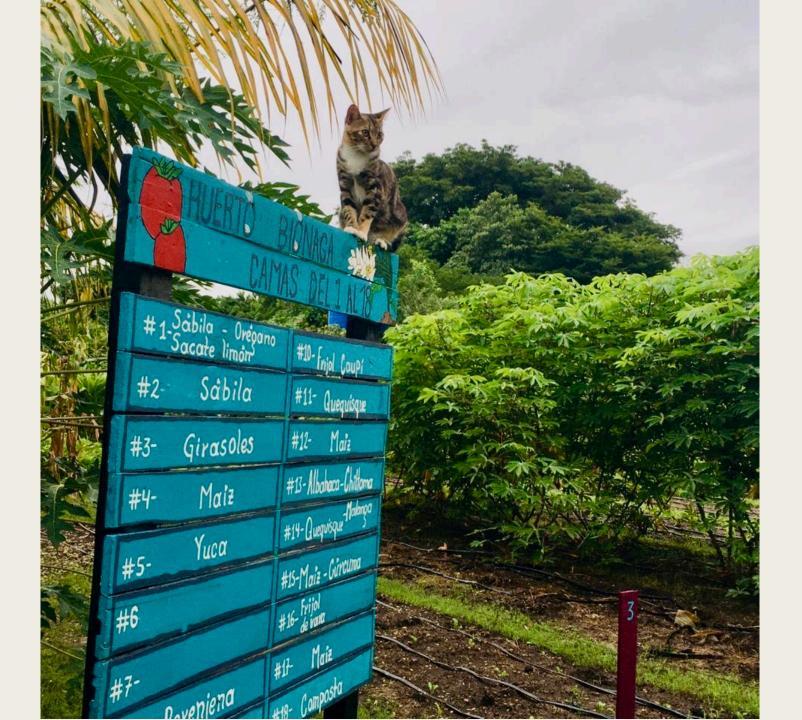








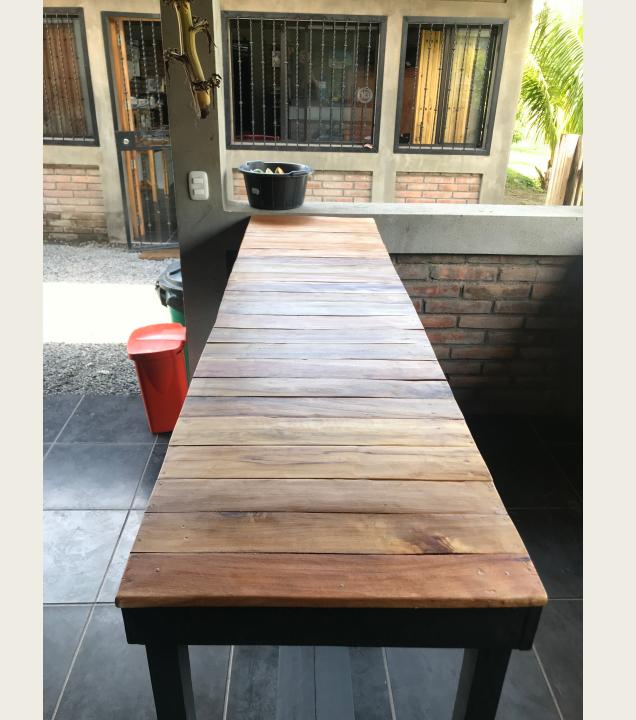


















NICAPHOTO 2.0

REOPENS TO STUDENTS AUGUST 1, 2020





































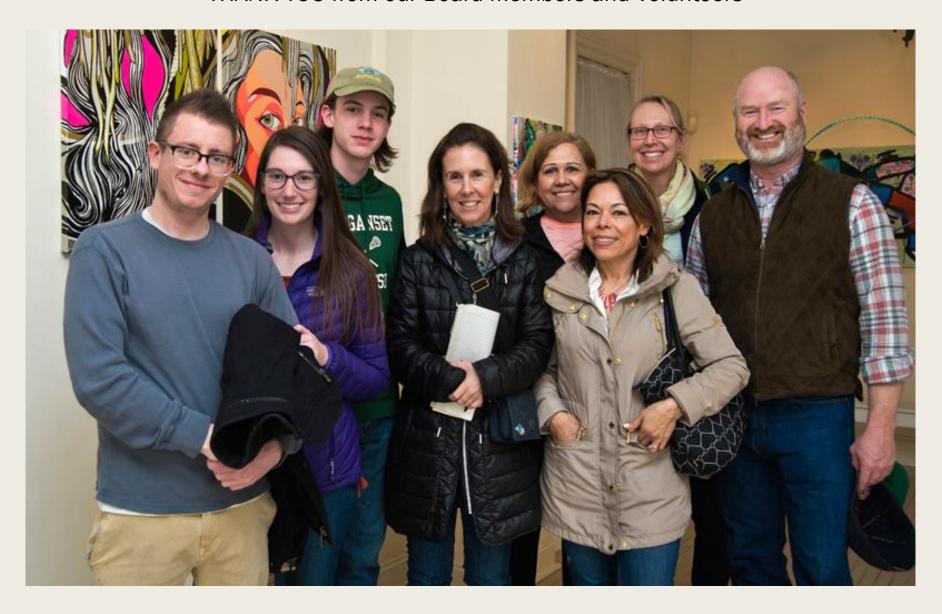
- Training for Staff & College Students JANUARY 2021
 - Bio-intensive Organic Garden Training for college students
 - Personal development
 - Art, Dance, Chorus
 - Cooking using produce from the garden
- Tutoring and reinforcement in Spanish, Math & English
 - Testing, evaluations, individual student plans

NEW Project for 2021

Aquaponics

As an addition to our organic garden/hot lunch program.

THANK YOU from our Board Members and Volunteers





THANK YOU!!!

To learn more about NicaPhoto visit:

www.nicaphoto.org

You can also follow us on:

www.instagram.com/nicaphotoproject/

www.facebook.com/nicaphoto/

Contact: ronnie@nicaphoto.org