

### ***Building Ties of Peace and Friendship***

This past year was a wonderful and adventurous one for our ecotour travelers! We had four trips with over sixty participants. In addition to our traditional activities (staying with San Ramón host families, experiencing the cloud forest at Finca Esperanza Verde, and working with our rural school partners), these groups enjoyed excursions to a poetry festival in Granada and to an NGO working with youth in León. Our goal with our tours is, as always, to strengthen the bonds between our two peoples, and this year with the support of our team in North Carolina and in San Ramón, we accomplished this very well. Come join us—you'll have a great time! Visit our web site ([www.san-ramon.org](http://www.san-ramon.org)) or email [kristine@san-ramon.org](mailto:kristine@san-ramon.org) for more information.

### ***San Ramón High School has a New Electrical System***

When SCSRN built four new classrooms at the high school last year, we noticed how old and dangerous the electrical system was, with some 90% of lights not working and too-small wires that could result in damage to anything that was plugged in. This past March, we partnered with the South Granville Rotary Club to design and install a new, safe system. We provided logistical support while the Rotarians raised over \$12,000 and provided the specialized labor. After one week, they left the school with a new and fully functional electrical system. We look forward to working with these super Rotarians again in the future!

## ***Reflections from Executive Director Anjie Price***



In my first year with SCSRN, I've been amazed by the commitment of the U.S. and San Ramón communities to the shared vision of cross-cultural understanding and dignified life conditions for all the members of these sister communities. If there is one thing that distinguishes this organization, it is that it is founded on sincere, life-long relationships. We refined our mission statement to more accurately reflect our commitment to a partnership with the people of San Ramón that is based on mutual respect and shared values. That statement has been the guiding force in our work to enhance our service to the San Ramón community, as well as the different U.S. communities who are involved in some way with our organization. Everyone on our team, North and South, is enthusiastic about SCSRN's bright future, and we thank you for being a part of this journey with us! I can be contacted at [anjie@san-ramon.org](mailto:anjie@san-ramon.org).



**Our Mission Statement:** *SCSRN partners with San Ramón, Nicaragua to support education and community development initiatives that build friendship, understanding, environmental preservation, and respect for human rights.*



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# SISTER COMMUNITIES OF SAN RAMÓN, NICARAGUA

Creating Opportunities and Hope in Rural Nicaragua

Fall 2015 Newsletter

## **Communicating for the First Time—Sign Language Classes for Deaf Children at Los Pipitos**

SCSRN has been a long-time supporter of Los Pipitos, a center for children with disabilities. This is because we have seen firsthand the amazing work that they do, attending to over 90 children, providing free physical therapy and early intervention education for children who would otherwise receive no specialized attention.

This year, in addition to our annual support for the work of Los Pipitos, we funded a class for 15 deaf children and their families to learn sign language. Most of the children participating in this class are ages 7 to 12 and have never learned sign language before. Since many of them were born to illiterate parents, this means that this is the first time they and their family members have been able to communicate beyond basic gestures. They are also interacting with literate deaf people for the first time, because the teachers of the class are members of the National Deaf Association. Once again, we are thrilled to be a part of the miracles that happen at Los Pipitos!



## **Long-lasting Benefits for the Sister Schools of the Rural School Partner Program**

For many years, our rural school partner (RSP) program has been connecting schools, churches, and families in the U.S. with rural primary schools in San Ramón. The U.S. partners in the RSP program commit to a \$500 donation each year that goes toward meeting the most immediate needs of the school. Traditionally, these funds

have been used to buy school supplies twice a semester, since many children stop attending school because their parents can't afford to buy supplies. However, this year some schools have opted to stretch the school supplies from the first semester and use the funds in the second semester for other projects, such as building tanks and laying pipes to bring clean water to the school, repairing fences, doors, and walkways, and adding extra-curricular activities.

At the El Trentino school, the teachers and parents use the funds to hire an art teacher to give Saturday classes. The teacher they hired happens to be a graduate of the art program that SCSRN funds at the local School of Art! The children and teachers are very excited about this opportunity, and plan to host an exhibition of the children's artwork at the end of the year, and you can bet we will be in attendance!

## **Improving the Educational Experience, One Classroom at a Time**

When pre-school students in the rural communities of Bella Vista and Matazano returned to school at the beginning of this year, they came back to a brand-new classroom, funded by SCSRN and built by their community. In both schools, overcrowding was forcing teachers to hold class outside at Bella Vista or in the school kitchen at Matazano. We also put in a new latrine in Bella Vista and concrete steps to facilitate the steep entrance into Matazano.

We're also happy to announce our next construction project: two new classrooms and a kitchen for Wabule School.

Like many rural schools, Wabule suffers from overcrowding and many students have to receive class outside. The school kitchen is also in grave disrepair; the holes in the walls and ceiling make it unsafe to keep the rice and beans for lunches there, so they have to be stored in someone's home and carried every day to school. Also, the open fire on which the mothers cook the lunch fills the small space (and the ladies' lungs) with black smoke. At our recent Celebration for Children we raised \$20,000 to build two new classrooms, repair the kitchen, and build a clean and efficient wood burning cook stove.

## **Bringing Light to Darkened Rooms—Solar Panels for Rural Schools**

In December 2014, we collaborated with United Solar Initiative (USI) to install solar panels in two rural schools: San Antonio de Upa and Mina Verde #2. This was the second of two solar panel projects that we have completed with USI in San Ramón. The purpose of installing these panels was to provide the schools with lights for adult classes and other community activities at night and to provide schools with a revenue source through the charging of cell phones. After a number of follow-up visits this year, we're happy to report that both schools are offering night classes and making money for the upkeep of the solar panel system and other school needs. We're continuing our collaboration for another year with the installation of panels in two more rural schools: San Jose and Verapaz.

**SCSRN Depends on Your Support!** We could not carry out our mission without our generous donors. Donations to SCSRN can be made online at [www.san-ramon.org](http://www.san-ramon.org) or by mail to SCSRN, PO Box 766, Durham, NC 27707. Thank you!

