

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME or KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

By Bob Saar

Americans are not uncaring people, regardless of the world's image of us as warmongering capitalistic tyrants.

When you get down to the first-person level, Americans are as human — and humanitarian — as anyone, anywhere.

Anielka Gutierrez knows that firsthand, and she passes that knowledge along to the indigenous people with whom she works in the barrios of Nicaragua.

Gutierrez teaches young Nica children at the Escuela Padre Antonio Stella school in Granada, the oldest city in Central America. She doesn't stop there, though: Gutierrez moonlights as the local facilitator for a Colorado nonprofit organization that assists poverty-

level children in Latin America.

"I want to do as much as I can for these children," Gutierrez said. "Teaching them in school is not enough."

Gutierrez spent much of last week walking the barrios with Kathy Adams, director of the Lyons-based foundation Empowerment International (EI). EI provides the otherwise-unaffordable shoes and clothing required to attend public school in Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

Gutierrez has an infectious, thousand-watt smile that brings the kids running, and she couples that with a no-nonsense directness and sense of leadership that brings an unruly child back into line without harsh words or voice.

"Anielka is great," Adams

said about Gutierrez. "Our work here in Granada is really growing, thanks to her."

Gutierrez, who has taught in Nicaraguan schools for the last ten of her 27 years, would like to work full-time for EI, but knows that the funds Adams raises in the US must go for the supplies first, and Gutierrez has her own ends that need to be met, so she continues to carry both jobs.

"Something more needs to be done for the children," she said. "At the same time, I would like to do something more for myself. I'm happy with them, but also I'd like to enrich my own experience."

Gutierrez believes that in addition to learning basic academic subjects, her children need to develop the skills

that enhance self-esteem, empowerment and community.

Saber es poder. Knowledge is power.

For herself, Gutierrez said that includes expanding her own education and gaining fluency in English.

Adams wants to help Gutierrez realize her dreams by hiring her on full-time and bringing her to America for more training here. She said that doing so would enable EI to achieve their goals for 2007.

"In 2006, we hope to develop the program in Nicaragua to include English classes full time," Adams said. EI also wants each child to do volunteer community service as part of their commitment to school, something

Gutierrez would handle well.

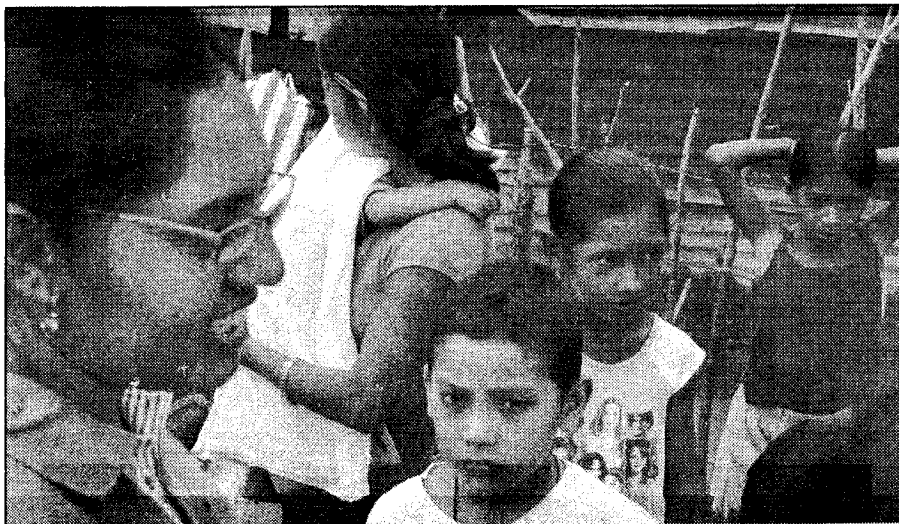
Adams said that this year's focus is upon refining the program in order to prepare for expansion.

"We hope to copy this program into another barrio in 2007," she said. "The idea is to continue to plant seeds, and to allow each community to take ownership over time."

Anielka Gutierrez is ready to help the Americans help her children.

Empowerment International is located on the Web at www.empowermentInternational.org.

This concludes a three-part series on Kathy Adams and her work in South American countries with poor children.



Anielka Gutierrez talks with barrio children in Granada, Nicaragua February 2006. Gutierrez works for the Lyons-based foundation Empowerment International, which assists poverty-level children in Nicaragua and Costa Rica by providing the



Kathy Adams of Lyons bonds with barrio children in Granada, Nicaragua February 2006. Adams is director of the Lyons-based foundation Empowerment International, which provides the otherwise-unaffordable shoes and clothing required for children