

## Pictures



The children of Villa Esperanza say goodbye to participants on El's first annual Adventure Tour



Tour Participants enjoy a dance performance in the barrio



El's Nicaraguan Director Aneilka with several smiling El students

## Summer in Review

Our growth and success only continues to skyrocket as summer 2006 comes to an end. Never before has EI had such a dedicated team both at base camp in the US and internationally. In fact, Empowerment International volunteer staff has more than doubled in this past year. The staff's hard work combined with the devotion of the children of Villa Esperanza showed with a graduation and return rate of 95% this year! We would like to extend our deep and sincere gratitude to all our supporters. Without you, this growth simply does not happen.

Sincerely,

Kathy Adams  
Director/Founder

## Adventure and Discovery in Nicaragua (By Dan Boyer and Marshall McCormick)

"Do I need to get out more often, or was this past experience for you (as it was for me), one of the most rewarding, satisfying, fun and emotionally fulfilling trips you have ever experienced? It was just plain spectacular; you planned a remarkable experience for us all."- Susan, Participant, 1st annual EI Adventure Tour

From the beginning, this was how we envisioned EI's first annual adventure tour in Nicaragua -- ten days and nine nights in paradise wasn't sufficient, we wanted our EI visitors to experience the warmth and connection that we have developed with the people of Villa Esperanza. So we created the tour to include activities that allowed the participants to feel the love of the barrio that we work with on a daily basis as well as taking in Nicaragua's beautiful sights. We could only hope that the participants would develop a lasting human awareness, a loving acknowledgement that would serve as a mutual connection in this vast world.

Four brave souls chose to make the journey to join us in experiencing the essence of Nicaragua on our first tour. Participants enjoyed 10 days of festive presentations and games with the children of Villa Esperanza as well as hiking volcanoes, zooming along jungle ziplines, and relaxing on the Pacific coast, to name a few. Watching this opportunity unfold, we witnessed a greatly positive and awesome cultural exchange between the children and families of the barrio and the four participants. More importantly however, it has built lasting impressions that will construct greater understandings between the different lives of the children in the barrio and the tour participants. We are very thankful for the support from this year's participants, and would like to invite many more of you to join us on EI's second annual tour in 2007!

Empowerment International's second tour is March 2 to 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007! For more info check out the website [www.empowermentinternational.org/donortrip](http://www.empowermentinternational.org/donortrip) or call 303.823.6495.



My name is Marluz, I'm 13 years old, and I was born in Granada, Nicaragua. I have always dreamed of going to school so that my kids will not have to sell everyday in the streets like I do. This is no life for a child to have. Thanks to the foundation (EI), I now have the opportunity to attend school. I get to go to school in the morning, and sell only in the afternoons now. I study as hard as I can in the free time that I have so I can be somebody in life. In my classes I received grades of 100% in all but one this year. If I can keep studying and learning and getting good grades, I hope that I can grow up and become a nurse or a doctor someday. If I were a nurse I could help everybody that needs it, but can't afford it. I hope that the foundation (EI) can continue to help me and others so that we can someday achieve these dreams.

## Living in Nicaragua (by Darcy Phillips)

During my walk tonight, I was crossing the street and smelled nice fresh-cut green grass. Seconds later I smelt the dirty water smell of Lake Nicaragua and was sorry the fresh smell had gone away. I long for fresh air as my lungs have been taking a beating these past couple weeks. My 'mama' here recommended medication that I have been taking and only hope it will go away soon. I continued my walk along the water to see women doing sit-ups on a cement wall and then aerobic type exercises in the grass. In the distance, I could see what looks like a tennis court. As I walked closer I saw people playing soccer in this 'tennis court'. It was a cement ground and one guy fell and rolled around a couple times on the hard cement. How awful to have to play on cement because there are not many real soccer fields here. As I walked, I could hear the birds chirping a melodic sound. I watched children (who had just finished school at 5 PM) play on the swings in their school uniforms, saw couples sitting on benches, and watched the Eskimo cart (ice cream!) and *refresco* cart (like slurpies) go by ringing their bells. White birds flew above the dirty, polluted, lake in the distance.

Tears ran down my face as I thought about Guillermo, a first grader I worked with today that wrote his four's backwards and didn't know how to recognize letters or know the alphabet. Guillermo sat eagerly in his chair beside me with a huge smile waiting for me to tell the next letter or number to write. I thought about Marluz, one of our best students, who asks me every time she sees me when I will visit her. She gets 100's in almost every class and attends school every day. She lives in a house made of cement and plastic. She lives with her mother, sister, and two young nieces. Her mother makes tortillas and enchiladas that Marluz sells every day from 2-4 PM. She is the only working person in the family. I then thought about Jose Luis, a preschooler who the first day he met me was the most timid person and now I can not walk by his house without him asking me to come in. I feel bad every time I have to tell a child 'another day I will visit' as I would like to spend every day with every child but that is just not possible. I can think of something special about every child in the program so it is even difficult to think about just a few of them. I am just so delighted to have the opportunity to work with them.

My tears turned into a smile as I thought about how welcoming Nicaraguans are. The children and families in the barrio greet me every time they see me. When I am in their homes they often offer me drinks (and sometimes food). These are people who live on barely anything yet are happy to share what they have with me and never ask for anything in return. I don't think I have ever heard the phrase 'my home is yours and you are welcome any time' as much as I have in Nicaragua and they truly mean it! As I got up from the bench, I felt very grateful for everything I have. It is easy to forget that half the world lives on less than \$2 a day

*EI is delighted that Darcy Phillips has joined us for the next year to work with the projects in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Darcy has a master's degree in non-profit management and a background in statistical analysis. To keep up on Darcy's year long adventure and service, stay tuned for future articles by Darcy or check out her blog on the Empowerment International website.*



Darcy Phillips reviewing participants school work