

**SIEG donated \$200 to assist in the efforts of Molly Barber who is a documentarian in Nicaragua. This is an update from her below sent to us by Kerri Cobb of SI Susanville.**

Hey Kerri!

So if you're reading this to the other Soroptimist women, tell them I said "Hola! Buenos Dias!"

Ladies, everything about this trip is absolutely crazy (in a good way). I've only been here going on my second week, but it feels like a month: and I think that's due to a couple of things: culture shock, people-overload, and how different the (human) trafficking situation is over here.

It took me a while to get through Customs my first couple of hours here. Finally, after customs I met Steve and a couple of missionaries he has staying at the Castle (what they call the recovery house- mostly because it looks like a castle). We waited at the airport for a while because his mom was also flying in that night. After we got her, we were on our way to the castle.

People drive crazy here, like in both lanes until you see a car coming towards you from the opposite direction. You only have to wear a seatbelt if you are in the front seat; and in fact you don't even have to be in a seat if you aren't in the front. I saw a group of people all hanging out on a flatbed semi.

We were probably about 10 minutes into the drive when Steve says, "we're going to stop and invite some of the girls working to the pool party this weekend." So within my first 6 hours in Nicaragua I was already going out for street outreach, which I have found a huge passion for. What really surprised me here was how different (human) trafficking looks.

It was nothing like going out on the streets with Leah in Sacramento where the girls were afraid to talk to you or constantly looking over their shoulders and every other conversation was with a pimp. Here, the girls (and I want to emphasize the word **girls**) run up to the car, not a care in the world. No one's watching them. As I climbed out of the back of the car I was greeted with a kiss on the cheek, which is a common salutation in Nicaragua, by a little 10-year old girl. I remember her mostly because it was the first time I was greeted like that here. I just remember looking at her and thinking, God, she's so young...

The girls were in good spirits, laughing and joking with us. We went to three different places before heading home. Steve gave me a quick tour of the castle and then walked me up to my room on the third floor (which I have all to myself). Before leaving me he said, "oh yeah, the windows are open so if the bats fly out of the holes in the ceiling they can just go out the windows; we'll have the handyman fix it when he gets back next week". Hahaha, so yeah, I was a little sketched but nothing every came down, at least not that I'm aware of and Sergio, the handyman, had my ceiling patched up in no time. I like the third floor mostly because my only worry is the bats; whereas the missionaries, who have a little house besides the castle, have already found a scorpion under one of their beds, and the group before them killed a snake. No thank you! I'm good where I am on the third floor.

So, we have a couple of families living here. Jenny and her three kids- Jenny jr., Sofia, and Jose. Then there's Dania and her daughter Helen. And of course Ericka, who is 9 months pregnant and was

supposed to go in Monday to have the baby delivered, but the doctors told her to wait two weeks so hopefully she can have a natural childbirth.

Besides the live-ins, Steven and Kenya also run a day program for about 12-15 girls and women. They come here for about 4 hours a day for 3 months. Then they graduate. The program focuses on teaching the women about Christianity and the bible, but also about a trade. And at the end of the program they are given the means to start up a business that could make them really good money here. Steve and Kenya will do surprise drop-in visits to the places the girls say they will set their businesses up; and if they are there working, they will get a stipend. If not, they are cut off; and if they want help again will have to go through the program again.

On the second night we were here we went out and did street outreach again; this time we took Kenya's famous burritos (about 120 of them) with us. We spent about three hours driving around and inviting girls to come to the pool party. When we got to the area with the young 10-year old girl from the night before, we found out she's pregnant.

It's heartbreaking here. There's no real manipulation that the girls are going through; it's just like a vicious cycle that kinds of reminds me of the caste system. It's like these girls are set out to "help with rent and other expenses" when they are hella young, and before long they are pregnant because no one wears condoms here. And then they are stuck; it's the only way they can take care of the children. And then you have the men in this country who believe if you are staying in their house (the majority of the live-ins were passed around by family services to other family members or even like foster parents) and the men in the households believe they have "free range" as Steven put it. It's heart breaking, but the majority of kids living here have been abused. That's why Steve and Kenya try and work with the women and girls to break the cycle. And that's why they are always trying to recruit for future programs.

They throw a lot of pool parties and events to try and draw people into the program, but most of it is from word of mouth by former girls who want to see their friends get help. The last pool party we had was a riot. Steve threw candy from the second story and it was a rat race for the kids... and the adults. You saw people sticking chicken into their pockets and just eating and eating until they couldn't eat any more. Steve said these people don't go to events like that and most likely it's something that the kids will talk about the rest of their lives.

The next big event will be the graduation which is November 15, and then the Christmas party in December.

There's so much going on; I'm sure I left out a bunch but I'll let you go. I'll keep in touch and might possibly be able to send a DVD... Although you can't send packages here; it takes forever and a day which explains why Customs was so crazy with people packing DVD players, kid's toys and everything else under the sun. But I'm sure we can work out something.

Hope everything going well.  
Catch ya later,  
Molly