

Search for a Coordinator for Cultural Center of Batahola Norte, Managua, Nicaragua

The Cultural Center in Batahola Norte was founded in 1983 by Father Angel Torrellas, OP of Spain and Sister Margarita Navarro, CSJ of New Orleans. Sadly, both of these wonderful people died less than five months apart: Margarita in September, 2001 and Angel in January, 2002. Their untimely deaths have left the Center without its original leaders; however, they have left a competent five-person administrative team who currently carry on the mission and spirit of these two founders.

The Centre is located in a poor barrio of some 25,000 persons in the western part of Managua. The buildings are one storied classroom structures (except for a library which has two floors) with interspersed open patios and beautiful murals painted by volunteers and the children themselves. There is also a small café where soft drinks or quick, simple "fast foods, Latin style" are served. The largest area serves various functions: dance rehearsals; music practice in groups; auditorium, and, on Sunday evening, as a Chapel for Mass. Music at that service is provided by the Center's wonderful choral group.

Mission Statement:

This statement is imprinted on a marble slab in the Center of a garden dedicated to Angel and Margarita. Translated loosely from the Spanish, it reads:

Our mission is to live a style of life more congenial and just, according to the Gospels and directed towards the poor. By way of culture and an integral education, we will demonstrate: human rights, self esteem and equality. We believe in the empowerment of the person and the value of sharing what we are and have, in order to transform this society into the Kingdom of God.

Administration and Supportive Parties

Coordinator: (position currently unfilled)

This person bears final responsibility for the overall functioning of the Center, though shares much of this responsibility, for the day to day operations, with the administrative team. The goal will be for this group to become more and more self directive. The coordinator will monitor the use of all funds; help to prepare and give final approval, along with the board, to the annual budget. Plans, along with the team, for all new or on-going projects. One very important responsibility is to communicate frequently with persons who donate money or services to the Center in order that these persons/groups may know that their donations were responsibly utilized. This may require a good amount of correspondence or entertaining groups who wish to visit the Center from the US or other countries. The coordinator meets on a regular basis with: the board members in Managua, with the administrative team and with the "socios".

Administrative Team:

This is a group of five persons, all of whom have university preparation, and all of whom were part of the Center as students themselves. Each one bears responsibility for a specific area such as: adm. and finance, educational programs, cultural/library, human resources.

Board of Directors:

The board is based in Managua and is made up of five persons, brought together by Sister Margie shortly before her death. One is a Spanish Dominican priest, community of Padre Angel; one is a Nicaraguan sister who is a member of a North American congregation; the remaining three are North Americans who work in Nicaragua in various projects.

The "Friends of Batahola"

This is a group of 14 persons, three of whom are members of S. Margie's community, who recently became incorporated as a tax exempt organization and whose purpose it is to collect and manage donations for the Center and to offer continued support. This Board is based in Baton Rouge, LA.

Staff

There are approximately 25 persons on the staff, most of whom are the teachers of the various courses taught within the Center. All staff members are termed "socios" and participate in periodic evaluations, meet regularly with the adm. team and coordinator and help to establish the goals of the Center.

Current Activities

Education of youth and adults of Batahola and surrounding barrios has been the main thrust of the Center since its early days. Courses within the Center include the following, plus several others not listed here:

Computer Science: The Center has acquired about 15 computers donated from groups in Spain and the Presbyterian Church in U.S. Currently they use Windows 98 and teach Microsoft power point, excel, word perfect, etc.

Professional ethics is an integral part of the course.

Communication Skills: Typing, orthography, human relations, administration, bookkeeping are included in this course.

Alphabetization: There are three levels taught which provide adults with sixth grade education when completed. This course is recognized by the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education.

Cosmetology: Includes hair cutting, dyeing, hairdos, manicure, pedicure etc. Free haircuts are often given on Saturdays to children in the barrio by the students.

Natural Medicine: Massage, reproductive health, nutrition, meditation, etc. are included in this course.

The Arts: Creative expression, manual arts, drawing, painting, theater and dance are taught by a variety of instructors.

Music: Although this is considered part of the entire arts program, the very extent of this operation demands special explanation.

Padre Angel trained in Spain as a classical musician and had spent these years mainly dedicated to enhancing the musical education of youth. His choral group and those who play multiple musical instruments or do native dance have become quite well known throughout Nicaragua, and have toured in Canada, the US and throughout Mexico and Central America. They have produced several CD's and tapes. Other instructors are now involved in this program and it is the hope of all involved in the Center that this great legacy will continue uninterrupted despite Padre Angel's untimely death.

Scholarship Program:

In addition to the courses offered within the Center, youth from the barrio are assisted financially to attend regular government schools at the primary, secondary and university levels. These funds provide for books, supplies, transportation and lunches as there is no tuition required in local schools. The recipients of scholarships are required to participate in social services such as: assisting in reading groups for younger children, teaching adult education, etc.

Other Programs:

The Center has, over these many years, found ways in which to reach out to other needy communities in many, many ways. After hurricane Mitch, for example, S. Margie gathered funds from all over the world and supervised the construction of nearly 100 new houses. She remained involved with these families and this involvement will continue by those who succeed her work in the work. A nearby grammar school, now owned and run by local people from the Ministry of Education, was built by donations obtained by S. Margie and Padre Angel when there was need for such a venture during early days in the barrio. On a much more modest scale, the team continues to find ways of expressing their concern for the wider community's needs.

Qualities Anticipated in the Coordinator:

The person we are searching for as a coordinator would be one who is bilingual: male or female; sister, layperson or priest; who has some experience in administration and finance; works well with youth; is justice oriented with a personal commitment to the poor. We need someone who is energetic and creative; one who will not only help to continue the current works of the Center, but will provide new vision and direction for many future endeavours.

Interested parties are requested to send resumes to the address below. The final decision on the choice of candidates will be made by the Board of Directors in Managua.

For more information or to forward a resume contact:

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