



Ruach Newsletter no 2: January 2018

Introduction

In our first periodic Newsletter we reported that we had moved to a new Home on 1st August. We have had a busy six months since then. The setting up of a community home for intellectually disabled adults and their carers and improving the situation of this vulnerable population group is challenging everywhere in the world, but even more so in a country like Nicaragua that lacks a legal framework, special care and education facilities for the intellectually disabled, and training opportunities for Nicaraguans to work in this field. The Ruach Foundation therefore has challenges galore.

But we are happy with what we have been able to achieve in recent months. Yes, there are delays with the implementation of some of our plans: we are after all dependent on other people, and on the circumstances of life that sometimes can throw our priorities into jeopardy. We are pioneering and part of that is a lack of experience and some passivity in dealing with unexpected situations. But we are focused and guided by our strategic plan which helps us to move forward!

We'd like to share some of the recent activities, developments and concerns with you.

Newsflashes

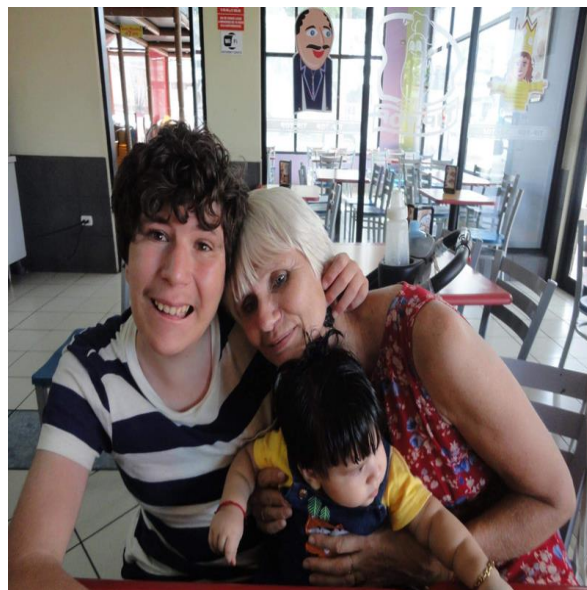
Progress with our residents Daniel and Loyda:

We are grateful for tiny steps forward. Daniel now finally seems to have a fixed time for using the loo every evening which has reduced inconveniences for our home care assistants. Loyda is becoming more aware of small domestic chores: she is able to put her own chair back after she has moved one

when she participates in a group activity. *This says something about the quality of our work. The assistants move beyond the role of carer and become more tuned in to working with a focus on development.*

Recruitment of night shift assistants: 24/7 we need two staff in the Home to look after our four residents. This was a heavy burden on Astrid, the Home coordinator, and the one living-in home care assistant. In November we were able to recruit two part-time nightshift assistants who can be called upon to cover for the two permanent staff at times for statutory time-off or emergencies.

Ruach's participation in an autism seminar: Astrid was asked to lead a discussion for fathers mothers, professionals and students about how to work with autistic children, in a meeting organized in the capital Managua by Vision Inclusiva.



She shared her experience in building bridges between herself and her autistic son Jonathan with this group. Autism is a relatively new topic in Nicaragua and there is a tendency to

use' autism' as a label for everything that appears to be 'wrong' with a child. There is a great deal of ignorance about autism, not helped by the fact that the main characteristic of autistic children - they live in 'their' world and seem not to have much desire to leave that world, because they have a limitation in relating to other people- this characteristic is not easily assessed till the child is at least 18 months old.

Astrid writes: *"I think what's most important for the audience is not the 'technical story' but hearing someone speaking from the heart. It was a great opportunity to try and inspire other parents and to give them some ideas of how they can relate better to their child with autism and to create more understanding for autistic persons"*

Managing the home and team building:

In October Astrid spent more than two weeks away from Ruach on her visit to the Netherlands. This period proved to be a good test case how well the staff was able to run the place during her absence.

Astrid writes: *"I spent a lot of time in my first days back home finding out from all employees how well the place had been run during my absence. My motivation was to turn 'experiences' into 'learning points', at the team as well as individual levels. My absence highlighted the weaker aspects in our functioning, but it is crucial that we do not get stuck in what has been, but analyze why it happened the way it did, so that we find structural solutions to problems. It is great to see that all of us would like to grow in our roles and to become more robust as a team"*.

Teambuilding retreats:

The team building process is greatly helped by quarterly team building retreats for all staff. These are usually lead by Father Joe from Managua. Father Joe is originally from

the US, but has been living in Nicaragua for over 25 years, working for basic church communities. He also runs a small project in support of physically disabled people, and he likes bringing some of them to our retreats. Meeting Father Joe and his friends is like gold to us, especially for our assistants, as for them it is a great eye opener that a lot more can be achieved with disabled people than they would have thought possible.



A scene of the end-of-year retreat

"They realize that progress in working with disabled people often depends on people in their circle who see 'opportunities' rather than 'limitations' from early on. And we know that the same applies to what is possible for Daniel, Loyda, Jose and Jonathan who now depend on us to believe in the progress they can make, even if it's only by a millimeter at a time!"

Staffing:

Volunteers keep helping Ruach with office work, including book keeping and accounts management. It was unfortunate that one of our assistants in the Home resigned, in spite of seemingly enjoying her work. Ruach continues encouraging and supporting its staff, and we now work with 'levels of empowerment', which helps staff to absorb new task and feel more secure in their roles.

Involvement of the residents' families:

We try to involve the families of our residents whenever we can, and encourage regular visits. For the families of our residents it is also a big event when one of their relatives becomes a resident of our community home, and it is a big adjustment, not only for the residents, the Ruach staff, but also for the family of the residents.



Loyda's birthday party with her family

The mother of Daniel and Loyda, Doña Yolanda, was initially reserved. But she became very cooperative once she knew how Ruach operates and when she could see that Ruach was able to give her two children a better life than she herself could. She visits Loyda and Daniel at least twice a month, usually with her daughter with whom she lives, and at the end of the month she contributes whatever she can in kind: oil, beans, rice, diapers that Daniel and Loyda still need, etc. She also takes her children to the doctor when necessary. This saves us a lot of hospital waiting time, and it's also practical because dona Yolanda has still got legal responsibility for her children. She appreciates the progress that Daniel and Loyda are making.

Astrid's trip to the Netherlands

After working and living in Nicaragua for two years to establish the Ruach Home,

Astrid finally had an opportunity for a visit to the Netherlands for two weeks in October 2017 to meet family and friends as well as have time to promote Ruach's work in Nicaragua *"I had a wonderful time and it was heart-warming to feel that so many of you are touched by our work for the Ruach Home and Activities Centre."*



Presentation in my former church in Leiden

The main successes were:

1. The office of Week Dutch Missionaries (WNM) in the Hague approved a 4 year extension of their support to cover her social and medical premiums and one return air ticket. (NB She asked for a 2 year extension)
2. Visits to various church communities and a committee of The Ark community in Gouda resulted in pledges for support
3. Meeting the Board of Vivir Juntos for the first again resulted in new local publicity and a new impulse to the Leiden-Juigalpa twinning link.
4. Meeting up with UK-based Eric Jager, the translator of the Vivir Juntos website, and discuss approaches to seeking support for Ruach outside the Netherlands. e.g. via Global Giving. Together with Eric Astrid visited Henk, whom she has known for 35 years.



Latest on Global Giving (GG)

Ruach has tried to benefit from having qualified as a GG vetted charity as much as possible, but we are still learning. It certainly has made it easier to seek financial assistance outside the Netherlands in the Americas. Ruach has committed itself to publishing brief but frequent updates on the latest news from Juigalpa. Ruach has got off to a good start. Global Giving assesses its vetted member charities on how they operate besides how successful the fundraising has been. Early January Ruach received a message from GG saying that *'Fundacion Cristiana Comuni-taria para Personas con Discapacidad Ruach is an active member of the Global Giving community with a Rewards Superstar status as of December 31st, 2017'*. As such we are among the Top Ranked organizations!



We are also pleased to announce that soon Global Giving will be able to receive donations not only in GBP (£) and USD (\$), but also in other major currencies including EUR (€), Canadian and Australian dollars.

HENK'S INSPIRING FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: LIFE AT ITS BEST

The undoubted highlight of my Holland visit was to meet Henk (not his real name) again. Henk is a valued friend of mine whom I first met 35 years ago when he received treatment in a Dutch institute for Forensic Psychiatric Care (FPC). Throughout the years Henk has been supporting my work in Latin America, and has upped his gifts after the Ruach Foundation was established. Henk now lives

in an institution for long-term FPC in the province of Brabant, Netherlands.

Henk started his Ruach involvement by talking to his inmates about Ruach, later in a church service, and later again he was able to arrange that he and his interested friends could ask me questions via an especially approved Skype link. Next was that he set up a Ruach stall for the annual Christmas Fair inside the compound that attracts many visitors from the 'outside'. Henk provided information about our project and sold or auctioned goods (donated by staff and inmates) and raised more than \$300 for the Ruach Foundation. The institute's pastor supported Wim by agreeing to dedicate the proceeds of the collection in the Christmas service to Ruach. The church services are also ideal occasions for Henk to provide updates on Ruach's work and to announce his next campaign(s)!!

In the period leading up to Easter Henk is cooking a meal (a pleasant break from institutional nosh!) once a week for between 15 to 40 inmates who pledge to donate a small amount to Ruach for their supper. The pastor has been seen helping Henk peel potatoes, and a senior manager has offered to pay for the cost of the ingredients for all meals. **Isn't this life for all involved at its best?**

Are you also inspired by Henk's story and campaign?

Then please tell us via ruachjuigalpa@gmail.com, and we'll tell Henk! For any other info, please also use this address

Consider making a small donation via either (i) the Ruach page on the GG website: <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/fundacionruach> (in £, US\$) or (ii) via www.vivirjuntos.nl in €.

**Your involvement means the world to us.
Together we can make a difference!**