



Ruach Newsletter 3: May 2018

In this 3rd quarterly Newsletter the main theme is 'our Community Home'. How do the residents fare, how do we select new residents and maintain contact with the families of our residents? Community life also has its ups and downs, but we see a challenge in every situation we face and learn from it, so that we end up being stronger and more flexible.

We also will share some 'Newsflashes' and information about our fund-raising efforts.

Jose left the Ruach Home

The saddest event of the past months is that Jose, our 4th resident, quite unexpectedly left our Home. Jose had settled down well since he joined us in August 2017, but matters slid down when Jose's younger cousin Alfredo (who was nominated by Jose's family to be their representative), defaulted on his responsibilities and virtually lost contact with Jose. Around Christmas two US-based sisters of Jose came to visit Nicaragua. They had initially been very supportive of Jose's move to the Ruach home, and proposed that Tania, another cousin, should take over as the family's representative. However, matters unraveled in the weekend before the sisters returned to the US. They asked (without advance notice) to take Jose with them for a few nights away to spend time with the family. As we knew Jose would get unsettled for longer periods away we agreed that they would take Jose for two nights. Late into the last day of his time away one of the sisters phoned requesting an extra night. When we referred to our initial agreement something snapped and one hour later the family was on the doorstep to announce that they would take Jose away from the home, for good. And so it happened. A day later, Alfredo, Tania and Astrid had a quiet conversation to try to understand what had happened. The cousins said they knew that Jose felt at home at Ruach, and were sad he was taken away, but that their opinion did not carry weight within Jose's family.



Protecting intellectually disabled persons

We feel sad of course about the way Jose left us. Jose's family violated our rules, so we are now working on a stricter detailed agreement document that governs the admission and related matters. To give the document more weight, this document would have to be signed in the presence of a lawyer. Of course families could still not honor agreements, but at least we will have done the most we can to protect our residents from potential whims of their families.

We also protect our residents through staff management. From the start of its work, the Ruach Board developed a protocol, adapted from what is standard procedure in the Netherlands, regarding potential maltreatment or abuse of the very vulnerable group of people we are working with. With this protocol Ruach is ahead of the times in Nicaragua. All employees need to sign a declaration that commits them to neither abuse nor maltreat our residents and to take action when they see abuse or maltreatment happening.

Finding new residents: Miguel maybe in May?

The procedure of finding new residents for our home cannot be set in stone, and it is a process that takes some time. But we are happy to show this picture of Miguel. Miguel is currently in a period of introduction at Ruach and we hope to welcome him as a new resident at the beginning of May.



Ongoingly, staff of the Ruach Foundation keep their eyes and ears open for situations where intellectually disabled adults for whatever reason are not well looked after within their homes. Once a situation is identified, Ruach staff will

make at least two visits to the family to assess the needs of the potential resident and the motivation of his/her family. If this is promising we enter into a one-month probation period during which the potential resident will gradually increase the time they spend in the home and gradually decrease the time they are accompanied by a relative. The purpose is of course that the potential resident can slowly get used to Ruach staff and other residents, and vice versa. During that period we can also observe what he/she is used to and is able to do and we can ask the family questions if needed. When all goes well during this period, a formal agreement is signed in the presence of a lawyer.

Miguel's story

Miguel is 47 years old, and so far has lived with his now 80 year old mother. The mother is a brave woman, but she really worries about Miguel's fate if she were to get injured, fall ill or die. She has already been living for a year in the only old people's home in Juigalpa, and during that time Miguel has also lived there with her as there is no one else in her family who is able (or prepared) to look after Miguel. Miguel's mother is understandably very motivated to have Miguel live with us. Miguel has four sisters and one of his brothers-in-law has accompanied his mother-in-law to meetings with and at Ruach and would become the family representative.

No economic motive in selecting residents

Ruach's philosophy is that we want to reach out to the most needy people, and therefore we do not ask a fixed cost-covering monthly contribution from a parent or family member. However, families will tell us what they think they can afford every month and arrangements are made accordingly.

We put as much energy as we can into building up a good relationship with the family members of our residents. We do our utmost to keep them involved in how their family member is doing, and we encourage visits and invite them to community events. This works very well with the mother of Daniel and Loyda.

Doña Yolanda and Elda

The mother of Daniel and Loyda, doña Yolanda, is very consistent in her visits to Ruach and in

contributing whatever she can. Clearly she is happy that Loyda and Daniel now have a dignified life, something that due to circumstances she was not able to offer herself.



On average she visits her children once a fortnight, usually with her daughter Elda with whom she lives. She enjoys the cup of coffee we offer her and listens to the stories I tell her about Loyda and Daniel and about what is happening in the home. On this visit doña Yolanda delivers beans, rice and oil (the standard fare in Nicaragua) as well as soap powder, washing up liquid, shampoo and diapers that Daniel and Loyda use at night. More and more they become part of the wider family. For example, at their last visit they had arrived late due to transport problems, but it was nice that they were able to join staff and residents for our regular short time of closing the day at 6 pm. During that time we sing something together, read a section from the Spanish children's bible, or share with one another whatever is on our hearts in a moment of prayer.

Daniel and Loyda slowly opening up

Daniel and Loyda, before joining our community, lived for years with a lack of stimulation. Every day we work one-to-one with each resident to stimulate them, with a focus on making contact. (see picture next page). And there are results: Loyda has discarded all her old behaviours such as putting $\frac{3}{4}$ of her finger up her nose, sucking on her sweater, and licking her arms like a cat, especially after a meal. Daniel also surprised us the other day. He had finished drinking his mug of water and placed the empty mug too close to the edge of the seat of a nearby chair, so the mug overbalanced and dropped noisily to the ground. But for the first time, Daniel realized what had happened as he looked for the mug and when prompted 'Grab the mug, Daniel!', he collected the mug and put it into my outstretched hand. Is

he very very slowly opening up to more interaction with his surroundings?



Jonathan with Carmen at his one-to-one stimulation activity

Newsflashes

Martine

Martine Verkade is a final-year social-pedagogic care student at the Hogeschool (= graduate school) in Rotterdam, Astrid's last employer before she moved to Juigalpa. Martine is 23 years old, and will do some research at Ruach on improving the quality of our care for 3 weeks. She will take the data she collects to the Netherlands and will send us her recommendations.

Internships at Ruach

Ruach welcomes volunteers, interns or researchers (in the last phase of their studies) of all ages who would like to contribute to our work in the community home or activities centre for at least one month. We offer free board and lodging. In the period leading up to a possible placement, we will in consultation agree on a set of activities that would be beneficial to both parties. Interested? Email ruachjuigalpa@gmail.com

Video of Ruach's activities centre:

Vivir Juntos, our mother foundation, posted a nice video of our activities centre, based on pictures by photographer Arnoldo Mercado. It is worth a watch! Here is the link:

<https://youtu.be/w1zf06GMEns>

Ruach and Vivir Juntos

Vivir Juntos, our mother foundation, has committed itself to supporting Ruach for a 5-year period ending at the end of 2020, with a decreasing amount every year in order to push Ruach to raise a larger share of the annual funds

needed. The end date of Vivir Juntos' support is approaching fast, and Ruach has a long way to go before it will be financially independent. However, the Board of Vivir Juntos is happy with 'the people in Juigalpa' raising substantial amounts. In the forthcoming months the boards of Ruach and Vivir Juntos will consult with each other on how Ruach can become less dependent on VJ support.

Finally, we'd like to report on two successful fundraising activities in the Netherlands that were organized with help of Ruach friends, independent of Vivir Juntos.

Henk, the resident of an institute for forensic psychiatry in the village of Zeeland near Nijmegen, whom we wrote about in the last Newsletter, continued his campaign for Ruach. During the period of Lent he once a week prepared a meal for residents and staff to enjoy in order to raise funds for our work in Juigalpa. 15 people joined for the first meal; around 55 people showed up on the final sixth evening! He got a lot of support from the staff of the institute, and staff and guests all greatly enjoyed these successful dinners. Henk's Lent meal campaign raised around € 1,800 in total!

In Leiden, the town where Astrid Delleman lived for several years prior to her move to Nicaragua, a group of Protestant churches chose Ruach as the foreign project for their 2018 'Holy Communion' special campaign carried out via the Diaconal Centre de Bakkerij (= Bakery). This Centre works with over 20 civil society organisations so Ruach's work will receive ample attention among a large section of Leiden people. The organizers hope to raise not less than €5000.

Every penny we raise will contribute to improve the lives of the people with an intellectual disability in Juigalpa! Donating is possible via

1. Global Giving (in £, \$):

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/fundacionruach>, or

2. Vivir Juntos (in €): www.vivirjuntos.nl

Want to know more? Write an email to ruachjuigalpa@gmail.com

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