



Chacocente News

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Summer 2015

Jossimar Barajona Places 2nd at Poetry Nationals

Jossimar Barajona, a senior at the Chacocente Christian School, strutted and gestured her way through 17 stanzas – yes, memorized – of a Rubén Darío poem and took second place at the national poetry competition in July.

Darío, as you may know, is one of Nicaragua's most famous poets. The poem that Jossimar chose is called "Retorno," or "Return," and is a passionate tribute to their native country.

"I selected the poem because it has such a strong connection to my beautiful country," said Jossimar. The poem weaves descriptions of Nature, patriotism and the native inhabitants of Darío's homeland, written after a trip away. It is one of Darío's most loved pieces.

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Above, an elated Jossimar celebrates for the camera.

At right, the high-school senior dramatically recites all 17 verses of "Retorno," by Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío.



Nicaragua has 16 departments.

**"If your homeland
is small,
One has grand
dreams."**

View from the Haze

Every once in a while something happens at Chacocente that sends chills up my spine.

The recent news that Jossimar Barajona won second place at the national level in a poetry contest blew me away.

It sent me back to 2003 and even before, when I used to watch small Nicaraguan children sit on the dirt floors of their tiny houses and stare at the gray or black walls. What would it be like, I wondered, to spend the first years of your life staring at gray? It's common knowledge in our country how important it is to stimulate children's brains early in life. But there, it was unknown.

There was a little boy, maybe just a year old, who captured my heart. I bought him some brightly colored plastic cars, so he'd have something to play with as he sat. A couple of days later, I noticed that

he didn't have the cars. I asked his mom what had happened. She was afraid he was going to break them so, being a responsible parent, she put the cars on a shelf until he was older.

So I bought him something indestructible: one of those colorful, multi-sided plastic toys where the child can put square blocks through the square holes, and triangular blocks through the three-sided holes, etc. The mom took that toy away after the first day. Why? Because he didn't know how to do it. The whole concept of learning by trial and error was lost.

When we started the school at Chacocente, we met under the trees but all of our teachers understood that the early years were the richest time to teach. We made sure that we read to the children every day, and that the older children read non-text books for pleasure. My



**Cheryl Avery,
Founder**

thinking was that if these children dropped out of school in 3rd or 4th grade – as is very common in Nicaragua – at least if they loved to read, they would be able to continue learning all their lives.

I had such dreams and aspirations when we started the school. I wanted to hire the best teachers who really knew how to help children learn, how to engage them and create in them a love of learning. But you can never be sure.

And so the other day, I got a message on Facebook from some girl in Nicaragua who told me – in English: "I win 2nd in national poetry." After a short dialogue, I learned she was from Chacocente Christian School. I've never met her, but she knew who I was, and found me on Facebook. I don't know if she realized how incredibly happy her message would make me; how my eyes would tear and that chill would run through me. All I know is the dream that you and I have shared over the years is bearing fruit. Amen.

Jossimar Barahona takes 2nd in National competition

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The competition featured the students who had won their local and departmental competitions throughout the country in June.

At the Nationals, Jossimar competed against the 15 best high school girls in the country.

**Photos by Ervin Ruiz, Director
Chacocente Christian School**



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Thanks!!**

Students, School Garden Await Winter Rains

The secondary school students at Chacocente Christian School have labored long and hard this year to plant a variety of crops: beans, corn, plantains, sweet and tart oranges, limes and mandarins.

The school is also raising pigs and 50 chicks. (Well, 48. Two were eaten by a snake.) The produce and chickens will be served in future lunches.

"The students have the opportunity to implement good planting practices," says teacher Elio Ticay. "For instance, in Natural Sciences, they learn about plant germination, and sowing corn and beans puts that understanding into action."

Now if the seasonal rains will only begin to fall, everyone will be a lot happier!!



Top, students sow seeds after the oxen plow. At left, the Landra pig is expecting. Above, beans sprout.

The Floor Project and Beta Theta Pi Raise Funds and a Roof

The Floor Project, co-founded by Brennon Thompson (right), has been raising funds for the past year, with an eye toward tiling the floor of the auditorium at Chacocente Christian School.

This spring, however, the school needed a new roof before the rainy season arrived. So Brennon teamed up with Beta Theta Pi at American University, where he attends, and responded to that need.

The delegation removed the old roof, and raised the walls so the new roof could be installed. Now there are no worries about the coming rains.



Above, Brennon Thompson adds height to the auditorium walls.

At right, English teacher David Arellano embraces Beta Theta Pi members Sakari Ishatar (left) and Mike Schwartz.



CCS Boys Capture 3rd At B'ball Nationals!!

Amazing!!! Chacocente's primary school basketball team, which has been training all year, took third place at the National level b'ball competition.

The boys represented the department of Masaya at the tournament, in which 15 teams from around the country competed.

Coach Winder Hondoy had the boys climb the Masaya Volcano as part of their training.



UVM Rescue Squad Trains First Responders at Chacocente



UVM Rescue Team: Kenny John (foreground) backed up by Trent Coletta, Mike Kelleher, Lillian Ruth and Angela Louisa. Hannah Gelb, another member of the group, is pictured at right in the striped shirt.

The medical students trained the younger Chacocente students in first aid and what to do if someone is choking. The older students learned Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation, burn care and head-injury procedures.

Thanks, friends!!!



Omar Hernandez provides an entertaining demonstration of choking.



Students practice the preliminary steps of CPR to see if the victim is breathing.



The Chacocente Christian School now has its own Medical Rescue team.