

Collin Burks – Soccer Without Borders – Midterm Report

Here in Nicaragua, we hit the ground running in the new year! In the past month and a half, we have launched a school scholarship program, significantly increased our involvement in local schools, added a new soccer team, and hosted a group of U.S. college soccer players to volunteer for a special week of activities. Challenges have come with this growth, but we are working through them as an organization.



The participants of Soccer Without Borders with a group of U.S. volunteers

With the arrival of 15 female soccer players from the U.S. in early January, we held a weeklong camp for the girls in Soccer Without Borders. Each morning, we spent two and a half hours at the soccer field coaching dynamic and fun soccer drills to the girls. After a break for lunch, the girls came back to our office for an afternoon of team-building activities. The week culminated in a trip to Managua, where the college volunteers, as well as myself, played a friendly soccer match against the Nicaraguan women's national team in their national stadium. It was a great chance for our participants to see female athletes playing competitively; we make an effort to show our girls as many female role models as possible.



The Nicaraguan captain and I, along with the referees, before our game against the national team

After the camp and before the start of the girls' school year, we began the application process for a school scholarship program in which Soccer Without Borders pays almost all of the costs associated with attending a public or private school. Our vision has always been to encourage education, but we are excited now to finally be able to offer direct educational aid to 14 of our participants! Three Nicaraguan staff members are taking on increased responsibilities in leading this scholarship program. Over my time here, it has been incredible to watch the Nicaraguan coaches continue to develop professionally and take on larger leadership roles in the program.



Scholarship recipients working on homework

I also have been able to develop during my time here. As a soccer coach, educator, and mentor to a group of adolescent girls, I have practiced and improved my skills in communication, motivation, and problem-solving. In large group situations, I have learned how to be a dynamic and engaging leader, while in 1-on-1 interactions I have grown as an empathetic listener and mentor. When I am not coaching or teaching my group of girls, I am involved in community outreach, including visiting schools, homes, and organizations. I have learned how a grassroots community organization works and developed skills in organizing community events and building community partnerships. Next year, I will start medical school and am confident that the skills I am developing in leadership, mentoring, Spanish, and community outreach are skills that I will carry forward with me into medical school and beyond. But for now, I am happy to have four more months in Nicaragua to continue to improve my skills and to coach, teach, and have fun with my girls!