

When I arrived to Nicaragua I was picked up by one of the members of the Club Rotaract Metropolitano de León, and a member of the Rotary Club of Leon. They were very welcoming and there was never awkward silence. After the airport we picked up another member of the Rotary Club. They asked me if I wanted to go back to Leon or to go to the market and get supplies for the Pediatrics playroom. I told them we should go get supplies! So we went to the market and we found good prices. I got 30 chairs and four fans for the Pediatrics department in Hospital Escuela. I am very happy to have funding from the JJCF grant to help with the costs.

The second day in Nicaragua I went the hospital to Pediatrics and I got to meet the head nurse and some of the Hospital Escuela staff. I saw many medical students getting instruction from their professors. I also got to see the playroom, which I was going to help renovate. There was a lot of dust that comes in from the chimney and covers the toys. There were broken wooden chairs and none of the fans were functioning. There were many areas and there was maybe one with proper ventilation. The area that impacted me the most were the patients who suffered injuries from being burned. The room was very hot, like an oven and the air conditioner is broken beyond repair. I came back to the hospital later on during the day to assist a professor who gives classes to the children. When the lecturing is done the kids get to play games and sometimes other children also join. The professor leaves the children homework to do according to their grade level. This service has helped many students not fall behind on their schoolwork.

The following morning I walked around to see how much I remembered the area. I went to the place where I had previously had Cacao and shopped for things that I needed. I found a place that seemed good to eat at and I had baked chicken, rice, beans, and mashed potatoes. When I went back to the hospital I took one of the patients to the Aula (schoolroom) to play. The other patient that was in the room with her was screaming really loud and she said it bothered her while she tried to sleep. I was happy to be able to distract her for some time. She loved to color. While we were coloring many other children wanted to color and play with the little toys we had. The professor had to make a note of each patient and their age, since she gives classes to kids 5-12 years old. Some of the patients knew some English so I also practiced that with them. The patient's family members are usually very nice.

Another one of the Rotaract members showed me around Leon and then we went to the hospital to meet with Dr. Jorge Alemán, which is the doctor in charge of volunteers. He introduced me to Doctors and more medical staff and we finalized more details about my volunteering. It is so much better to talk about things in person.

The first event that I had to prepare for was for "El dia del Niño" which means Children's Day and is on June 1st. The 30 chairs and 4 fans were bought on May 21st. As I started to get the hang of how things work, I realized that having the whole play area restored by June 1st was going to be very difficult. After seeing the play area I thought it would be a better idea to add tile to the floor, so the renovation would last longer. One of the maintenance people measured the area and gave me an

estimate of how much it would be. The only problem is that since it is like a wing from the hospital, someone else has to inspect the floor and make sure that it will hold the weight of the tile.

So I re-evaluated how I would go about the project, and the Rotoracts and I decided we could bring the chairs in on El día del Niño, and install the fans after the floor was done. I was advised that the chairs should say who donated them so there would be less probability of them being stolen. I met with the Professor who gives classes for the Pediatrics patients and the Pediatrics psychologist and made a list of the toys that would be adequate. The best prices I could get would be in Managua, so I have to wait to get the toys when I take a trip there.

Being here in León I have had a lot of support from Dr. Jorge Aleman. I usually talk to him on the phone or meet with him in the morning and talk about the project. He is very helpful and open to ideas. He helped me develop the idea that I could look at the attitudes of the staff, families, and patients before the play area was fixed, and then see how it is after. The members of the Rotoract Club have helped me in finding the best prices for supplies and helped me learn my way around. In the Rotary Club here in León, I have established a good relationship with Oscar Aragon, which is in charge of an organization that deals with English and Spanish Languages. I think that the Hospital Escuela Partner experience could eventually be linked with the Rotoract and Rotary Club of León.

The development of the new playroom is an ongoing process, and as it is going I continue to be involved with the children. In the morning I volunteer in orthopedics and in the afternoon I volunteer in Pediatrics and assist the Professor with the lesson plans and interacting with the children. And through my interacting with the children, and the Rotaract Club knowing about their community, we came up with what we would do for El Dia del Niño.

On June 1st we all met up at the entrance of the hospital with balls, goodie bags, toys, homemade donuts, and juice. There were two clowns accompanying us that were a great success. Before everything began the Rotoract Club President talked a little about the project we are working on in the play area and let me talk about where I was from and what I was doing. We played interactive games with the kids such as hot potato, had mothers sing a song they sing for their kids, and played with the balls. The grand finale was the piñata, which unleashed candy when the strings were pulled. It was good to see the patients get out of their rooms for a little while and laugh and smile. Even today, two days later, the kids were still talking about it and how they liked it. After that we gave away clothes for the new born babies.

When the event was over I gave an interview for a local radio station. I was asked how I established the contact with the Rotoract Club, why did I choose to help out in Hospital Escuela and why I choose the Pediatrics department. I talked about Omprakash and my preparations before getting to Nicaragua. I also talked about the help I received from the JJC Foundation. A member of the Rotoract Club is the one who was able to set up the interview. It is a good way to spread hope, and maybe plant a seed so more people will be inspired to help.