

## Felices Vacaciones!

*Thanks to your contributions this holiday season, children will get hot lunches, students will attend university and women will learn to sew—all year long. Your gift will sustain Bloomington-Posoltega Sister Cities in the months ahead. That gives everyone a happy holiday. Muchas gracias, amigos!*



## Feeding small children builds brain power

According to researchers, around 70 percent of a child's brain development takes place in the first two-three years. That brain growth takes stimulation; it also takes energy.

You can't find a better reason to feed the hungry children at the Comedor Infantil. This energy-rich hot-lunch program has been supported by Bloomington for many years.

Meals provide rice, beans, vegetables, fruit, and meat to about 40 children and pregnant women five days a week.

Your contributions pay for the cooks, the food, and even the maintenance of the kitchen and dining room. In recent years, the roof, windows and benches all received repairs.



*A young mother and her children eat lunch at the Comedor Infantil in June 2017. In the background is a mural representing both cultures painted in 1997 by Bloomington and Posoltega youth.*

***An infant's brain develops up to 2 million neural connections a second! More rice, please!***

## Bloomington promotes chess in Nicaraguan school

In June, a group of Bloomingtonians, many from First Presbyterian Church, delivered shoes donated by Childs Elementary School to the Escuela Ricardo Morales Aviles School in a village near Posoltega.

On that visit, they found the children learning to play chess with handmade chess pieces and boards.



When word of this reached Cristian Medina, president of the Bloomington Indiana Scholastic Chess Club, he started an online fundraiser to buy sturdier boards and chess pieces for the students.

The group surpassed its goal of \$500, purchasing 20 chess sets that are now bound for Nicaragua!

It was a perfect game plan. Checkmate!

## Cross-cultural administration challenging!

One success story of Bloomington Sister Cities (BSC) is its university scholarship program. First Presbyterian Church provides funds for 24 scholarships; BSC administers the program and pays for graduation fees.



*Debbi Conkle and Orbelina Reyes get a rare opportunity to coordinate scholarships in person, rather than electronically, on a recent work trip to Posoltega.*

But cooperation across cultures can be complicated! Names of prospective students need to be gathered and checked for eligibility. Sponsors need to be recruited. Then money needs to be sent to Nicaragua every month and dispersed in \$15 allotments to each student for expenses, meanwhile checking to make sure they remain in good standing.

It's a challenging administrative job, but worth it to students who might not otherwise afford a college education. Though the scholarships are small (\$150 a year), that money buys needed food, books, supplies, and transportation to and from the university.

### *Ingrid Martinez Vargas: environmental activist*

Vargas, 22, has graduated with a degree in Environmental Engineering. Her 116-page thesis focuses on ways to restore and preserve environmental quality.



She hopes to improve the environment in Posoltega. Ingrid knows the challenges, but she is eager to educate her neighbors on the value of cleaning up their village's soil, waterways and air.

She is a member of the Congress of Female Entrepreneurs.

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## 2017 Bloomington-Posoltega Sister Cities Financial Report

### Expenses

• Hot lunch for children/pregnant women	\$3,984
• Hot lunch staff salaries	1,920
• Sewing project: instructor's salary, five new machines	1,284
• Scholarships for six secondary students	600
• Scholarships for 24 university students (First Presbyterian Church)	3,600
• Graduation fees for 10 university students	1,000
• <b>Total expenses for 2017</b>	<b>\$12,388</b>

### Assets

• Cash on hand (plus pledged contributions)	5,366
• Money reserved for the sewing project	(192)
• Program expenses through Dec 31, 2017	(520)
• <b>Predicted year-end balance</b>	<b>\$4.654</b>