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Newsletter Issue #38

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With Thanksgiving rapidly approaching, it is time to ponder what we have to be thankful for. This has been a tough year for many; between Harvey, Irma, Maria, mass shootings, and massive fires to name but a few of the year's low points, but despite all that has gone wrong with our world, most of us can still flick a switch to turn on a light, open a faucet to get water that is safe to drink, and have easy access to food and other necessities of life. Thanks to many of you who have supported the Foundation over the years and the hard work and perseverance of people and communities who have invested our grant dollars, there are many people in the developing world who now live healthier and happier lives. Yet there is so much more work to be done, so we humbly ask that you help us reach our annual fundraising goal by donating today at <http://www.allpeoplebehappy.org/donate/>.

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### Theresa Bailey 2016 Fall Fellow with Comunidad Connect

Theresa's *AllPeopleBeHappy* Fellows grant was awarded for her project, "Addressing Sexual and Reproductive Health in Marginalized, Rural Communities in Northern Nicaragua." In her final report she was asked to address questions about why the project was chosen, what was accomplished, and what she learned. Though she worked in remote areas of Nicaragua, the answers are relevant far beyond Nicaragua, Comunidad Connect, and Theresa herself.

**Why was the topic chosen:** "I believe sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is oftentimes an aspect of health that suffers from the stigma associated with it.

Women ... have felt that they could not have an honest conversation with their partners about family planning and use of birth control. Teens oftentimes do not have enough information to make healthy decisions about partners, sexual relationships and how these aspects impact their physical and emotional well-being. And men are rarely asked to engage in topics of SRH or think critically about how they view manhood within this context."

**Provide metrics that illustrate progress:**

- Over 100 pap smears provided for the women of Los Robles and San Esteban
- 19 students and teachers trained as community leaders and ambassadors for healthy SRH in their communities
- 3 private and governmental partners willing to support the development of this pilot project in the future

***What will you take back with you from this experience?*** “The most important lessons I will take away from this experience are patience and flexibility. Creating a culture of change and resilience is the most important part about any work with Sexual and Reproductive Health. Certainly, this cannot be accomplished overnight. So, I will of course take with me the feelings of disappointment when things did not go exactly as I had planned or according to the timeline that I had envisioned, but I remain overwhelmingly convinced that patience and flexibility were the keys to overcoming these setbacks and carrying out work that I, Comunidad Connect and *AllPeopleBeHappy* can be proud of.”



### **Gianna Biaggi Spring 2017 Volunteer Service Award Recipient**

Gianna applied for the Volunteer Service Award to work in Kenya. Things didn't go exactly as planned, but Gianna didn't let that stop her. “When I arrived here in Kibera, I was planning on working for Wale Wale Kenya, a program that I had

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(3), to support the center. However, when I arrived in Nairobi, and got to Wale Wale, I was given some bad news. The founders had decided, in the past month, to close the center and move to Sweden. They were unable to help me with my program - goodbye, and good luck, basically.

Panicked, but determined to make it work, I tapped into my other networks in Kibera, and slowly found three other amazing, determined, local women to help me with this endeavor, all born and raised in Kibera. Vannah, my old study abroad advisor with a passion for art, Rukia, a friend-of-a-friend with years of experience in non-profit management, and Amisa, an agemate who I met standing at a bus-stop, with a passion for education, and a background in counseling. Together, the four of us created Waka Lab (Pass the Mic Youth in the United States), a fully functional community library space with programs in literacy, technology, the arts and the environment. Our lab serves an average of sixty youth per day after school, and seventy youth on the weekends, both primary and secondary students. In three short months, we built a building and an advisory board, wrote programming and curriculum, reached out to local schools and recruited youth, and created partnerships with organizations like the Kenya National Literature Bureau. But most importantly, we have and will continue to- serve youth, giving them a safe space to do homework, testing them for literacy, working with them to improve, and tracking their improvement through assessment. Though it has not been easy, it has been immensely rewarding, and a privilege to serve these youths. Waka Lab has absorbed the youths of Wale Wale Kenya, and during this school holiday, is now open from nine am to five pm, with programs in foreign language, yoga, art, technology and creative writing. Starting in January, Waka Lab will be hosting its first class of pre-school students in our space, and starting a program specifically for students in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, to work on their reading levels with the ultimate goal of preparing them for the Kenyan Certificate Primary Education Examination, which is required of every Kenyan student before they can attend high school.”

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