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Newsletter Issue #40

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Eric Tang, the inspiration behind the *AllPeopleBeHappy* foundation said that, "The World's greatest currency is friendship." As if to prove that point, we have leveraged some of our oldest friendships to collaborate in new directions. Earlier this month our partners at Amizade announced their new Global Social Action Accelerator initiative for which a Foundation grant provided the seed funding. Though it is still early in the process, over the coming months we should be able to tell you about some exciting new ventures. Also, as described below, the Foundation leveraged an opportunity made possible because of communications between friends.



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One of our exciting new initiatives for 2018 really highlights the value of friendships. An opportunity presented itself because of a simple conversation and resulted in 10 schools in rural Tanzania being “solarized.”

For tele-communication, Africa skipped the landline and went directly to cell phones; for energy, rural sub-Saharan Africa has skipped the power grid and is going directly to solar. The reasons are many and obvious: plenty of sun, few major rivers, sparse population, lack of money.

Last year, in conversation with our friend Erika Mackey, former Executive Director of Support for International Change and co-Founder of **Off-Grid Electric**, we learned that solar panels can be installed in Tanzania for a fraction of what it would cost in the U.S. This triggered us to ask our friend Brandon Blache-Cohen, Executive Director of **Amizade** whether we could use his contacts to help us provide electricity to schools in rural Tanzania. Brandon led us to Charles Bahati of Mavuno and this Opportunity Grant project began.

Starting in February of this year, Mavuno identified schools and together with Off-Grid, the needs of each school were assessed. Between April and May, with a total investment of around \$11,000, ten rural schools around Karagwe, Tanzania were “solarized” by Off-Grid Electric, meaning solar panels, interior lights, charging stations, radio, and TVs. Potentially the nature of teaching in these schools will be enhanced and the school buildings can also be used as community centers for evening activities. We look forward to providing more updates on the impact of this investment.

Volunteer Service Awards

This Spring the Foundation awarded 8 new Volunteer Service Award stipend grants. Four of the grants were awarded to volunteers with organizations we have never worked with before. Unfortunately, several applications had to be deferred because of the political unrest in Nicaragua. Events that barely made the U.S. News had a major impact on volunteers serving with **Manna Project International (MPI)** in Nicaragua near Managua. Carol Pengshung, a Spring 2017 Volunteer Service Award grant recipient, has been conscientiously sending us monthly newsletters about her experiences as a 13-month MPI Project Director. Her final newsletter did an excellent job of illustrating how “matters beyond our control” can impact the best laid plans. “April was a “calm before the storm” kind of month. The Manna House felt empty and quiet after the spring break groups left... I was preparing to lead a group of occupational therapy students at the beginning of May. Unfortunately, all of these plans went up in smoke due to civil unrest in Nicaragua and my fellow volunteers and I were unexpectedly evacuated out of the country.... At the end of

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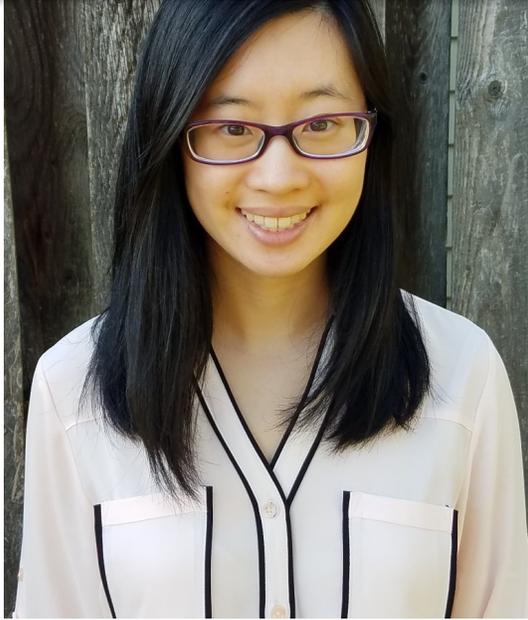
the protests quickly escalated into a very violent confrontation between the public and the government. The protests are among the largest and most violent in Nicaragua's recent history. It now seems to have turned into much more than just concerns with social security... While I am sad that I was not able to say goodbye to many community members, I am hopeful that these protests will lead to positive change in Nicaragua.”

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Oftentimes *AllPeopleBeHappy* volunteers wish they could continue to work beyond their initial commitment. Sarah Hartman, thanks in part to her Spring 2017 Volunteer Service Award grant, is staying for a 2nd year working with **Partners In Health** in Chiapas, Mexico. With the extra time Sarah has been able to make a real difference. “My time in Chiapas, Mexico has been filled with both familiar faces and new projects. It was the start to my second year working with *Compañeros En Salud* (CES)/Partners In Health Mexico, and so I was generally accustomed to the flow of the organization, my role as Mental Health Volunteer, and the rhythm of the communities where we work... Based on the results of a preliminary evaluation I conducted in my first year at CES, our mental health team decided to pilot the restructure of a psycho-education course for our patients with depression and anxiety. In the past, the medical supervisors had run the course, but my evaluation found that half the time they did not hold sessions because of lack of time to successfully recruit participants or to run the groups. We brainstormed a new method: hiring women from the communities who would have more knowledge of the community and more time than the supervising doctors who were over-saturated. The original plan was to recruit and train women in two communities as a pilot run in three weeks... Three weeks turned into three months... I ended up assisting in creating the training material and running many of the trainings, along with my supervisor who is a physician from Mexico. While my participation in such a long training was not anticipated, it has been one of the most gratifying roles I have held here.”

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