

The Monthly REfund



A New Start

An update on the Savings Start Program and the participant's graduation by the program director, Ben Patterson!!

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A New Start

"Being part of the Savings Start program has been a great experience. It has taught me to plan, organize and manage my business in an efficient manner; all our class activities have been oriented to real, specific situations focused on business management. The best thing about the program is that all the participants understood how important it is to save. Thank you Ben, John, Aliza, Megan and Diego"

Yajaira Jimenez, participant of the Savings Start Program.

In our first Newsletter, we introduced the Savings Start Program, which started this April to provide local entrepreneurs with greater opportunities for success and encourage job growth in small communities in Nicaragua. It was launched in San Juan del Sur, and is the first of its kind in Central America. The program teaches small business skills to entrepreneurs and provides means of saving money for business improvements.



Each month the participants have been saving between **Some of the participants during class**

5-50 dollars and depositing it in his or her new bank account. After the completion of the course, Saving Start matches the amount of money that the participants were able to save. Then, the students must turn in a budget detailing how they will use the money saved to improve their businesses. If the budget is approved, the Savings Start team will purchase the items for the participants.

We are happy to say we have completed the first round of Savings Start in San Juan del Sur! We are pleased with how it has evolved in six months. We have learned a great deal and look forward to making some needed adjustments for the future. Participants' businesses included among others a tortilla business, transport service to local beaches and Managua, and a Spanish school. We plan on offering a new round of Savings Start in San Juan del Sur for the beginning of February of 2009. We are currently looking for volunteers interested in becoming mentors for future participants. Please contact Ben Patterson: ben@cbnicaragua.com for more information. In addition, we are working on expanding the program in Tola and San Marcos next year.

"The most important thing I learned is how to elaborate a business plan. We have studied and learned many things, for example we learned how to relate properly to the customers so we can give them a quality service"

Maritza del Carmen Ortiz, Savings Start participant

About us..

Community REfund is an initiative launched in 2007. Our mission is to ensure that local communities benefit from the growth of real estate and tourism in Nicaragua. We aim to encourage people to think differently about investment and offer a simple solution to responsible property investing that creates value in society and the environment while at the same time being financially profitable.

We have two main programs. The **Savings Start** program supports local small business owners and contributes to microenterprise development. The **Community Bridge** program helps to raise funds for community led projects.

Where do the funds come from? We solicit contributions from real estate buyers, developers, agents and other parties involved in the real estate transaction, and then channel these funds towards the needs of the local communities in a way that is mutually beneficial to both donors and recipients.

You are invited to the Savings Start Graduation and to our Fundraising Dinner, see details in page 3!!



This month's featured projects

Volunteer Firefighters of La Villa, Granada



The Bomberos de la Villa are a legally chartered Nicaraguan association of volunteer firefighters. They are required by law to respond to any and all emergencies in the province which threaten the safety and welfare of citizens.

Without a secure source of funding it is difficult to maintain quality and regular services to the community.

Amigos de los Bomberos, is a citizen support group working to procure funding for the firefighters.

The volunteer firefighters provide many on demand services besides their emergency response to putting out fires. They are trained for aiding in accidents, floods, gas leaks, rescues and water delivery. The firefighters can be hired to provide these additional services on a professional basis which can solve your problem and at the same time, assist them to obtain the much needed funds to continue providing their volunteer emergency services to the community when needed.

Funds raised are used to cover ongoing needs, such as phone and electricity bills, food bills, fuel, truck repairs, protective suits, and vital equipment.

The Bomberos de la Villa have already made a strong contribution to the local community in Granada and the service provides a great way to train local citizens in emergency response and other skills which are utilized in the local community.

BibliotecaMóvil of San Juan del Sur

The San Juan del Sur BibliotecaMóvil (Mobile library) opened seven years ago as the first lending library in Nicaragua. Its permanent location in San Juan del Sur, which began with 200 books, now boasts 13,000 books and 4,100 patrons with library cards.

The mobile portion of the library, which launched six years ago and visits schools in rural areas (approximately 27 communities) currently includes 8,000 books and 3,700 registered borrowers.

Over the years, the library has expanded its services to include English classes, computer classes, and opportunities for children to participate in crafts projects.



As the demand for more books and the number of new patrons increase, and with the addition of the Library in a Box Program, the San Juan del Sur Biblioteca Móvil needs help. One of their biggest expenses is renting a truck twice a week to bring books to surrounding impoverished communities with the Proyecto Móvil.

With enough donations, they can eventually buy a truck of our own, which will allow them to operate five days a week, bringing books and activities to many children and families. Contributions can help to purchase books, art supplies, computers and defray the costs associated with operating the program.

Montecristo Projects

The developers of Montecristo Beach Resort in Nicaragua have "adopted" the town of El Tránsito and initiated projects to help raise the standard of living among the local population. They are donating building materials, providing educational opportunities, sponsoring youth programs and encouraging business, thus making a significant contribution to the local culture and economy.

A medical doctor was recently hired to visit the community three times a week and a campaign started to fix the roofs of homes in the community.

One of the most recent projects by Montecristo involves a group of women from El Tránsito with the desire to develop themselves in the chicken business.

These women have received funds in order to start breeding chicken so they could sell eggs to the community. The amount loaned was divided between the 23 women and they will have to pay the money back, but not to Montecristo, the money loaned will be invested in another social project to be developed in their community, so everyone around them is hoping their business succeeds.



This is a great example of how a small initial donation can keep working beyond the life of the first project that it supports.



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Sunday Brunch Fundraiser becomes an annual event...

To mark the launch of ANID's adoption of Community REfund as a key way to give back to local communities, we hosted a fundraising Champagne Sunday Brunch earlier in the year. The brunch was centred around a series of silent and live auctions of donated goods – everything from artwork to sailing excursions, hotel packages to hand carved furniture, free pizza to massage therapy!



Mrs. Tuey Murdock, making a presentation of Community REfund

The event was a great success and all involved enjoyed the day. Most importantly, the auction raised a significant amount of funding for Community REfund which was able to distribute the funds to community projects across the country - in the areas of San Juan, Granada and the Central coast. It also helped to ensure that Community REfund could meet the matching savings commitment to the Savings Start project (see page 1 for more information on the project and below for details of the upcoming graduation of the participants from the first program).



During the fundraiser...

We would like to extend very sincere thanks to all of those who contributed goods and services for the event – without these generous donations the auction could not have been such a success. Similarly, we would like to thank all those who attended the event and so generously bid on the goods and services offered. Without the (sometimes frenetic and competitive!) bidding Community REfund would not have been able to contribute to so many projects across the country.

The event was so successful in raising funds and so much enjoyed by all the attendees that we have decided to make it annual – we'll make sure to let you know of the date for the Annual CRF Fundraiser in 2009 so you can book your diaries in plenty of time...

We would like to thank those who made this great event possible by buying tables and donating goods and/or services:

Table buyers:

Gran Pacifica Resort
First American Title Services
Montecristo Beach & Golf Resort
Calvet & Associates
Coldwell Banker Nicaragua Real Estate
Garcia & Bodan Attorneys
Grupo Mariana
Piedras y Olas..... a Pelican Eyes Resort

Goods & services donors:

Milagro del Mar, Central Coast
Pelican Eyes...Piedras y Olas Hotel & Resort,
San Juan del Sur
Gran Pacifica Resort, Central Coast
Montecristo Beach & Golf Resort, Central Coast
El Tiscapa Restaurant, Managua

Continues on next page....



Auctioning



The room was full!!



Claudia Gonella, from Coldwell Banker, bidding with enthusiasm!



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From page 3....

Coldwell Banker Nicaragua Real Estate , Granada & San Juan del Sur
First American Title Services, Managua
David & Tuey Murdock, Managua
Jorge & Lori Estrada, Managua
Hotel Plaza Colon, Granada
La Posada Azul, San Juan del Sur
Kirk Hankla & Missi Dees, Granada
Mandala Agency, USA
Frontera Books, Managua
NicaCharters, Leon
Via Platero, Managua
Hilton Princess Hotel, Managua
Clinica Odontologica Mongalo, Managua
Carlos Rocha, Managua
Tura Murdock, Managua
Juan Caldera/NicaDev, San Juan del Sur
Darrell & Amy Bushnell, Managua
Calvet & Associates, Managua
Garsa Sports, Managua

Papa Johns Pizza, Managua
Tip Top, Managua
Park Avenue Villas, San Juan del Sur
Building New Hope, Granada
Casa Lirio, Granada
PURE Natural Health & Fitness Centre, Granada
Ole, Granada
NicaBella, Managua
Gray Line Tours, Managua
Jaime Chamorro, Managua
Exotic Limousines, Managua
Hotel Seminole, Managua
La Liga Body & Fitness Center, Managua
Roger & Carolyn Keeling, Managua
Tequilla Vallarta, Granada
Ferreteria Richardson, Managua
Pizza Hut, Managua
TGI Fridays, Managua
Grupo Conti, Managua
Bohemian Paradise, Granada

Why did Donn Wilson, president of Nica Dev, decide to become part of Community REfund?



This is what he had to say:

"In my opinion, the former political turmoil has made Nicaragua, a stunning country full of warm hearted people, the perfect spot to give back to humanity what most of us typically take for granted.

Donn Wilson

Community ReFund allows those of us wanting to be involved a perfect platform for consolidating efforts, sharing knowledge, ideas and helping in each others projects of social consciousness. By grouping our efforts we become more knowledgeable, more powerful and ultimately more effective.

It is an honor to be surrounded and supported by such compassionate minded people".

You are invited to the Savings Start participants' graduation and to our fundraiser dinner!

When: **Monday 15/12/2008**

Time: Graduation: 5:30 pm / Fundraiser Dinner: 7:00pm

Graduation Ceremony: Galeria del Sur, del Mercado Municipal, 1/2 c. al sur, San Juan del Sur

Graduation Ceremony: free

Fundraiser Dinner: Restaurant La Canoa, at Hotel Piedras y Olas...a Pelican Eyes Resort, from the Parroquia (parish church) 1½ blocks east, San Juan del Sur

Dinner fee: \$25 (this is a buffet set menu with 40% of the price of each ticket going directly to Community REfund to support community projects)

RSVP to: alejandra@communityrefund.org

We look forward to share this special evening with you!!



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The Role of Real Estate Agents in Community REfund



Real Estate agents play a crucial role in our organization. They are our voice and connection to the rest of the participants in a real estate transaction. Through them, we are able to pass our message on to those who want to help, but sometimes, don't know how.

The Real Estate agents are also great donors to Community REfund. Let's not forget that they are part of the real estate business and many of them have donated part of their profits to the projects in Community Bridge.

We want to thank all the Real Estate agents who have taken the time and dedication to talk to their clients about us.

On December 15th we have organized a workshop for Real Estate agents, to discuss approaches to raising Community REfund with their clients.

Meet our Steering Group

The Community REfund Steering Group has overall responsibility for the strategy, direction and management of Community REfund.

- Turalu Brady Murdock, First American Title Services
- Chris Berry, Pelican Eyes....Piedras y Olas Hotel and Resort
- Donn Wilson, Las Fincas
- Raul Calvet, Calvet & Associates
- Lori Estrada, Montecristo
- Jon Thompson, Comunidad Connect
- Sergio Corrales, Garcia & Bodan
- Mike Cobb, Gran Pacifica
- Aram Terry, Aurora Beachfront Realty
- Roger Keeling, Milagro del Mar
- Sara Murphy, Coldwell Banker Nicaragua

How You Can Help

To give back to the community, REfund needs your help. Make a donation to CRF and ask your real estate agent, developer, lawyer, and everyone else involved in the transaction to match your donation. Donations can also be made in person with a check through your real estate agent or online at www.communityrefund.org.

The benefits of your contribution are mutual. Communities with more assets are stronger, friendlier, and, ultimately, better investments. Nicaragua presents incredible investment opportunities, but the opportunities to give back and improve the standard of living for the residents of this country are even greater.

Thank You

Thank you for considering a contribution to Community REfund. By supporting these projects, you are helping to stabilize and strengthen local communities. In addition your potential contribution sets a positive example of future responsible investment in Nicaragua. For more information, please contact us:

Online:

www.communityrefund.org

Email:

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alejandra@communityrefund.org

