



News of Nicaragua!

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Sochi helping at the Samuel Vidaurre Library

Meet me at the library!

We at From Books to Brilliance (FBTB), wish to express our thanks for both the spiritual and financial support you have provided to us over the past years. We could not do what we do in expanding literacy to remote areas without your interest and aid. Again, thank you.

If you travel south to the village of El Fortín you'll find the most recent library sponsored by FBTB. Maggie Covill, one of our founders, worked with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire to establish a close working relationship with leaders there. An El Fortín community member, María Teresa, spearheads local development projects. With her guidance, older students in El Fortín now manage the small lending library established this past summer. In a recent email she reports: *"Here in El Fortín we are very happy with the library that you donated. Every day more children arrive to work and that for us is giving life to the library."* This new lending library is the first access to books children of El Fortín have enjoyed, books that they can take with them, read and return for another.

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The following is a brief encapsulation of our efforts this past year and our plans for the summer of 2010. We hope you share in our modest accomplishment and the excitement we feel for 2010.

During the past three years From Books to Brilliance has added more than two thousand new books to Mulukukú's library, a library closed for two decades. This year, in addition to providing more new books, we assisted in the establishment of a preschool that begins this spring, to be held in the Samuel Vidaurre Library. We excitedly gave needed math kits, rulers, maps, puzzles, pencils, paper, crayons, coloring books, and more...all necessary materials for this nascent preschool! The Maria Luisa Ortiz Cooperative, a local women's group, proudly told us of plans to install tile flooring, and to build cubbyholes to accommodate children's personal belongings while at the library. During our June visit to the Mulukukú library, it was heartwarming to see teens studying, young children reading and engaging in craft activities. One mother happily told us that her teenage daughter rushes home from school every day, and then races to the library. Her daughter, Sochi, wants to attend college.



María Teresa reading a book to a child in El Fortín's new library, published and donated by Hoopoe Books



Books and puzzles at the library, El Fortín

Meet me at the library!

La Casa de la Mujer, focuses its efforts to improve life in El Fortín. As an example, the women obtained financial grants from provinces in Spain and France. With this funding, the town replaced ninety-five cardboard and metal shacks with well-constructed permanent houses. These new homes have solid flooring, potable running water and sewage systems.

Other improvements in El Fortín include a commercial bakery that employs local residents who bake bread for sale in Granada, as well as a cattle project for milking and making cheese. Villagers, in partnership with students from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, have just finished constructing a bridge in town, eliminating El Fortín's isolation during the rainy season. The villagers will tell you that poverty has moved elsewhere! El Fortín's confident attitude is remarkable. It is a declaration of self-reliance and optimism by people still living in poverty. We are pleased to be a small part of the growth of this small community.

In parts of Wisconsin and New Mexico, FBTB is gaining recognition as an organization focused on providing access to books by creating libraries in impoverished communities. As examples of our growth two student organizations at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, La Sed and the Latin American Studies Club, held fundraisers. The Student Organization of Latin American Studies at the University of New Mexico invited us to present our work.



Students at the El Fortín elementary school are challenged to a reading competition at their new village library

Usborne Books teamed with FBTB to raise funds through sales of children's books at the Corrales Harvest Festival, with many Albuquerque businesses donating prizes. Additionally, we are thrilled to announce that Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School, in Albuquerque, has decided to join in our mission. Members of their faculty travel regularly to Latin America and will focus on identifying villages for future FBTB sponsored libraries. Cottonwood Prep's students are excited to get involved in this literacy project.

As From Books to Brilliance looks enthusiastically to the future we continue to refine our efforts. Our experiences have indicated that our greatest successes have been tied to certain characteristics. We recognize that both Mulukukú and El Fortín are organized communities. They have strong cooperatives and have sought outside help. Medical teams from the United States volunteer in Mulukukú regularly. El Fortín collaborates with Spain and France, as well as with UW-Eau Claire. These villages work to define a path to their future. What makes for a successful library project? We suspect the answer to that question lies in characteristics both villages possess... hard work, persistence, self-reliance and appreciation.

With your help, a treasured supporter, From Books to Brilliance will continue to support and develop the libraries in Mulukukú and El Fortín, and to identify other projects. Again, thank you for your generous donations and continued support! We wish you a healthy, prosperous and fulfilling year.

Kim Covill

Founder and Director

"Visit the Samuel Vidaurre Library where we help you do your homework and your research... The world waits for you in the library!"

Radio Mulukukú - Summer 2009.

A public service announcement highlighting our first library project in 2007, offering encouragement and hope...hope for a brighter future.