

# Mangua, Nicaragua

“The Land of Lakes and Volcanoes”

Summer of Service 2017

Brian Talbot

*Nicaragua is an incredible place to do summer of service - it has a rich culture, incredible people, and as the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, there is a wide variety of service to be done. We were able to use and improve our Spanish on a daily basis while serving those in need. We were lucky to have an awesome Siena grad who lives in Nicaragua and organized our trip, coordinating service sites and host families, and helping us acclimate to and enjoy life in Nicaragua.*



In the mornings I volunteered at a preschool for children who were not getting enough to eat at home and were underweight for their age. As well as receiving classes, the children were also fed a nutritional meal every day to supplement the food they received at home. The people there, from the children to the teachers to the mothers who volunteered in the kitchen welcomed us to their humble school like family and shared everything that they had with us. They greeted me with smiles and hugs and always took the time to repeat something that I did not understand or teach me something new. The children did not have a ball to play with or a book to read at the school, but everything they did have, they shared. And what they shared most was love.



10 people going 45mph in the bed of a pickup truck, we pretended not to be terrified!



Learning to cook soy and probably getting laughed at, in the most loving way possible.



We taught the kids to make ice cream in a bag!



Relay races to help get out the children's never-ending energy.



The classrooms at the school, about 15 students were in each class.



A few of the crazy kids with the teacher and me from the class I helped in!

In the afternoons, I worked in a community center for adolescents in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Managua. Our goal was to promote education and prevent gang violence, empowering the students to grow into a life that is safer, healthier and more sustainable. The neighborhood that I worked in had dirt roads and houses made of tin sheets, and yet I was amazed by how happy the people were. They cared about me and were excited to include me, and I had the privilege to care about the students and help them gain confidence and personal security.



The “chavalos” (students) spending time together. They loved taking selfies and making food! One day, we went on a field trip to a play at a local college!



“Before and After” of a gardening project that we took on with many of the students! Later, new fruit trees and flowers were planted in the gardens.

I lived with a host family during my trip where I was able to experience the culture, eat great food, and gain an understanding of what the day-to-day life is like for working-class locals. I lived in a house with an 11-person multi-generational family who were incredibly hospitable, caring and willing to help me in my transition to life in Nicaragua. While we did not have hot water, air conditioning or a washer and dryer, we formed lasting relationships and I learned that happiness does not stem from objects, it stems from relationships.



My wonderful host mom (even if she doesn't know she's in a picture!)



Other members of our host families – the goodbyes were so hard!

