



Annual Report 2016



A letter from our Board President

Dear friends,

2016 has been a year of transition and learning. During this time, CREA secured legal non-profit status as a 501(c)3 organization in the United States as well as legal non-profit status in Nicaragua. With legalization in place, we opened CREA offices in 2016.

Our programming embraces education in an area of the world where people experience severe poverty and hardship. CREA's three initiatives provide critical services and support for children and youth ages 4-24 years old. We conduct outreach in order to increase participation. We also work with parents to encourage their involvement in programming and their children's future.

Our Library Initiative's focus is to lend books to children and youth while fostering a joy for reading. We engage young children by providing them an opportunity to discover a love for reading through school visits by our mobile team. In a place where children do not have access to books, youth are borrowing books and taking them home to share with their families.

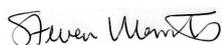
The Education Outreach Initiative consists of early education academic support for pre-school and primary school students and a formal tutoring component for secondary school students. Through dynamic and interactive plans, our mobile team works with students in primary schools on important skills like reading, writing and math. The formal tutoring component consists of weekly tutoring during the secondary school year, a November university entrance exam preparation course, and remedial course for students at-risk of failing a year in January and February.

The Youth Development Initiative began with a merger with a local organization that was directing Formación Fénix, a youth development group. Fénix students are learning important life and leadership skills through their involvement in Fénix projects, such as 3 micro-businesses and a community health initiative.

In order to meet the needs of our growing organization, 2016 marked the beginning of a capital campaign to fund a new library and resource center. The new CREA facility will be the hub for our programming with the ability to further unify programming and add critical elements, such as a computer lab and a formal library.

The entire CREA organization is humbled by our accomplishments and excited for all the future possibilities. We appreciate your ongoing support and look forward to another great year ahead.

In partnership,



Steve Merritt
Board President

Our Approach

Our belief is that access to quality education is the catalyst to affect change for individuals and communities so that they are healthier and stronger.

CREA's programming is designed to be integrative in order to create better support and more effective long-term services for children and youth ages 4-24 years. Due to the overlap of our core initiatives, a child could be a CREA participant from pre-school through university!

The integrative approach also allows for a strong foundation within the CREA team. The staff members share best practices with one another and brainstorm different ways to engage children and youth in order to remain relevant through a child's interaction with CREA.

This type of support is critical to individual and community development. We are honored work in the Tola region of Nicaragua.

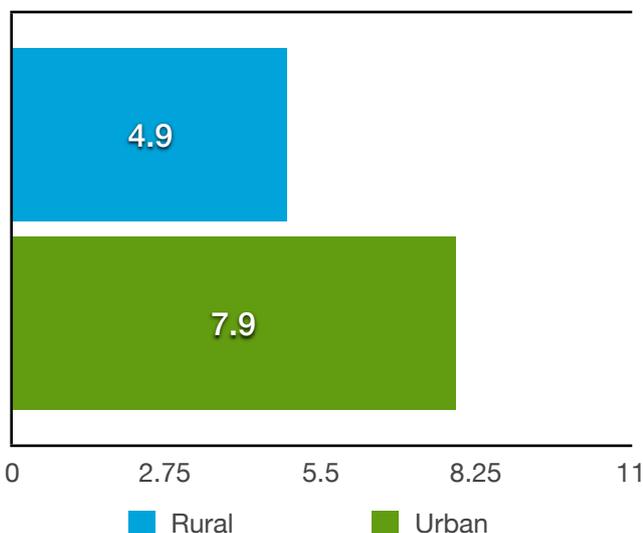


Education in Nicaragua

Nicaragua is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with the majority of Nicaragua's poor living in rural areas. Local people residing in these communities experience difficulties accessing basic services, like clean water, food, health care, and education. It is within this context that CREA operates.



Average Number of Years of Schooling

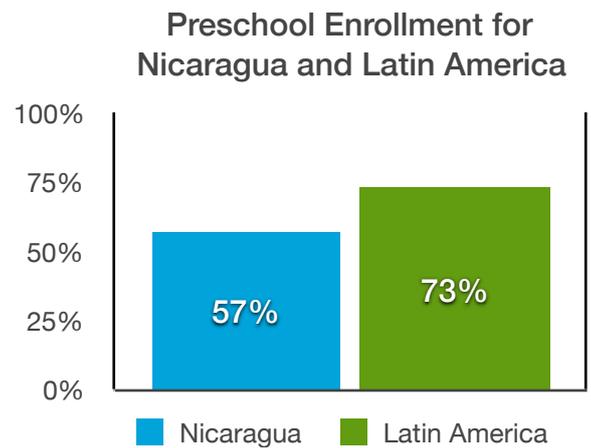


Average Number of Years of Schooling

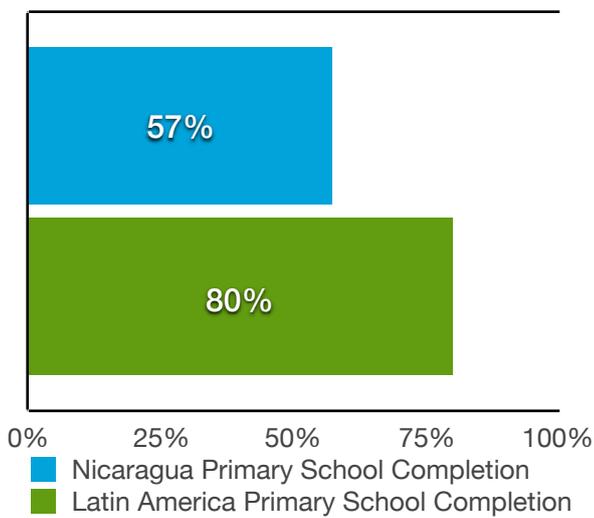
CREA operates in the rural Tola region of Nicaragua. Without the organization's support, the average number of years of schooling for a rural Nicaraguan is 4.9 years compared to 7.9 years in urban areas. According to the World Bank, the average number of schooling years a Nicaraguan needs is 11 in order to break the cycle of poverty.

Pre-School Enrollment

Pre-School education helps lay the foundation for a successful academic career. In Nicaragua, 57% of pre-school aged children are enrolled in local pre-schools. The average enrollment for Latin American pre-schools is 73%.



Primary School Completion

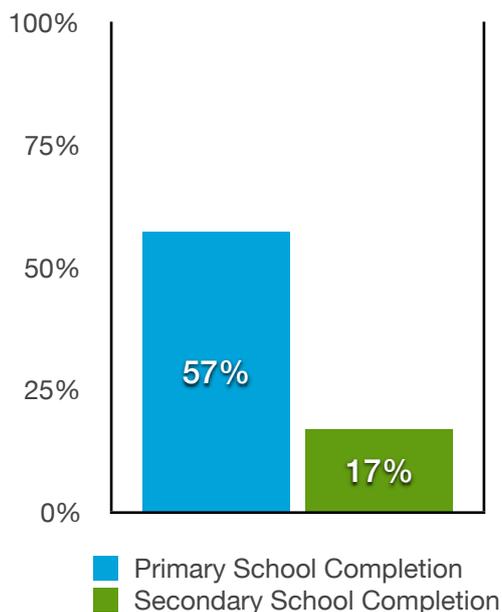


Primary School Enrollment and Completion

While Nicaraguan primary school enrollment, at 92%, is in line with other Latin American countries, primary school completion in the country is dramatically low, at 57%. Other Latin American countries have a 80% primary school completion rate.



Primary School and Secondary School Completion Rates



Secondary School Enrollment and Completion

Although 57% of students complete primary school, only 17% of them go to finish secondary school. Finishing secondary school is a key indicator to future successes.



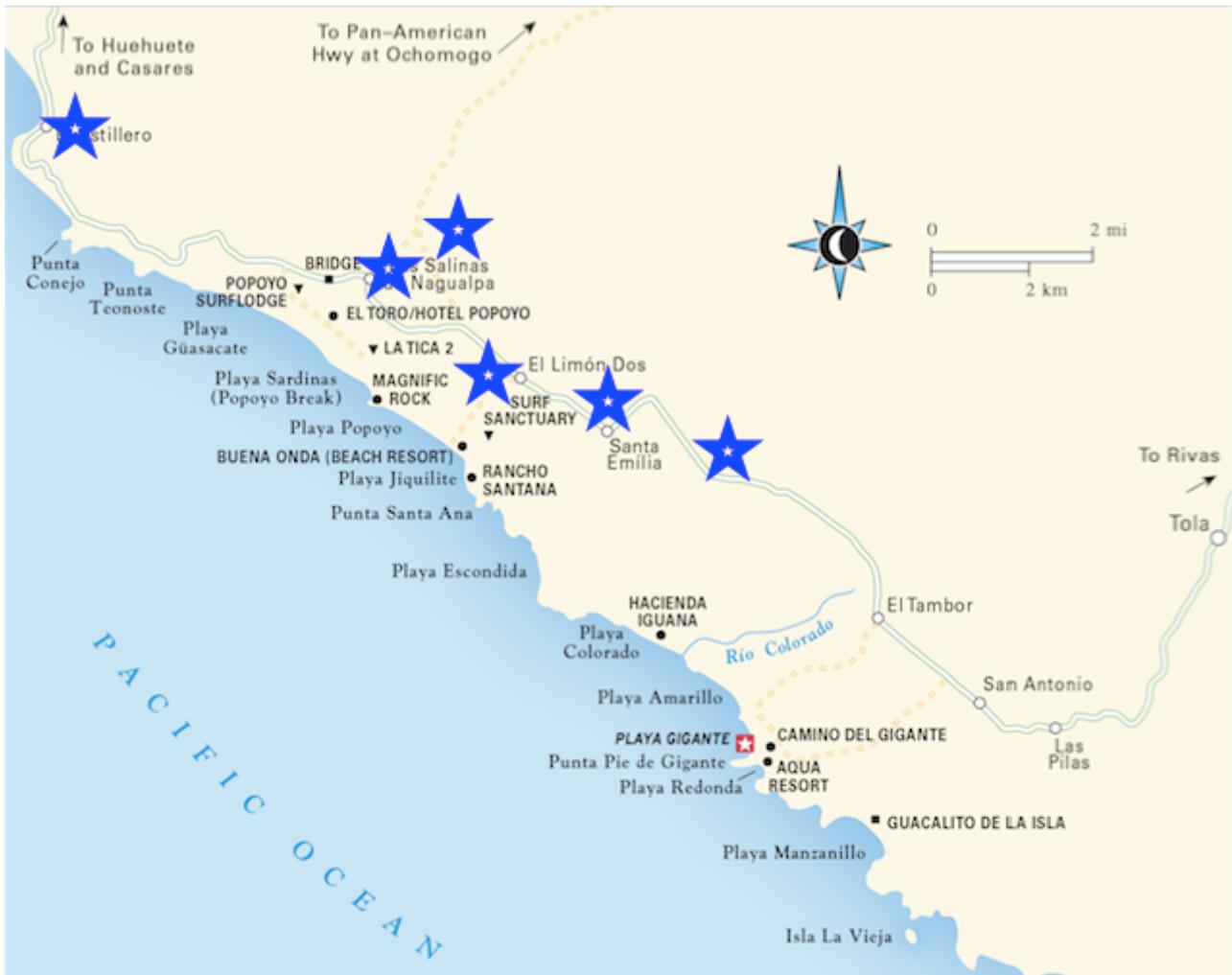
Teacher Certification

Teacher qualifications and training play an important role in a student’s academic success. In Nicaragua, many teachers are not certified educators. As a result, teachers are not prepared to manage and teach a class and students are not able to properly learn. This practice disadvantages rural students as the majority of certified teachers teach in urban locations.

Teacher Certification and Training	
Pre-School Teachers	64.2% Lack Certification and Training
Primary School Teachers	42.4% Lack Certification
Secondary School Teachers	24.4% Lack Certification

Education with CREA

While the context for education in Nicaragua is bleak, CREA's integrative programming addresses student needs from pre-school to university in order to create healthier and better lives.



Presently, CREA serves children and youth in the Tola region of Nicaragua. This region is situated along the country's southwestern coast. It includes the six communities of Astillero, Las Salinas de Nalgualpa, La Virgen Morena, Limón Dos, Limón Uno, and Asentamiento.

Library Initiative

A vital aspect to CREA is literacy. The focus is two-fold: get books into the hands of children and foster a joy for reading.

The key to the CREA mobile team is its book lending component. Families do not have books in their homes as access is non-existent. At each mobile team session, children have the opportunity to borrow a book or two to take home until the next mobile team session at their primary school. This important library service encourages children to explore and share what they learn with their families at home.



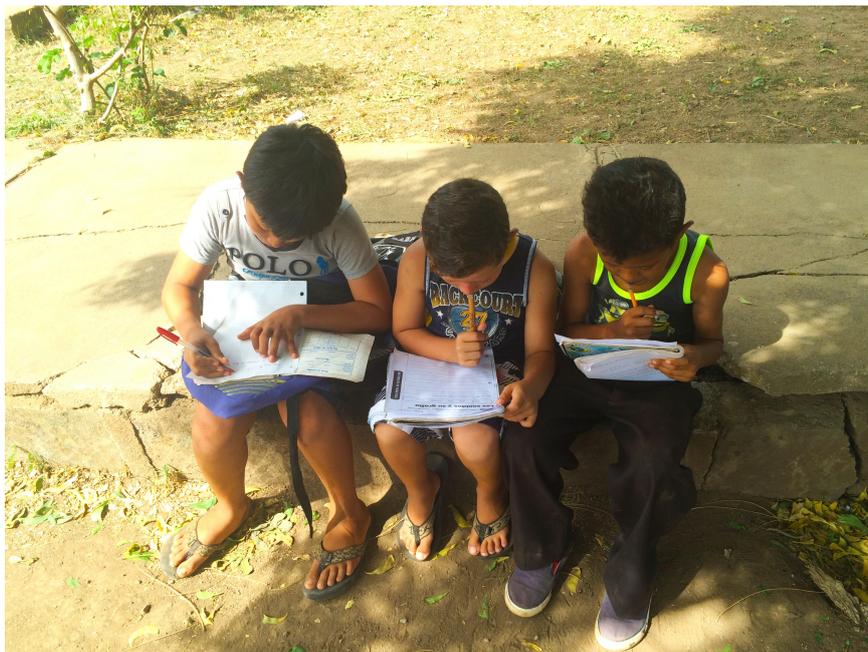
In addition to a mobile book-lending program for primary students, we are constructing a space for families to explore the joy the reading. This facility will serve as a community library and resource center. It will serve as our primary site of operations and educational outreach including a publicly accessible computer lab, learning spaces, and our collection of Spanish language books and teaching materials.



Education Outreach Initiative

Early Education Academic Support

As part of CREA's education outreach initiative, the CREA mobile team partners with the Ministry of Education to provide before and after school services to students in pre-school and primary school. These programs serve an average of 47 girls and 37 boys each week in five communities. Each engages the children in interactive activities to support literacy and learning while creating a place where kids can be kids.



The mobile team is integrated with the formal CREA tutoring component. This allows for a coordinated approach to provide important educational services. Such programming aligns with the Ministry of Education curriculum. It also helps prepare children for future success.

Formal Tutoring Component

The tutoring component serves CREA youth development participants in addition to many non-Fénix youth in the region. During weekly tutoring sessions, students receive individualized attention based on their needs, allowing them to keep current in classes and succeed in school.

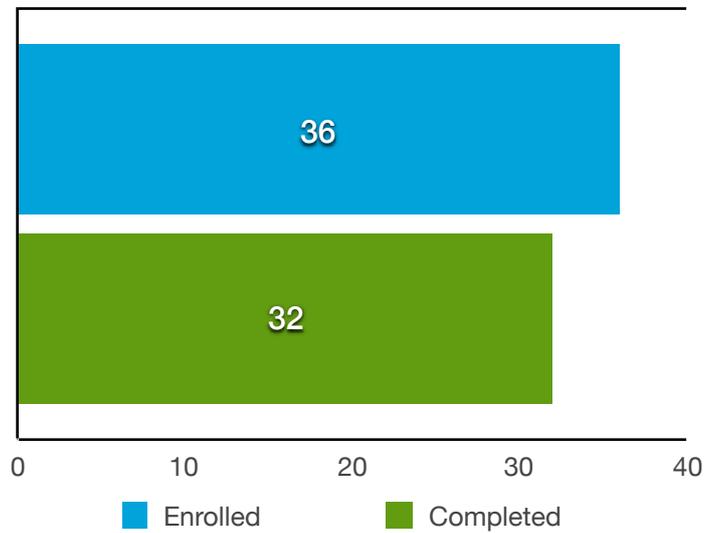
CREA's weekly tutoring sessions engage more than 80 students from a number of nearby communities. The sessions are led by CREA staff member, Mariana Castillo, who is a master's level teacher with more than 20 years of experience.

Remedial Classes

CREA is able to offer remedial coursework for students who are failing one or more subjects. Without remedial learning, any student who fails even one class is held back for the entire year. These classes are vital given the stigma associated with failure of a grade, which is one of the many reasons students do not complete secondary school.

In 2016, Mariana Castillo worked with 36 students enrolled in remedial classes. Thirty-two of those students were able to pass onto the next grade level, ensuring their continued enrollment in secondary school.

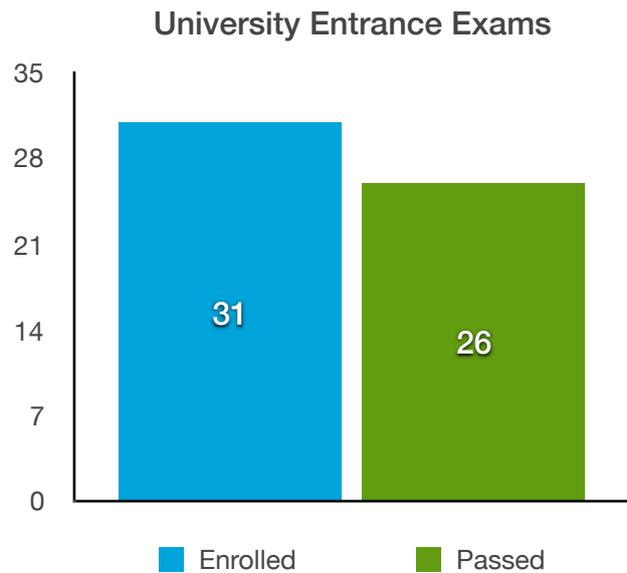
Remedial Coursework Enrollment and Completion



University Entrance Exams

Receiving a secondary school diploma is an amazing achievement in rural Nicaragua. Considering the majority of young people are unable to complete secondary school, the ability to sit for university entrance exams is a big deal.

Under the leadership of Mariana Castillo, CREA is the only organization in the region that offers university entrance exam preparation courses to any youth interested in attending a post-secondary institution.



Prior to this class beginning 3 years ago as part of the Formación Fénix youth development group, interested students had to have the financial resources and family support to travel to Managua for exam preparation as the secondary school curriculum alone does not prepare students for these life-changing tests. With the addition of our course, a university education is more accessible to the youth of the region.



Youth Development Initiative - Formación Fénix

The youth development program, Formación Fénix, includes 19 secondary school students and 4 scholarship university students. The program's mission is to create the leaders of tomorrow. The program is offered to youth at no cost. Fénix accepts participants who express an interest in its programming and complete a rigorous application, which includes a personal biography, a detailed description of goals, and a statement of parental support. The application process ensures each participant is eager to fully embrace its programming and work hard to achieve success.



Community Health Initiative

In a country where access to health services and information are lacking, Formación Fénix's Community Health Initiative is combating the statistics through peer-to-peer learning. Partnering with the national organization, Casa de la Mujer, and the local health center, youth participants learn from health practitioners to create talks designed for their peers. Local schools are thrilled and call upon Formación Fénix to provide talks on topics that range from identity and healthy relationships to prevention of human trafficking.



Leadership Development through Micro-Enterprises

Formación Fénix youth participate in one of three micro-enterprises or the community health initiative. Their participation is designed to enhance their leadership skills. It also engages them in learning to develop basic life skills.

“The experiences I have had with the micro-enterprises has helped me in university. I learned to be a leader, responsible, organized and I learned how to work in a team. This has allowed me to be a better university student.”

- Jason Sanchez, Fénix University Scholarship Student



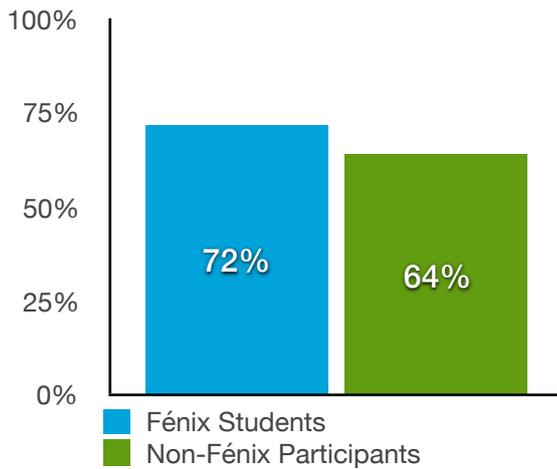
Manos Verdes is the organic gardening micro-enterprise that focuses on producing vegetables and herbs for sale. The youth involved in this enterprise also advocate for healthy eating, like preparing fresh vegetables alongside local staple foods.

Bici Fénix is the bicycle rental and repair micro-enterprise. Participants provide bicycle rentals and repairs for locals and tourists. They also donate their services at occasional community events.

Creaciones Fénix is the artisan jewelry and craft micro-enterprise. The youth make earrings and bracelets as well as create recycled paper and envelopes for purchase.



Average GPA of Secondary School Students



Education with Formación Fénix

CREA's tutoring program is integrated with Formación Fénix. Student participants receive critical support and attention in school subjects, making them leaders in academic achievement. The average overall GPA for non-Fénix students is 64%, while the overall high school GPA for Fénix students is much higher, at 72%.

Goal Achievement with Formación Fénix

Formación Fénix inspires and motivates participants to achieve their goals. Our scholarship program supports Fénix high school graduates to pursue their dreams despite obstacles and challenges. Currently, Fénix has 4 university scholarship students studying engineering and architecture, veterinary medicine, and tourism and hotel management.

“Since high school, I decided that I wanted to study to become a veterinarian. There are always obstacles and one of those was the cost of the program because the income of my parents was not enough to help with university. Another obstacle was that my mom didn't want me to study to be a veterinarian as I'm her only daughter and the program is difficult with working in the field under the sun. However, the dream was greater than the obstacles.”

- Miriam Espinoza, Fénix University Scholarship Student



Our Core Values

Love. Love is in everything that we do – love for our mission, for books and learning, for reading and education, for local communities and for each other.

Honesty. We are a transparent organization where every individual's opinions and perspectives are heard and appreciated.

Unity. We come together as a team – including board members, organization friends and staff – to work in partnership with the populations we serve.

Communication. Open communication is fundamental to a healthy organization. Every member of the CREA team has value.

Respect. We are respectful in the work we do and how we do it. We are respectful of every individual.

Responsibility. As an organization we have a responsibility to our donors, staff and the individuals with whom we work. We have a responsibility to maintain a realistic budget while reporting measurement-based progress. We have a responsibility to the constituencies we work with to ensure effective outreach, access to educational opportunities and activities and support for school success.

Solidarity. We are one organization filled with many different people, perspectives and, at times, languages. We stand side by side in staying mission-driven.

Tolerance. We are patient and understanding of varying perspectives, opinions and situations. We strive to remain calm, effective and compassionate.

Loyalty. We have a commitment to the people and region where we work, to our mission and to one another.

Humility. We are a small organization with a big mission. Organizational success is dependent on our ability to work side by side with all stakeholders in the region, grounded in humility.

Equity. Organizational programs and services are provided with equal access to members of the region's communities, including staff members.

Partners

Centro de Salud, Las Salinas, Nicaragua
SG Foundation, United States
Girls Rights Project, United States
Casa de la Mujer, Rivas, Nicaragua
Roberto Clemente Health Clinic, Limón Uno, Nicaragua
FunLimón, Limón Uno, Nicaragua
Rancho Santana, Nicaragua
Pre-Schools and Primary Schools in Asentamiento, Limón Uno, Limón Dos, Las Salinas
and La Virgen Morena
Secondary School in Las Salinas, Nicaragua
Ministry of Education
Gay Su Pinnell Foundation

CREA Board

Steve Merritt, President
Michelle Chackerian, Treasurer
Scott Hagg, Secretary
Jeff Keller, Member
Lila Cunningham, Member

Special Friends of CREA

Ara Chackerian
Vern Cunningham
Tessa Gunther
Ann James
David Michael
Amie Riley
Kitty Rudham
Alan Vilchez

CREA Leadership Team

Corrie Burdett, Executive Director
Pahola Amador, Administrator
Mariana Castillo, Education Program Director
Lidieth Alvarez, Formación Fénix Coordinator
Rosa Torres, Formación Fénix Assistant
Isayana Rojas, Mobile Team Facilitator
Ruth Obando, Mobile Team Facilitator
Ezequiel Amador, Technology Specialist



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