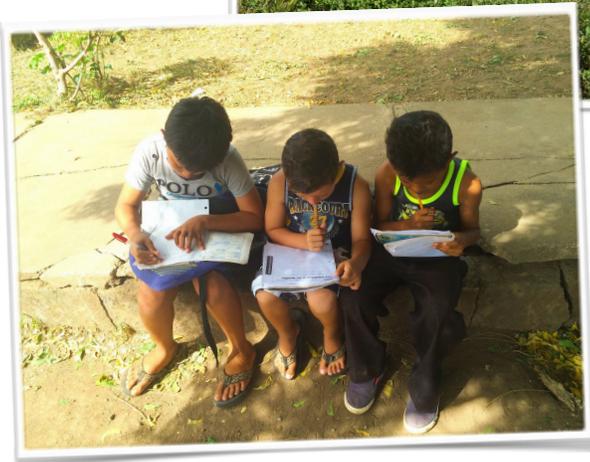




2017: Annual Report



Letter from the President

Dear friends,

2017 was marked by growth, transition, and challenge. During this time, CREA successfully completed a capital campaign that led to the construction of the CREA Center on donated land. The building, which opened its doors officially on August 22, 2017, features a formal lending library, a computer lab, a multi-use space for the Youth Development Initiative, Formación Fénix, and a much used covered outdoor area. Even before its official open, we began receiving visits by children, youth, adults, and families. The space is a dream come true for the organization and the local communities.

With the completion of the facility, CREA's three core initiatives took off as they quickly adapted to their new home.

The Education Outreach Initiative has continued its work in the surrounding local communities as young children from further out communities are not able to make it to CREA due to the distance and cost. The continued visits are much anticipated and filled with learning, laughter and joy. High school tutoring vastly improved with its move to the CREA facility as resources became available, such as computers, books and access to the Internet. The Initiative also welcomed a Math Specialist to the team, which ensures that students of all levels are receiving assistance in the core subjects of Spanish, Literature, Math and Science.

The Youth Development Initiative, Formación Fénix, quickly adjusted the new home. The Fénix participants are now able to work more comfortably, with the use of whiteboards and technology for trainings, and have a safe space for reflection, goal setting, and educational support.

The CREA Center's opening made the dream of a library a reality. We now welcome children, youth, adults and visitors to explore and borrow books! We look forward to growing the Library Initiative in 2018 to promote the joy of reading.

While 2017 was incredible in terms of growth and opportunity, it was not without challenges. On October 5, 2017, the Tola region was hit hard by Tropical Storm Nate. The storm caused flash flooding, resulting in severe damage and destruction to homes, water wells, crops, and local businesses. CREA was flooded with an estimated 4-6 feet of water, causing the loss of thousands of books, computers, and other materials. We worked immediately to get our artesian water well back online, which allowed community members access to clean water. Within 10 days, CREA was open once again, providing a safe environment for children and youth. We also became a site for the organization and distribution of food, water, clothes, and beds for those in need. Though the storm challenged the region, local leaders and foreigners came together to provide relief and now are working together to ensure long-term sustainability in the local communities.

With the end of 2017, the word "thankful" resonates across the organization, from Board Members, and Friends to staff and participants. We are thankful for the support and love as we embark on 2018.

In partnership,



Steve Merritt

Looking Back at 2017

Education Outreach Initiative



Primary Education Support

The CREA Mobile Team continued to visit to surrounding communities, providing critical support for pre-school and primary school-aged children. Key subjects such as reading, comprehension, writing, and math were explored. The CREA mobile team engages children through playing - the best way to learn!

In 2017, the CREA mobile team engaged an average of 85 primary school students each week in five different local communities.

With the opening of the CREA Center, children and youth visit the facility each day for homework help, art projects, books, and fun. CREA's efforts to provide a safe and encouraging, learning environment is life changing for these children.



High School Tutoring

Before the opening of the CREA Center, tutoring for high school students was held outdoors at two local community schools. There were not enough chairs for students nor the resources to be able to properly teach. Since the opening of the Center, tutoring has transformed! High school students are now able to utilize resources such as the computer lab, books, and the Internet, all of which were not previously possible.

In 2017, the high school tutoring component served an average of 54 students each week from various local communities.



Remedial Course Support

Graduating from high school is an enormous accomplishment in rural Nicaragua. One of the many reasons why students may not continue their high school education is due to failing a core course. Even failing one course will hold a student back for the full year. In order to work with students struggling in core classes, CREA offers remedial support so that students have the opportunity to pass the course at the end of the year. This ensures they continue forward in obtaining their high school diploma.

In 2017, 37 high school students participated in courses to prepare them to demonstrate proficiency on an examination of “failed” coursework.



University Examination Preparation

Access to public universities in Nicaragua is possible, but each student must sit for an entrance exam. The competition is fierce, so preparation for these exams is crucial.

In November 2017, 10 high school graduates prepared intensively with CREA for the January 2018 public university exams.

Youth Development Initiative: Formación Fénix

Leadership Program

A core component to the Formación Fénix Youth Development Initiative is the leadership program. Through a series of workshops, youth participants are empowered to exercise their leadership skills. Workshops are structured to facilitate and strengthen communication, goal setting strategies, and organizational skills.

Social and Entrepreneurial Projects

Part of preparing Fénix participants for the future is allowing them to learn in a hands-on way. The youth-led social and entrepreneurial projects allow participants to explore various topics of interest as they are related to projects, and then utilize what they learn in interactive ways. Such topics include: presentation skills, marketing, accounting, applied mathematics, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking.

Participating youth are organized into a series of groups that focus on topics of community health, bicycle rentals and repairs, artisan crafts and jewelry, and sustainable agriculture.



Community Health Project: Partnering with local organizations, participants receive training on health related topics, which they share with their peers in nearby community schools.

Bici Fénix: This entrepreneurial project offers bicycle rentals and repairs to local people and visitors. All proceeds support the Fénix Scholars fund.

Creaciones Fénix: This entrepreneurial project focuses on creating and retailing traditional artisan crafts and jewelry. All proceeds support the Fénix Scholars fund.

Manos Verdes: This entrepreneurial project focuses on organic gardening as a form of agriculture. Its goal is to enable youth to sale their produce in local markets and support healthy eating. All proceeds support the Fénix Scholars Fund.



Scholarship Program

The Scholarship Program aspect of the Youth Development Initiative provides eligible participants tuition and registration at any Nicaraguan post-secondary educational or vocational training institution. Fénix scholars give back to Formación Fénix by acting as mentors for the younger participants.

In 2017, CREA graduated its first scholarship participant. Jason graduated with a degree in Tourism and Hotel Management from a university in Rivas! Three other college students continue pursuing their degrees in Tourism and Hotel Management, Architecture and Engineering, and Veterinary Medicine.

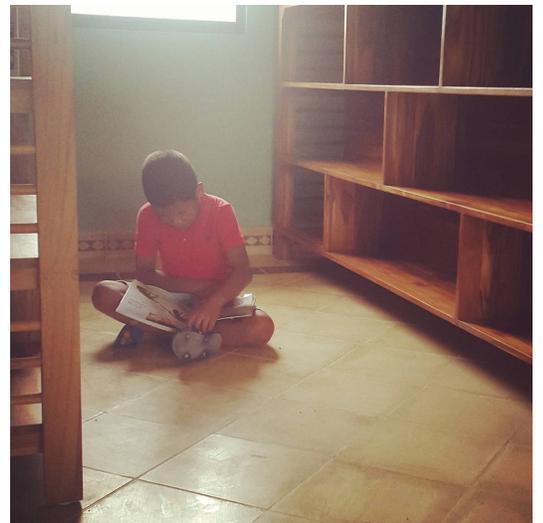


Library Services Initiative

Prior to the opening of the CREA Center, the Library Initiative was functioning as part of the weekly school visits to local communities, allowing children to check out books and bring them back the following week.



With the opening of CREA, a formal lending library has been established! Each day during the week, children and youth take advantage of the library, reading books at the facility as well as checking them out to take home for a few days. The dream of a library has become a reality in 2017.



Looking Forward to 2018

Strategic Plan

The CREA Board of Directors are working on a 3-Year Strategic Plan for the organization. The organization looks forward to sharing the plan in 2018!

Initiatives

The **Educational Outreach Initiative** will continue to work with children and youth in CREA and the local communities. In the coming year, we plan to strengthen our relationships with local teachers and administrators at the community schools as well as other educational organizations in Nicaragua, universities in Rivas and Managua, and other non-profit organizations. Additionally, we look to connect with educational organizations outside of Nicaragua, such as schools in Canada, Spain, and the U.S. as well as professional educators.

We anticipate the **Youth Development Initiative** will undergo some changes to better suit the needs of the changing communities. This year, we expect the initiative to expand its services to include providing support to participants who have graduated from high school but are not yet ready to pursue a university degree. We are actively seeking support of our partners to strengthen the educational aspects of our social entrepreneurial projects.

The **Library Services Initiative** will take off in 2018. We look forward to hiring a manager for this Initiative. This new hire will help our organization manage our library services as well as lead activities and programming to inspire children, youth, and adults to enjoy reading and learning.

For all initiatives, a comprehensive evaluation plan will be completed to better evaluate successes and challenges and help make informed future decisions.



Sustainability

During the first quarter of 2018, the Board of Directors grew by two members. This expansion has enabled the Board to grow to 7 members. In 2018, we expect to strengthen and diversify the board in order to ensure the organization's long-term sustainability.

As staff are vital in the organization's sustainability, CREA has dedicated a portion of its budget to building the capacity of its team. This fund is made available to employees to increase their knowledge and expertise on topics of importance to CREA. Fénix Assistant, Rosa Torres, was the first member to take advantage of this opportunity. She engaged these funds to complete her college degree in December 2017.

To ensure CREA is financially sustainable in the long-term, we have created and funded a Reserve Fund. In 2018, we will continue to strengthen and diversify our funding sources through developing new partnerships with foundations, businesses, and other local and international partners. We also plan to explore the possibility of an Endowment Fund.

The future is bright.



Partners

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

CREA Team

Corrie Burdett, Executive Director
Pahola Amador, Administrator
Mariana Castillo, Education Program Director
Lidieth Alavarez, Formación Fénix Coordinator
Rosa Torres, Fénix Assistant
Eliezer Castillo and Darlin Lopez, Reading Facilitators
Sergio Dominguez, Math Specialist
Ezequiel Amador, Technology Specialist
Juan Guzman, Reynaldo Arcia, Leonidas Martinez
Facility Assistants

CREA Board

Steven Merritt, Board President
Michelle Chackerian, Treasurer
Scott Hagg, Secretary
Lila Cunningham, Member
Kitty Rudman, Member
John Edwards, Member
Ann James, Member

CREA Friends

Katie Brame
Ara Chackerian
Vern Cunningham
Kelly Cushner
Tessa Gunther
David Michael
Amie Riley

Thank You

Simply put, if it wasn't for our generous donors and supporters, CREA wouldn't exist. So thank you for making CREA possible and making a difference in the lives of rural Nicaraguans.

