



CASA
PUEBLITO

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

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IN MEMORY OF MARY ELIZABETH GUILLEN MEDINA



Mary Elizabeth Guillen Medina, our Bookkeeper and Office Administrator at The Casa in Managua, passed away suddenly on April 25th, 2021. Elizabeth had been a central figure at the Casa for 26 years, and was a valued member of our team. We will miss her greatly.

“Many years ago when we were faced with replacing what was then called our Global Education Coordinator, I asked Elizabeth if it was difficult for her each time she had to say good-bye to those she had worked with and gotten to know so well. With the hint of a tear in her eye and with her trademark stoic strength she simply replied, “Si.” It was almost 25 years ago when I first met Elizabeth. I made my inaugural visit to the Casa in the days leading up to the 1996 election in Nicaragua. Should the circumstances of the pandemic allow me to return to the Casa this fall for the upcoming elections it will not be the same without the warm welcome of my friend and colleague.”

Carl Melvin, President

“In 1992 we purchased the Casa off Scarborough Foreign Missions. A few years later as it became obvious that we would have coordinators serving 2, 3 or 4 year tenures for the most part, and that we needed a more permanent presence. Elizabeth became that presence, that common denominator, that rock upon which our unique community centre/ house and headquarters was and has become. She was, upon reflection the heart, the legs and the soul of the whole Managua operation. Elizabeth you will be sorely missed but your legacy will live on.”

Bill Heffernan, Founder and Vice-President

“On Sunday April 25th we received very sad news to inform us that Elizabeth Guillen had died in Managua, Nicaragua. For those of you who do not know, Elizabeth had been bookkeeper for Casa Canadiense since 1995 and continuing as we amalgamated with Pueblito to become Casa - Pueblito and on till the time of her death. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing Elizabeth, each have our own memories of her. Elizabeth welcomed and trained new coordinators about every two years. She was always the consistent, quiet-behind-the-scenes backbone of Casa in Managua. I have been to Managua many times with student groups and I cannot imagine Casa without the presence and warm welcome of Elizabeth there. She welcomed, from the north, country directors, countless students and teachers and partners from all over Nicaragua. Elizabeth was the constant, dependable and authentic embodiment of Casa’s philosophy of solidarity with the people of Nicaragua. She will be dearly missed.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Elizabeth and her many years of unwavering and dedicated work for Casa-Pueblito. We extend our deepest and most sincere sympathies and condolences to her family and friends. Elizabeth will not be forgotten. May she Rest In Peace.”

Brenda Holtkamp, Director

“I had the privilege of working with Elizabeth since 2016 at the Casa in Managua. She was my right hand when it came to office administration and was key to the office running smoothly. Elizabeth had a wealth of knowledge about Casa - Pueblito’s history, and memories of all of the previous coordinators to pass through Casa’s doors. In a very real sense, she was the thread that connected us all to one another and the memory that knit together the disparate tenures of different coordinators. Elizabeth was dedicated to the communities that we served and determined to make sure that we were able to continue serving them to the best of our ability.

Elizabeth also had a sharp sense of humor and could always make me laugh, even when dealing with stressful situations. She was brave enough to try my cooking, and her tenacity and persistence in the face of adversity was something that I always admired. The Casa will not be the same without her, in the same way that a fabric is not the same when it’s central threads are snipped or cut short.”

Ashley Rerrie, Country Director 2016 - 2021

Casa - Pueblito is working to put together an Education Fund to benefit Elizabeth’s daughter, Meritxell. If you are interested in contributing, please contact Bill Heffernan at bill@casapueblito.org for more information.

COMINGS AND GOINGS AT CASA - PUEBLITO

In January 2021, Casa - Pueblito left its decade-long office space on Dundas West, to move into our new digs at **2356 Bloor Street W**. Located above the iconic Book City bookstore, we're thrilled to have new space to grow. Our phone number remains the same, and our team can be reached at 416-642-5781.

Lucero Tsui, our valued Administrative Assistant, originally from Chiapas, Mexico, has moved with her husband and young family to Dundas, Ontario, on the occasion of their first house purchase. Congratulations! Luckily for us, Lucero has decided to remain with Casa - Pueblito and she splits her duties between her new home and communiting to the office once a week.

Carlos Jimenez, originally from El Salvador, has joined our Board of Directors and brings vast experience in technology, community development, and social justice praxis within the Latino community to our organization. He splits his time between Toronto and El Cruceiro, Nicaragua. He's the father of our former Global Education Coordinator, Juan Carlos Jimenez, who is currently pursuing his doctoral studies at the University of Toronto! We welcome Carlos to our team!

We are bidding a fond farewell to **Katie Saunders** who after many years of dedicated and committed service to Casa - Pueblito, as a volunteer and as a Board Member, is stepping down. Over the years Katie has contributed in many diverse ways, including stepping in as an emergency office Administrative Assistant one summer, a long time member of and ultimately, the Co-Chair of the Auction-Brunch Committee, and a driving force behind our very successful first ever Virtual Film Night production last year in the midst of COVID-19. These are just some of the highlights among her many other regular Board commitments and accomplishments. We wish Katie the best of luck

and good health, and thank her profoundly for her many contributions.

Our treasured collection of **Revolutionary Nicaraguan Poster Art**, donated to us by the iconic Order of Canada art collector, Avrom Isaacs, has been housed in our Toronto office. We will be returning it to Nicaragua, after 40 years of showings in Southern Ontario. Negotiations with the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamerica at the University of Central America are currently underway to arrange for their safe return to Managua. Stay tuned for more information on this front and for one more show here in Toronto if possible, before their return home.

COVID-19 has presented challenges over the past 14 months that we never would have imagined. Our Country Director, Ashley, has been working from home in Nova Scotia since March, 2020 and the team in Managua including Elizabeth, Darling, Angel and Daniel have been working hard to keep things running as smoothly as possible.

Despite the challenges, we have some exciting news to share with you all about our work and our projects for 2021 and moving forward. We recently began a 5-year agreement with Global Affairs Canada to implement a project with our partner communities promoting women's rights and climate-smart agriculture. The team has been working on this initiative for a while now, and we're thrilled to finally see it come to fruition! Stay tuned for further details in the future -- we can't wait to share this work with you!

Pictured below: sewing students at Huellas de Paz community center in Acahualinca, celebrate the end of their course, and show off masks they'd made.

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