

## Buenos Aires Learning Center – Mayra Mendoza

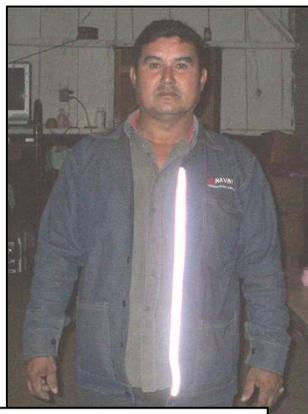
Maybe you have been a part of Mayra Mendoza's life in one way or another so we thought you might enjoy a little history, update and opportunity. If you don't know Mayra, you will learn through this story how the W/NP Learning Centers are a prime example of what can happen with motivation and cooperative efforts.

Mayra has been a significant and exemplary volunteer with Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners for 14 years.

### Who is Mayra?



I am Mayra Mendoza Mojica. I'm 43 years old and have worked as a WNP volunteer training women and young ladies in my community since 1998. I've also been in different communities sharing my knowledge and skills. Genaro Suarez is my husband; he's 45 years old, works as a farmer planting corn, yucca and others. He has always supported me but he's very shy. I have three daughters, Marlang is 26 years old, she's married and has a son (Denis Ismael Lopez) who is four years old, he likes to play, paint and watch movies. Maysell is twenty one years old, married, and studies physics at UNAN- Managua. She has baby who is one month old and lives in Masaya. Scarleth is nineteen years old, single and studies computer. She teaches kinder garden in Masaya, she likes to read and listen to music.



*(Genaro works very long hours and wasn't there when they took the photo)*

Mayra and Genaro Suarez Mendoza of Buenos Aires standing with their Sherin Bowen Lending Library.

Mayra came to Wisconsin in **2005** for the **Wisconsin Women Care II Conference** representing **Women as Grassroots Leaders in Developing Countries – Reaching Across Borders**.



Her Presentation topic: ***How Mayra and her community make small plots yield nutrition, hope and happiness***

**Press Release October 2005, STEVENS POINT** - Twelve women from Nicaragua will share their stories about making a difference in their home communities at the Wisconsin Women Care II Conference being held Saturday, October 15 at the Country Springs Hotel, Stevens Point. The presentation topics will include building a pre-school, nurturing square-foot gardening, growing a business or lending library, working with the Wisconsin National Guard, and healing after a hurricane. They will also describe the Chica Nica Doll Dress Project and working with youth.



(press release from 2005 con't.....)

The “Mano a Mano, Heart to Heart: Shawls of Love” activity will be providing handcrafted shawls made by Wisconsin and Nicaraguan craftspeople to be auctioned during the event, which will also feature keynote presenters Barbara Gottlieb, Women’s Edge Coalition, Washington, DC; Dra. Elia Armacanqui-Tipacti, Peru & UWSP; Jane Mirandette, Loveland, CO; and Jean-Ann Day, Ho-Chunk Nation.

The event, themed **“My Story is Important, and My Voice Needs to be Heard,”** is sponsored by the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners of the Americas, Inc. The conference is open to women, men, teachers, students, community leaders, and all who want to make a difference by exploring the needs of women and girls living in developing countries throughout the world.

**Notes from Mayra’s Break out sesión at the conference: “Nurturing Healthy Habits: Square-foot Gardening”**

- Her town is to the south of Managua in a rural área & difficult to travel in the rainy season with all the mud
- A chimney was provided by WI Nic Partners because before, smoke from cooking would get all over the house
- She carries water 80 kilometers
- Doesn’t have electricity or wáter (*electricity has changed, but she still carries wáter*)
- Her daughter teaches pre-school , middle daughter is in high school and is very good at math, youngest daughter us in middle school
- In order to go to school they must walk 3 kilometers and must cross a river to get to the city
- Gardening:
  - Were taught how to do compost and sq. ft. garden by Arlen from WI Nic Partners
  - Good method for women because they can work close to home – Normally cultivation is really extensive; with this technique even the kids can help out
  - Two kinds of watermelons – one kind from WI and other is from Nicaragua (better results from the Nicaraguan seed)
  - In the beginning there were challenges with water, but now mangos, green peppers, radishes, carrots, sunflowers, and grazing grasses are growing well all due to a water pump, also have plantains & papayas
  - Arlen helped out with the water pump – cost was \$400 which she paid \$200 cash and got a loan to pay the rest
  - Began drip irrigation to save on gasoline
- 7 sewing machines in her house – all donated
- She teaches a class on dress making and knitting, crocheting and embroidering
- She teaches free of charge due to WI Nic
- They also built another water tank from a WI/Nic. Loan with sufficient pressure for the piping system
- Chair/Desk donations to the school in her town
- She raises cows, sheep and turkeys
- Washes clothes in the river





## Summit 2006

### 40 Years and Growing Stronger; Partners in Action

Partnership Development – An ongoing goal within the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partnership is to provide opportunities for people from both chapters to work together.



## Site Visit to Mayra Mendoza's Garden & Learning

**Center Project:** This Learning Center focuses on training in sewing, women's health issues, kitchen gardens, and carpentry. Especially of significance is the drip irrigation system developed through the assistance of W/NP Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer Arlen Albrecht. Also set up at this center is a model clay stove with a chimney that takes the smoke out away from the family and children. An excellent demonstration of how W/NP is impacting families and communities.



Mayra proudly exhibits a successful and productive Learning Center. She recognizes the need to disseminate information to others who can also benefit from learning new methods and skills.

## 2009 Partners of the Americas Peer Learning Event at Mayra's Learning Center & home



**2010 Wisconsin Rural Leadership** Mayra offered the group to experience some of the different tasks that take place in a rural area such as corn shelling by hand, cleaning the patio, washing dishes, carrying water, working in the garden and the composting area.



**2010 & 2012 UW-Stevens Point** Mayra hosted and organized home stays in her community for the 2 UWSP student groups; Family Life Trek in 2010 and Food, Community and Ecology in 2012.



Mayra giving a warm welcome to the group



Sharing about her gardening projects



Making delicious chicken soup!

Bringing up the laundry from the river



Good-bye, until we see you again.....

# 2012 Learning Center Trek

## Making tote bags out of skirts and pants at Beth's Workshop



### So this bring us up to March 2012.....

In March, the night before saying good-bye to the Wisconsin group she had graciously hosted, Mayra sent a proposal with us to give to her host family she stayed with in 2005 in Stevens Point. Her desire was to continue the baking classes in 2012 at her Learning Center, in order to do this she needed a mixer. So Mayra sent the photo to the left along with her idea to have the scarves and shawls they knit in Nicaragua sold in Wisconsin to pay for a mixer.



Rosalind (Mayra's host family from WI) received Mayra's proposal and decided to share this opportunity with her friends, family and home school group.

*(photo: Mayra's mixer was a team effort )*



By pooling their money, using coupons and finding a quality mixer on sale for an exceptional price (1/2 of what it normally would cost) Rosalind pulled things together in short order and now Mayra's Learning Center is going to have a mixer!

**Working together, we can make a difference.**

*Tambien mi amiga Karen dio para el Mixer, pero no salio en la foto*

## And the story gets better.....



CPT Joe Davison  
State Partnership Program  
Coordinator and Katie Berberich  
Wisconsin National Guard 2012

So how to get the mixer from Stevens Point to Mayra in Nicaragua? For many years the Wisconsin National Guard (WNG) has been an exceptional collaborative affiliate with W/NP. From shipping support to coordinating civilian exchanges with community water projects, gardening, firefighter training, quality milk production, water purification and forest fire prevention to Senior Leader visits to our offices in Wisconsin and Nicaragua, we maintain regular communication with the WNG. Erik Leckel, State Partnership Coordinator for WNG, graciously provided excellent coordination and paved the way for his successor, Joe Davison, who is currently in this position.

### Projects with W/NP and the Wisconsin National Guard



Joe had let us know he was going to be traveling to Nicaragua in May. Joe's brother Sean happens to attend school at UWSP. Sean graciously offered to pick up the suitcases (with the Mixer inside) and deliver them to Joe in Madison that weekend. When stopping at the W/NP office, Sean recognizes Rosalind (who was here helping to inventory beads) as she was the photographer for his wedding months before! Small world.



Sean Davison

On May 10th, Mayra picked up the mixer at the Managua office.

"Attached is a picture of Mayra receiving the mixer in our office today. She was very, very happy." - Mirna



Rosalind recording  
inventory of the beads  
Joe is going to carry  
down for the Learning  
Center Jewelry Project

We hope you enjoyed learning a little more about Mayra and her Learning Center in Buenos Aires. We are gathering cooking items for their Bakery classes, please contact the W/NP office if you have any to send along. [wnp@uwsp.edu](mailto:wnp@uwsp.edu)

