Welcome to Nicaragua and the Asociación Familia Padre Fabretto

We are glad to welcome you into ‘La Familia Fabretto’! We look forward to working with you and hope that you find the Volunteer experience to be as rewarding for you as it surely will be for us and the children we serve. The purpose of the information presented in this Volunteer Handbook is to give you an idea of what to expect during your volunteer experience. Please take the time to read this Handbook carefully and consult the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

Once again, Bienvenidos a la Familia!
I. Contact Information.

Office in Managua Address:
La Asociación Familia Padre Fabretto, Managua
Del Ministerio de Trabajo, 500 metros abajo, mano derecha

Fabretto Staff and Contact Information

- EVP/Chief Development Officer, U.S. Office: Kathy Baczko
  Office: (703) 525-8716 Email: kbaczko@fabretto.org Address: 325 Commerce Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
- VP/Chief Operating Officer, Managua Office: Monica Drazba
  Office: 703 348-2359 (US phone line) Cell: +505 8354-9389 Email: mdrazba@fabretto.org.ni
- Volunteer Coordinator: Hannah Peterson
  Cell: +505 8451-7321 Email: hpeterson@fabretto.org.ni
- Director of Center, Cusmapa – Víctor Bustillo
  San Jose de Cusmapa Center & regional schools Cell: 8408-3102
- Director of Center, Quebrada Honda – Trinidad Castellón
  Quebrada Honda Center & regional schools
- Director of Center, Somoto – Fátima Pérez
  Somoto Center & regional schools
- Director of Center, Estelí – Geneli Quiroz
  Estelí Center & La Cruz School
- Director of Center, San Isidro de Bolas – Ramon Montalvan
  San Isidro Center (Managua) & Local schools Cell: 8448-6169
- Volunteer House in San Isidro: Landline Number: 2260-0433
Our Centers

We operate from seven Centers that deliver our programs in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. We use a holistic model that supports children throughout their growth and development and motivates them to become lifelong learners. While Fabretto’s primary focus is children, our community-based approach ensures that parents, teachers, and community members also receive the training they need to create an environment in which children thrive.

Fabrettos seven centers are located throughout Nicaragua, as shown on the map below.
2. BEFORE ARRIVAL – PACKING

Documents

• Passport – make sure it does not expire within 6 months of your departure date!
  + Be sure to make 2 copies before you come.
  + You should leave one copy and your passport in a safe and secure location. You should carry the other copy on yourself at all times for identification purposes.
• Emergency contact list for arrival in Nicaragua
  + You should have a list of people to call, including the volunteer coordinator, driver, and one other Fabretto representative
• Medical Care and Insurance
  + Nicaragua’s medical care in Managua is acceptable by first world standards, although the latest medical technology may not be available. The Hospital Metropolitano is a new hospital (http://www.metropolitano.com.ni/) and is used by Fabretto in emergency situations. The phone number at this hospital is: + 505 2255-6900.
  + The website also provides information on insurance companies accepted directly by the hospital. Hospital charges in Nicaragua are far lower than those in the United States.
  + Check with your insurance company to see if your same coverage carries over while you are in Nicaragua. If not, you can choose to purchase international insurance.
  + In all areas outside of Managua, medical care is rudimentary. For any emergencies or serious illness, you should contact the Volunteer coordinator to arrange transportation and medical visits in Managua.
• This Volunteer Handbook

Clothing

• Brimmed hat (baseball cap is fine)
• Sunglasses
• Work shoes (tennis shoes are fine)
  + Women can wear sandals and men can wear sneakers
• Comfortable footwear (sandals for Managua, flipflops or closed-toed shoes for Cusmapa)
• Flip flops (for beach trips, showers, etc)
• Hiking Boots (for Cusmapa)
• Rain Jacket (with hood) and possibly an Umbrella, especially for the wet season
• A light weight jacket or windbreaker
  + In the mountains you will want a sweatshirt since it gets cooler at night
• Lightweight, cool skirts & dresses (for women)
• Jeans and other long work pants for the office (1-2 for Managua, more for Cusmapa)
• Polos or Button-down shirts (2-3, depending on job-type)
  + For men, they are preferred for office work
• Shorts (2-3)
  + Men don’t wear shorts out to bars or to work, so they will only serve for use during free time
• Bathing suit—in case you go to a lake or beach

Personal Care Items

• Personal toiletry items
  + Tampons—they are difficult to find in Nicaragua
• Basic first-aid products
  + Bring Benedryl and Cortizone (can also buy it in Nicaragua)
  + Advil
  + Neosporin and Band-Aids
  + Diarrhea medication, Tums
• Sunscreen and Mosquito repellent
  + For the mosquito repellant, get 30-50% Deet, especially if coming during the rainy season.
• Plastic bags (Ziplocs) for wet or dirty clothes
• 1-2 Towels (if you will be here longer term) and wash cloth
  + Hand soap, dish soap, hand wipes, hand sanitizer
  All of these items can be purchased in local grocery stores in Nicaragua so there is no need to worry about running out. Imported products can be found in the grocery store, “La Colonia.”

**Miscellaneous Items**

• ATM and Credit cards (can use ATMs to withdraw dollars or Córdobas; your bank and the ATM will charge a small fee for each transaction)
  + Be sure to alert your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans before you leave.
• Costume jewelry only, inexpensive watch
  + Only wear plain and simple jewelry to avoid drawing attention to yourself.
• Camera and extra batteries or charger
  + They are safe to carry in most places, but be mindful of your surroundings.
• Water bottle to refill (Nalgene or other sturdy bottle)
• Head lamp or battery-operated flashlight
• Pocket translation dictionary
• Small backpack for traveling
• Exercise equipment (yoga mat, jump rope, etc.)
• Unlocked cell phone—if you have one
• Favorite snacks or food items (specialty mixed nuts, granola, cliff bars, certain American candy, Asian, Indian or other international food products)
  + Even if you can find these in the local markets, they will be expensive
• Books and/or Movies
  + o You will have free time at the house, so bring games or entertainment (cards, books…) for fun!

**Drugs to take/bring**

• Be sure to bring all prescription medicines in their original containers.
• You should be up to date with routine vaccinations, such as Measles, Polio, Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis, and Varicella.
• In general, some visitors to Nicaragua have been vaccinated against Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Typhoid Fever, and Yellow Fever.
• Malaria and Dengue Fever are present in Nicaragua.

Malaria is only a risk if you travel to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (NOT needed at our Centers). You can take Malaria Pills to prevent contracting Malaria, but Dengue Fever has no vaccination. To reduce your risk of developing these diseases, prevent mosquito bites by using repellant and long sleeved clothing.

*After packing, make sure to weigh your bag because flights to Managua are strict with their 50lb weight limit.*
3. UPON ARRIVAL – IN THE AIRPORT

Customs

- During your flight, the flight attendants will give you two forms, one for immigration and one for customs. When filling these out, please list your address as: Asociación Familia Padre Fabretto, Managua. No need to put further details, but if you don’t put something, they will question you.
- Once you land in Managua, you will go through immigration and will be required to pay a $10 cash fee, or tax, for the ‘tourist visa.’ If asked to fill out a health form, just check NO for everything.

Luggage

- Unlike in US airports, the Nicaraguan authorities compare the checked luggage ticket number (from your departure airport) with the number on the sticker on the luggage. You should have your ticket handy when leaving baggage claim.
- If, for some reason, your luggage has gone missing, you MUST report it at the desk inside baggage claim and make sure to get a tracking number for your report. There is only one lost-luggage desk/kiosk for all of the airlines.

Córdoba Exchange

- The local currency is Córdobas. The exchange is rate is about C$26.5 Córdobas for $1 USD (March 2015). Most markets and stores accept dollars, providing change in Córdobas. However, Nicaraguan vendors will not accept ripped or stained bills. Bills larger than $20 are generally not accepted.
- The easiest way to get Córdobas is to use your Visa or MasterCard (American Express is rarely accepted) and withdraw cash from any local ATM. Please keep in mind that both the ATM and your bank will likely charge you an international transaction fee for ATM withdrawals.

Transportation

- Fabretto will arrange transportation to pick you up from airport and take you to the center where you will be working or to the volunteer house.
- Details on the airport pick-up will be provided to you once you send your flight information to the volunteer coordinator.

Weather

- Managua, Nicaragua is hot and humid, even after the sun goes down. If traveling from colder climates, be sure to bring a light outfit to change into upon arrival.
This year, the Georgetown Fabretto Fellows will stay in a private apartment in Managua.

The two-story house (4 bedrooms and 5 beds) is located in a Private Residence Club, near the new city center of Managua.

Amenities:

- Fully furnished. Includes all home appliances, linens, and cookware.
- The first floor has a living and dinning room, kitchen, utility room, guest bathroom, a bedroom with full bath, terrace and courtyard.
- The second floor has a family room, three bedrooms, and two full bath.
- All bedrooms have air conditioners. Ceiling fans are available in the living areas.
- The property is fully enclosed with 24-hour security.
- Access to a spacious Clubhouse, Swimming Pool, Gym, and Field.
- Free Wifi and Cable TV are available in the house and the Clubhouse area.

Location:

- The residential community is located in an area of Managua called Las Colinas.
- Approximately 30 minutes from the Fabretto Office (varies with morning and afternoon traffic, which can be quite heavy on Carretera Masaya)
- 5 minutes from Galerías Santo Domingo mall
- 5 minutes from Metropolitano Hospital
San Jose de Cusmapa - Volunteer House

- During your stay in Nicaragua, you may visit Cusmapa, a safe town (population of 6,000) located in the northern mountains of Nicaragua.
- Volunteers may stay in the Fabretto “Casa de los Mangos” volunteer house, a fenced-in property.
  + Close to the Fabretto center (a 5-10 minute walk)
- Climate—warm days and cool/cold nights (bring pants and sweaters).
- There are four bedrooms: a single, a double, a triple and a quadruple. The quad has bunk beds.
- Sheets and pillows are provided. A towel may be provided.
- Bathroom—the showers have low water pressure and cold water. Water shortages are common.
  + While some toilets flush normally, others require you to pour water into them in order to flush. Never flush toilet paper in Cusmapa.
- Kitchen—A stove, oven, toaster, refrigerator, plates and utensils are provided.
- No A/C, dishwasher or laundry machine.
- There is NO internet in the house. The nearby Fabretto center has wifi.
- There are no taxis (and really no need for taxis).

Before arriving in Cusmapa, be sure to:

- Basic foods are available in Cusmapa. For a larger variety, purchase food before traveling to Cusmapa.
  + In Cusmapa, food can be purchased from local vendors or at the mini-super.
- Bring 2-3 large and full water bottles.
  + Drinking water is scarce in the city and the tap water is not potable.
- Coordinate your transportation with the volunteer coordinator.

Things to do in Cusmapa:

- Visit el Mirador, a look-out from the top of Cusmapa. You can see Honduras and a beautiful sunset from this site.
- You can hike to La Laguna and La Piedra from Cusmapa. Ask a Fabretto staff member for more information.
Volunteer House Cusmapa
5. LIFE IN NICARAGUA

Weather

The rainy season runs from mid-May through November. During this time, it is hot and humid. Generally, it will rain 3 – 6 days/week during the rainy season, in the afternoons and evenings. In September-October, rain intensifies and tropical storms are common. The dry season, from November to May, is a great time for hiking and other outdoor activities. It is hot and less humid during the dry season.

Laundry

The houses do not have laundry machines. You can either do the laundry yourself (hand-washing) or have the cleaning lady wash your clothes for C$30 per dozen units of clothing. You can buy soap (usually powdered) at any local grocery store.

Transportation

• Taxis — Get credible taxi drivers from current volunteers and Fabretto staff members

  + Keep a list of trustworthy taxi drivers with you while in Nicaragua
  + There are no rates and no meters in cars—negotiate before you enter the cab.
  + You might share your cab with locals that are already in the car.
  + Rates are typically more expensive later in the day and if you are going to a place where it is less crowded.
Food/Water

- You are responsible for providing your own food, which can be purchased at the local markets. People who work at Fabretto Centers may have lunch provided.
- Food in Nicaragua is simple, particularly in the countryside. A typical meal consists of rice, beans, tortillas, local salty cheese, and perhaps chicken or beef. Fresh fruits and vegetables are generally available.
- With the exception of those volunteers with severe allergies or dietary restrictions, meals should not be a problem and get ready to eat a lot of rice and beans!
- The water in Managua is highly chlorinated, and the locals are used to this water.
- Fabretto provides filtered water at the houses. Don’t drink the tap water and try to avoid ice in your drinks.
- The water at the volunteer house in San Isidro de Bolas can be used to brush your teeth, however the water in Cusmapa should NOT be used for brushing teeth.

Activities in Managua

Shopping

- Metrocentro and Galerias are two popular malls where you can find many different products. Both have movie theaters and food courts.
- Metrocentro has both phone companies (Movistar and Claro) and phones can be purchased there for approximately US$30. These are pay-as-you-go phones.
- Managua is filled with local markets, which offer a variety of fruits, clothes, crafts and anything else. Mercado Roberto Huembes is recommended for visitors. Avoid Mercado Oriental unless accompanied by a trusted local. These markets tend to be rife with petty crime. Purses, cameras and other valuables should be left at home.

Nightlife

- There are many popular bars and nightclubs in Managua.
- They are safe, however, don’t bring too much money (more than $20-$30) or anything of value.
- Places to go:
  + Quilombo
  + The many bars at Galerias Mall
  + Zona Hippo: a street lined with bars and nightclubs
Travel

- Many tourist destinations are within a two hour bus ride, which can be caught by the university (just tell the taxi driver “La UCA”).
- The San Isidro house has many tour books that can help you plan your weekend adventures!
- San Juan del Sur is a popular beach that is perfect for surfing and is known as a “party beach.” Gigante beach is close to San Juan del Sur, but is less crowded.
- Granada is a fun, historic town about an hour away by bus. It is next to Lake Nicaragua, where you can swim or take a tour of Las Isletas—the mini islands in the middle of the lake that were formed from the top of a volcanic eruption.
- La Laguna de Apoyo is a crater lake about a half hour from Managua and offers a great weekend getaway. Swimming and kayaking are offered by many hostels at La Laguna.
- Mombacho Volcano is an inactive volcano near Granada where you can go hiking or take a zipline tour.
- León is another historic town with lots of hiking, surfing and volcano tours. If you’re lucky, you can opt to go volcano boarding down Cerro Negro. It has the largest Cathedral in Central America!
- Ometepe is an island of two volcanoes in Lake Nicaragua and is the largest volcanic island inside of a fresh water lake in the world. On the island, you can see the archeological past of the Nahua Indians.
- The Atlantic coast is a completely different experience than Pacific coast tourism. The Corn Islands provide a perfect location for snorkeling and diving.
Thank You for Inspiring Change in Nicaragua!

www.fabretto.org