

## ***Mamaroneck UM Church, NY—Feb. 19-26***

From Mamaroneck to Nicaragua: Good Will & Good Works

*by Pam Tucker with photos from the Mamaroneck United Methodist group*

(March 7, 2005) Thirty-one members of the Mamaroneck United Methodist Church flew to Nicaragua on February 19 for a week of activities that ranged from constructing walls to shoring up health, education and art programs at the El Ayudante orphanage site near Leon. Pastor Javier Viera and Assistant Pastor Jennifer Morrow led the group of 8 youths and 23 adults, ranging in age from 13 to 78.



Most of the group spent the majority of the visit alongside a Nicaraguan construction team building a cement block wall at one end of the site and painting orphanage classrooms. They picked up a variety of new skills, like cement mixing and bricklaying. Another group, led by New Rochelle High School art teacher Grace Powers Fraioli, conducted art programs in several schools. The visitors shared a variety of art materials and techniques with eager children at schools at the prekindergarten, elementary, and middle school levels.



**Judith Sedaitis, Joanna Lord, Anne Herman, and Javier Viera confer at the Team House construction site.**

Nutritionist Marion Groetch, and RN Paula Meighan held workshops on maternal, infant, and reproductive health. “Although there is so much that the local mother's can't control, we wanted to provide education so they could be more empowered to take charge of what they could control,” said Marion Groetch. “We taught strategies for preventing illness, treating illness, feeding their children well with the foods available. This is what we could offer. It's hard to see hunger and illness and not be able to make it go away immediately.”

In addition to the clinic work, the two treated some patients who were affected by a sudden viral epidemic that sickened 27,000 Nicaraguans and killed 25 children that week.



**Podiatrist Charles Morelli examines a diabetic patient with a foot problem.**

Charles Morelli, a Mamaroneck podiatrist, organized the donation of thousands of dollars worth of health supplies and during his time in Nicaragua consulted with, and performed surgery on patients at the Leon Hospital. He found all the activities, including the construction work on the orphanage, rewarding “on many levels,” and said, “ It made me appreciate what we have here in the United States more than ever, and thankful that I am part of a profession that is able to help so many.”

Lunch programs at schools, grocery donations to needy families, and music programs at senior centers were also part of the week’s activities.

In addition to the above mentioned participants, other attendees included Cathy Sullivan, Kevin Sowerby, Henry Hobbs, Dan and James Heldridge, Lori and Liz Pisani, Amy Brelia, Bruce and Graham Meighan, Joanna Lord, Scott and Daniel Dieter, Coralie Joseph, Anne Herman, Judith Sedaitis, Danius and Simas Glinskis, John, Lauren, and Evan Groetch, Pam Tucker, Tad, Gracie and Jim Philipp.

This was the first trip to Central American for many in the group, and the first trip to Nicaragua for all of the participants. They were impressed with the natural beauty of the country as well as the warmth and friendliness of their Nicaraguan hosts. A return trip in 2006 is already being planned.



*Nicaraguan children with Judith Sedaitis of Mamaroneck (in hat) and an El Ayudante staff member.*

For more information on the El Ayudante Orphanage project in Leon, or the Mamaroneck United Methodist Church, please call 698-4343.



*Poor Nicaraguans gather at the city dump to participate in a worship service and be given lunch, sacks of sugar, coffee, beans and rice so they can feed themselves during the coming week.*