



PRESS RELEASE:

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“Sister Katie Schilling, Celebrating Twenty Years of Success in Nicaragua”

The year 2010 holds particular meaning for Sister Katie Schilling, a native of Plymouth, Wisconsin. Sister Katie is a member of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes. Twenty years ago she established “The Maureen Courtney School for Special Needs Children” in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua. “We began with five teachers and a handful of children; twenty years later we have 240 children enrolled. My joy is in seeing these children liking school, feeling accepted and learning life skills that will give them a higher quality of life. The children who are enrolled have a variety of learning issues which include hearing impairment, hyper-activity, autism, mild retardation and severely handicapped,” said Sister Katie.

“At our school they learn to read and write, as well as life skills such as carpentry, baking, arts and crafts, sewing and music” continued Sister Katie. “Among many success stories is one of our students who now bakes and sells bread each day to earn an income to support himself and his mother. He came to us at the age of twelve and had not been in school before. He learned to read and write, and after three years in the elementary school went on to high school and graduated.”

“Prior to starting the school, it was not uncommon for these special needs children to be hidden away from public view. They were often abused and sadly many were used almost as slaves for household work. Through twenty years of successfully working with children of special needs, people have come to see these children can learn, and need to be treated with dignity and seen as contributing members to their families and society,” shared Sister Katie.

“My life’s work is to walk with these marginalized children in their journey. This is what has given my life joy and deep happiness,” concluded Sister Katie. The school’s main funding sources have come from donors. A few years ago a “Sponsor a Child” program began providing a full year of education, daily meal and school supplies for \$150 for one student. Larger projects such as painting of classrooms, playground equipment, supplies for baking and carpentry, arts and crafts, as well as teacher salaries is a continuous challenge. As for Sister Katie, she trusts in friends and God to provide for the children who would have remained invisible but are now seen. To read more about Sister Katie’s children, click on www.csasisters.org