



## CALLING ALL SEWERS

My name is Nancy Hayes and I'm the sewing co-op facilitator for PAN Missions. Over the last two years PAN has been developing a sewing co-op program that is based on the theory of a hand up rather than a hand out. Here is how it works:

- First a group of Canadians is brought together who have felt the Lord calling them to go to Nicaragua and teach sewing. Much prayer goes into this first aspect of the project because God has to lead these participants.
- Secondly a host church in Nicaragua is chosen by Annette Vickers (she is our director) that we are to work with. The team is instructed to come along side their Christian sisters and teach them sewing basics.
- Thirdly the team from Canada starts to work gathering supplies for their trip. The word goes out that we are headed to Nicaragua to teach sewing and would like donations of fabric, notions, thread, sewing patterns etc. There are usually some fund raising projects done for our contingency fund (this I will explain later) and trip costs.
- The date of our trip is set and the host church starts to pray for the team. This is an important part of the process as we are joining two sets of women for two weeks with different cultures, and language to work together for the betterment of the Nicaraguan community.
- As we approach the departure date airline tickets are bought, information meetings are formed, a head sewer is chosen and projects that will be taught are discussed.
- The skills that we have asked to be taught are as follows:
  1. threading the machine
  2. forwards and backwards
  3. locking their stitch
  4. curves
  5. casings
  6. elastic insertion
  7. bias tape
  8. lining
  9. sewing machine maintenance



The Canadian ladies do the teaching. This is decided on a volunteer basis.

- All sewing machines are provided by PAN because of the generous donation of a fellow by the name of Patrick from London, Ontario who gives to PAN reconditioned used sewing machines. These machines are in a carrying bag along with extra needles and machine instructions. The machines are not given to the co-op they must work for them. The co-op is expected to give back to the community by making a sewing donation to a local hospital. They get to choose what they will sew – we choose the number. All fabric and notions are supplied for this project. The Nicaraguan women get to practise their new sewing skills and make the item they have chosen. When the sewing co-op finishes the project their debt is paid, the church then owns the sewing machines. This program is called the payment project. The new co-op benefits by their sewing machines the children's hospital benefits by receiving some badly needed supplies for the hospital. These supplies could be crib sheets, hospital gowns, P.j. bottoms, etc.





- A little talk is given to the co-op telling them how to run the co-op, managing the money, voting etc.
- The Canadian team has a graduation ceremony for the Nicaraguans with certificates given out and cake served.
- A children's program is generally run at the same time as the sewing team is at the church. This provides day care for the moms as they learn how to sew. The Canadian team usually supplies the leadership and supplies for this aspect of the program.
- The co-op is given suggestions as to what to sew to sell within the community. But ultimately it is their decision. The co-op is left well stocked with fabric, notions etc. to start their new venture.
- **Contingency Fund**....As the Canadians travel and visit the different projects in Nicaragua there are usually needs identified that tug at their hearts. This is where the team's contingency fund comes in to play. The team votes on how to spend this money and Alfredo (our PAN Nicaraguan representative) makes it happen. This could range from pillows for the shelter where women stay while receiving cancer treatments to bed guard rails for the children at the orphanages to extra food for the feeding centres. Lots of needs have been met because of the "contingency fund".
- In about three to six months I return to visit the co-ops to see how they are getting along. We usually do some problem solving and a new skill is taught. Generally at this time they are given a serger to help make their projects look more professional. I return about every six months just to check on the co-op and help in any way I can. There is another project called the **contract project** that the co-ops have access to at this time. This project is where the co-ops make crib sheets, hospital gowns, hospital P.j. bottoms, isolet sheets, warming bed sheets etc. for the children's hospitals in Nicaragua. All supplies are given to the co-op and they provide the labour. We have a written contract that is paid when they complete the sewing. Any money earned is seed money for the co-op. What they spend it on is up to them.



Nancy

So that is how PAN installs a sewing co-op. If you feel the Lord is tugging at you to share your skills in the sewing department we would love to have you join us on a sewing team. You say you don't sew .....well we have mixed construction and hairdressing with the sewing and it worked just fine. If you are motivated by a hand up project rather than a hand out project the sewing team is where you want to be. We are making a difference in Nicaragua and would love to have you along on one of our teams.

For further information please contact me - Nancy Hayes .....  
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