



YMCA Northumberland-Nicaragua Youth Exchange•Campamento

YMCA Northumberland – International Program

YMCA Northumberland’s International Program was established 16 years ago, with the vision of providing support to YMCAs in developing countries in times of need, forming a partnership with a YMCA in a developing country to support projects, mutual learning and to provide our membership and community with an avenue to learn about our world and participate in development learning opportunities.

We have developed a partnership with the YMCA of Nicaragua over the past 9 years and through this partnership we support a youth development project to provide young people in Nicaragua with access to education and training and participation in citizenship leadership, not normally available to them due to economic circumstances. Their participation in the YMCA program enables them to find employment, be involved in their community and local municipal activities, and be active participants in their community and their country.

Our partnership is one of mutual exchange of learning and resources. We feel we can learn a great deal from the work that the YMCA of Nicaragua conducts with young people in their communities and our youth exchange is our first step to providing an opportunity for young people in our community to actively participate, learn and become agents of change for global learning at our YMCA and in our community.

We are very excited to bring this unique, 2 year exchange and development opportunity to the young people of our community, and the communities of our partner YMCA in Nicaragua, and to continue our work towards improving global understanding at our YMCAs.



YMCA Northumberland-Nicaragua Youth Exchange • Campamento

In 2002, YMCA Northumberland's International Program embarked on the YMCA Youth Exchange/Campamento to give young people in our community a chance to experience different cultures, languages and life within Canada and internationally and the opportunity to share the experience with students in Canada and Nicaragua. 68 youth from our community and communities in Nicaragua have participated in this unique youth exchange experience over its 8 year history.

Goals

- To create a program for youth to exchange ideas and experiences, reflect upon the experience, develop a bond and team with peers and learn to approach differences in others with an open mind
- To foster in youth a sense of potential as social actors in their world and to encourage awareness and understanding of their future impact on their society
- To contribute to the development and enrichment of the partnership between YMCA Northumberland and the YMCA of Nicaragua to begin an exchange of expertise, ideas and resources between our YMCAs.
- Develop in youth the values of volunteerism, leadership, responsibility, respect for others and gender equity
- Develop and deepen participants' knowledge of the politics, economics and social issues concerning Cobourg, Canada and Nicaragua.
- Facilitate an international exchange that will permit participants to develop an awareness of the value and richness of differences amongst people.

Process

Ten youth, ranging from 15-17 years of age from throughout Northumberland are selected for the program through an application and interview process. The participants participate in regular development training and learning, Spanish language classes, meetings, fundraising activities and team building along with the Exchange Leader. Meetings and activities are also held with all the families to get to know each other and to understand the exchange.

In May/June the youth spend a team training weekend at RKY Camp, the residential camp of the Kingston YMCA.

Our Northumberland youth travel to Nicaragua for a two week visit in late June/early July. While in Nicaragua each of the Northumberland youth are paired up with one of the Nicaraguan youth and live in their home with their family. The youth together follow an agenda developed by the YMCA in Nicaragua and their youth to help them understand the reality of the lives of their youth, the cultural history, geography and beauty as well as the many challenges of the country.

After returning to Canada the youth and parents participate in an evaluation process of the first phase and then move on in fall of the year to continue their weekly Spanish classes and preparation meetings for the next summer when 10 Nicaraguan youth come to Canada. While in Northumberland all the Nicaraguan youth stay with our youth in their homes and we reciprocate by providing a full program, developed by our youth, of learning of our community, our rural environment, our cultural history and time spent with families. After the Nicaraguan youth return home, the families and youth participate in a final evaluation process and celebrate the end of the exchange!

Criteria for Candidates

- Between 15 and 17 years of age-must be able to commit to the full 2 year program.
- Payment of a commitment fee over the two year period. We want to ensure that everyone from all economic circumstances have the ability to participate-financial assistance is available through the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign. Funding is received from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) to support our exchange program.
- Must be available to travel to Nicaragua for two weeks in late June/early July of Year 1 and be similarly available in the same time frame in Year 2 to host a Nicaraguan youth in their home.
- While the Nicaraguan youth are in our community we involve the entire family and families need to be open to participating in our activities (as they can around work schedules) and sharing driving duties.
- Must be able to participate in the Spanish language classes and all training sessions, fundraising events and activities with the team. You are not a team if you are not all there!
- Must have your appropriate inoculations prior to the trip and show proof of such by March 1 of Year 1.
- Must have a valid passport for the travel dates and must present it to the Youth Exchange Leader no later than March 1 of Year 1.
- Must be open to experiencing a different culture, climate and landscape and working together on a team of fellow YMCA youth and YMCA youth from Nicaragua.
- Must be healthy and able to do physical work.

For more information:

Happy Mireault, Director, Development & International Program 905.372.4318x309
hmireault@ymcanorthumberland.com