



Bainbridge-Ometepe Scholarship Program

The Bainbridge-Ometepe Scholarship Program began in 1990 in response to a request from faculty at Instituto Ladislau Chwalbinski, the local high school in Altagracia, Ometepe. At that time, it was nearly impossible for a high school graduate from Ometepe to study at a university.

Together, we have developed a scholarship program that depends on teamwork among five groups. Each Ometepe high school has a committee that selects students based on academic performance, economic need, and community spirit. The committees collect grades, receipts, and documentation from the students receiving scholarships, and monitor their progress. Parents and guardians attend meetings and support their students. Our Nicaraguan scholarship representative on Ometepe trains committees, collects information from the local committees, meets with students, and sends receipts, grades, letters, and information about students' progress to the committee on Bainbridge. Our committee recruits sponsors here, meets with committees and students on Ometepe annually, coordinates with the representative on Ometepe, and communicates with sponsors. Sponsors make the program possible by funding scholarships.

The number of high schools to graduate their first class of students has increased from two in 1990 to nine in 2008. During that time, the number of scholarships for Ometepe high school graduates has grown from 2 to 43.5. In 2007, thirteen students completed their classes, adding two professional nurses, a doctor, two lawyers, a civil engineer, two businesswomen, a psychologist, a specialist in sustainable tourism, and three trained mechanics (through technical school) to the island. That brings the total number of university graduates over the course of the scholarship program to 62. Four current high school teachers also finished their university studies, earning their teaching degrees.

Several years ago a very generous person donated a sum of money to establish the Robert Drew Scholarship Fund. That fund has provided partial scholarships for high school teachers on Ometepe to earn their university degrees through weekend classes. The Drew Fund also helps students cover the high cost of graduation seminars and research projects that are required to receive a diploma once regular course work has been completed.

A full scholarship is \$960/year or \$80/month. Several sponsors donate \$480/year or \$40/month, sharing their student with another sponsor. Some committees, with the consent of scholarship students, divide a full scholarship between two students. The entire portion of your donation goes directly a student, with the Sister Islands Association covering the small overhead for photocopies and transportation for Ometepe's volunteer committee members and the salary for the local scholarship representative.

We are looking for more sponsors. For more information, please call Kathy Grainger at 842-9805 or Nancy Quitslund at 780-9422. You may e-mail kathy@bainbridge.net or nancyq@bosia.org.