This 3rd Quarter Newsletter will focus on the impact of the pandemic. As a grant making foundation, we have had to adjust how we determine which grant proposals to fund. The first decision was to not fund any programs or projects that involve international travel. As we review reports and new funding requests, we are focusing on COVID plans and how people and communities are being supported despite necessary public health measures. It is impressive what people and organizations have been able to accomplish.

Project Alianza
Even before hand washing became a “thing,” Project Alianza included the importance of good hygiene as part of its Community Allies Program (CAP) to improve the lives of children of migrant coffee farmers in Nicaragua. The program’s objectives are to: (1) conduct community educator trainings on teaching methodology, literacy development, WASH standards, gender-equity in the classrooms, and environmental responsibility, (2) provide supplies for the daily practice of tooth brushing and hand washing in schools, (3) pay community educator stipends, and 4) refine materials for the literacy component of the programming. Results were impressive:

- “Our work reduced the number of students without basic prerequisites skills (e.g., vowel recognition) to learn how to read by 21 percent; 94 students went from lacking basic prerequisite skills to beginning to learn how to read.
- CAP changed the entire distribution of students’ literacy levels; before CAP, the majority of students in our communities lacked basic literacy skills, after CAP, the majority of students are reading fluently and comprehend the texts that they read.
- Now 64 students not only read fluently but also can make inferences from reading texts, no students possessed this level of reading comprehension before CAP.
- We improved student attendance by 17 percentage points from May to October, and 144 students achieved attendance of 70 percent or higher during the project.

As a nonprofit organization working with a variety of stakeholders, we are uniquely positioned to adapt and to continue to support the communities that we work in despite the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in Nicaragua. Project Alianza has been able to use our digital resources to communicate important materials and relevant information to our communities. Because we are deeply knowledgeable of the availability of running water and living conditions of our community members, we have been working to adapt materials and training to be appropriate for remote communities.”

Nicol Chinchilla Cordero - Amigos de las Americas
“As part of my AllPeopleBeHappy Fellowship, Amigos de las Américas aims to create a pilot in Costa Rica, on how to expand year-round programming for students… As a response to the different needs that youth across the United States and Latin America were expressing for inclusive spaces that promoted leadership skills and allowed for connections and cultural exchanges in the middle of the uncertainty of the COVID-19, AMIGOS created the Community Impact Project (CIP)-a 6-week virtual program for Latin American youth between 15 and 19 years old.

Students were assigned to different cohorts to ensure the most impactful cultural exchange experience. Bryan B. is a Costa Rican student who participated in the first cohort. Bryan describes his involvement as a catapulting and eye-opening experience. Bryan also often mentioned how the CIP had allowed him to gain more confidence on his own skills as well as learn how to be a more inclusive leader. Bryan constantly pushed himself to give the extra mile and took every single learning opportunity he had access to.

As part of his participation, Bryan developed the project proposal for Stand2Learn, a one-on-one tutoring for ninth grade students. These sessions will support students whose quality of education has been hurt by virtual learning platforms during the pandemic. Bryan applied every stage of the design thinking model he learned in the program; in the testing stage he surveyed his fellow classmates to research how many would be interested in being tutors.” He presented his idea to his school principal and council and with their support recruited 20 tutors and 80 students needing tutoring (twice the number he was expecting). What a great start to this new program.