

Point organization involve

in Nicaraguan conference



Milo Harpstead, Park Ridge, fits eyeglasses as part of a project for Wisconsin Nicaragua Partners. (Contributed photo)

Wisconsin citizens, including representatives from Wisconsin Nicaragua Partners (W/NP), a group headquartered in Stevens Point, played a central role in a multi-country conference in Managua, Nicaragua, Friday through Sunday, Jan. 30-Feb. 1.

W/NP was one of 60 chapters within Partners of the Americas, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop leadership, understanding and opportunity in the Western Hemisphere, sent representatives to the conference, which focused on volunteerism.

The Stevens Point area has had a central role during the last 18 years in supporting programs in Nicaragua, said Amy Wiza, W/NP executive director. "With the W/NP state office based on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus, there is a natural tendency for many local volunteers and supporting organizations to be involved with W/NP," said Wiza.

She said W/NP has consistently demonstrated over its 44 years of existence how to perform international relationships with Nicaraguan citizens by developing community-based infrastructure and leadership skills. "Sustainable programs and human development projects through the work of volunteers from over 20 Wisconsin cities

partnering with Nicaraguan communities have gotten the attention of other Central American countries who ask, 'how do you do it?'" said Wiza.

She said the "how to" answer was shared with delegates from eight Central American countries at the conference, including the United States, Mexico, Paraguay, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The principle presenters at the conference shared their vast experiences and W/NP had the opportunity to highlight how its Learning Center development has evolved from the original Sewing Center idea. W/NP currently coordinates projects in more than 100 Learning Centers located throughout Nicaragua.

Some of these projects include providing citizen-to-citizen interaction that allows for the instruction of making crafts suitable for home and commercial sale, basic electrical repairs, first aid, knitting and sewing; as well as projects in agriculture, domestic abuse abatement, maternity and child health, Vitamin A distributions, fire-fighting training, and lending libraries.

W/NP also provides regular shipments of supplies for Learning Centers, including medical equipment and hospital supplies, fire trucks, ambulances and even a handicap-accessible bus.

More information is available online at