

Sponsorship and scholarships: Maria Antonia's story



Maria Antonia benefits from sponsorship

Maria Antonia, 18, is an ayudante or teaching assistant volunteering at La Esperanza Granada.

Her story is one of how sponsorship can make a difference.

As a youngster Maria Antonia showed academic promise at school and was fortunate to be sponsored by a couple known as Rebecca and Ryan Wayman.

Sponsors donate from \$185 to \$280 per year for five years.

This money ensures that children in and around Granada, Nicaragua can continue to go to school. In Maria Antonia's case it meant the teenager from El Hormigón in Granada had a uniform, shoes, a rucksack, pens, pencils and a notebook to take with her to school each day.

These simple things children in the West can happily take for granted but for Maria Antonia they made the world of difference.

Not all children have uniforms and some remove their shoes during recreation and play in their bare feet because they know their parents can't afford the cost of replacing ruined footwear.

"The sponsorship was very important. Without it I wouldn't be where I am today," Maria Antonia said.

The young volunteer was sponsored from the age of 12 until she was 17.

During those five years she excelled academically studying Spanish, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and then latterly, when she turned 15, English.

Only 30% of children in Nicaragua complete their primary education because many don't have the opportunity. But Maria Antonia's sponsors gave her that chance to complete that schooling.

Her success didn't stop there because she showed further promise and was lucky enough to receive a university scholarship - sponsorship - which is managed by La Esperanza Granada.

This second award of \$1280 for this year is a financial lifeline which has given Maria Antonia the opportunity to study Business Administration, Tourism and Hostelry.

The sponsorship means Maria Antonia has a stipend of around \$80 per month to help cover her living expenses.

Next year her sponsor, who is a former volunteer, will pay \$1360. This means \$400 will go towards Maria Antonia's university fees.

Visiting volunteers at La Esperanza Granada – who come from all over the world – provide supplementary tuition for the ayudantes with one-to-one sessions of Mathematics, English and Computing.

Maria Antonia is happy juggling her work at La Esperanza Granada, her home life and her university education.

“I’m very lucky to be where I am. Some of my friends who went on to University have had to drop out after a few months because they can’t afford it. They don’t have the money to carry on.

“If I wasn’t sponsored I wouldn’t be able to go to university,” she said.

Maria Antonia helps the teachers at Jose de la Cruz Mena – she’s even on hand to stand in anyone is sick.

Her other roles include co-ordinating the volunteers who come from all over the world to help out in those public schools in Granada deemed to be in most need of assistance.



After financial help for school Maria Antonia is now being sponsored through university

The 18-year-old ayudante also organises and runs a Geography Club, an Arts Club and a Sports club which take place throughout the school week and cater for 3rd and 4th Grade students.

“I am where I am because of, firstly, the sponsorship and then the scholarship. I am very grateful.”

Maria Antonia has aspirations to work in the tourism industry when she completes her four-and-a-year university course.