ROCHA PROJECT TIMELINE

2007 On this first Winthrop trip to Nicaragua and to Guatemala, a small group helped to dig artifacts found by a farmer planting trees (Nicaragua) and worked on an eco-tourism project (Guatemala).

The group learned that the Nicaraguan children were not in school because they didn't have the money for supplies and uniforms and they couldn't cross the river during the rainy season. In addition they learned that the community in this particular part of Nicaragua was especially hard hit during the civil war of the 1980s; the community of Rocha was bombed practically every day for a ten year period. The adults in the community didn't have the opportunity to go to school during the civil war.

2008 A group from Winthrop returns to Rocha after raising money to build a one-room school house as requested by the community.

Dr. Williams spent the next couple of years identifying the community needs of this particular area of Nicaragua. She worked with community members and non-profit organizations (ANIDES in Nicaragua and Reto Juvenil in Costa Rica). Projects such as dental clinics, planting two community gardens, teaching English lessons, and reconstructing roads were carried out.

2010-2011 Three student researchers collected survey data and interviewed individual community members about their individual capacities and goals.

We worked with community members on building their strengths so that they can solve some of the problems that face them such as persistent poverty, hunger, lack of land ownership, and lack of education.

In 2013 we promised that Winthrop University students and faculty would help acquire a new water system and build 30 latrines in three years. In 2016 we finished this project.

We know that having access to water will help the community work on realizing goals beyond those of basic survival. Fulfilling the commitment of the three-year project has helped us build trust in a community that spent so many years in hiding.

In March 2016, the history and nutrition students who participated in this class were the ninth group of students to travel to Nicaragua as part of a course-embedded program. Many groups of students and faculty have and will participate:

- Dr. Peter Phillips has brought Biology students to Nicaragua to test water sources.
- Dr. Wendy Campbell has brought Social Work students to analyze needs in the community.
- The Human Nutrition department has sent students every year since 2008 to work on nutrition projects in the community.
- Dr. Matt Heard and Dr. Cynthia Tant, both from the Winthrop Department of Biology helped instruct our students on how to test the water in Rocha and Tierra Blanca for water-borne diseases.