Morales family making miracles in Guatemala

Benjamin Tuschman Staff Writer

Nearly nine years ago, Bella Morales was living in a rural village in windy Guatemala with no electricity, indoor plumbing, or any remote form of entertainment to be found. The Morales family saw the conditions that she and other Guatemalans were living in and adopted Bella, opening a door of opportunity for her. The whole family has now spent the last four years dedicating their time to helping impoverished Guatemalan children through the Miracles in Action Organization.

"We just want to help, even the tiniest bit we can, without adopting every child in Guatemala," sophomore Ben Morales said. "[We want to] give them an education, which is the start to a brighter future."

Ben and his family work with the Miracles in Action Organization in order to achieve this goal.

"Miracles in Action" is a completely non-profit organization that goes to poor, remote areas of Guatemala and provides latrines, clean water, stoves, and schools to improve the quality of living. Founded in December 2004, their main focus is build-

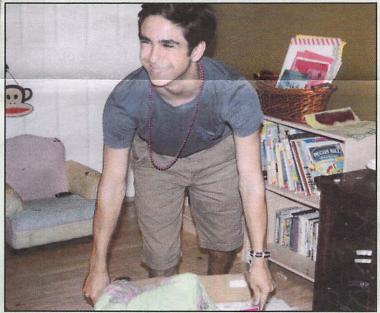
ing schools in order to promote education and help Guatemalans gain skills to improve their lives.

The Morales family adopted a baby girl from Guatemala eight years ago, a country from which about 70% of indigenous people live in poverty and elementary school enrollment rate is at a mere 39%, according to the Rural Poverty Portal. On their trip to pick her up from her homeland, they encountered alarming sights.

"We stayed on the better side of town, but we still lived in wooden huts with no electricity or indoor plumbing," Ben Morales said. "While in a taxi driving through the area, there were several houses made of piled up trash. Traveling on the roads was in general, a very heartbreaking experience."

Seeing real-life scenes as upsetting as these caused the Morales family to feel the need to help the people from Guatemala, the homeland of their newest family member. A few years later, they teamed up with Miracles in Action and began helping the cause.

"As a family we have always tried to practice compassion and to share what we have with others," Linda Morales, mother of the Morales family said. "The people of Guatemala have wo-



GUATEMALA GIFTS: Sophomore Ben Morales takes donated supplies to the rest of the collections that he and his family are holding for Miracles in Action. *Photo By Benjamin Tuschman*



DELIVERY: Ben Morales shares a laugh with sister Bella while carrying donations, which are going to the Miracles in Action drop location to reach Guatemala. *Photo By Benjamin Tuschman*

ven their way into our hearts and have made a home there."

Ben's brother, senior Nico Morales, has been collecting various donations for the Miracles in Action Organization for the past four years, and enjoys lending a hand to those who may need a little help getting on their feet.

"It usually involves collection of all sorts of knitted goods and school supplies," Nico Morales said. "Basically, anything that would be beneficial to the kids who aren't as fortunate as us down in rural Guatemala."

Bella was adopted from Mazatenango, Guatemala at only four months old, and goes door-to-door in her neighborhood, spreading awareness of the organization about once every one-two weeks. She has even said that she would like to go to Guatemala and help out first-hand next summer.

"I wanted to help out Guatemala because they are poor, and my mom told me how lucky we are to have a house, and I felt that we should help them," eightyear old Bella Morales said.

The Morales family has spent countless hours helping out impoverished people in Guatemala, and they have the numbers to show for it. They have collected hundreds of books, hats, and scarves, and thousands of articles of clothing and school supplies. The inspiration for all their charitable efforts was all because of one person: Bella.

"She actually started off the initiative to build a school in Guatemala," Ben Morales said. "Bella's brought so much joy into our life in the eight years she's been here. With the education she's received, and the food she's been given, she's been given a much better life than she would have had in Guatemala."

After collecting donations and working on the project for nearly four years, the Morales family is showing no signs of slowing down.

Their next family project is to try to fund an entire school in Guatemala, through collecting \$20,000 via the Miracles in Action website, miraclesinaction.org/schoolstarter. Ben and Bella made a video and Power-Point detailing their situation.

"I want to help all the children," Linda Morales said. "I think every child deserves clean water, good nutrition, a warm and safe home, a free education, and a chance at a promising future."