

December 2012

Dear Miracles' Supporter:

Each year I have the opportunity to share our best stories from Guatemala through our holiday letter. There is so much news, and we try to keep you up to date throughout the year on our website, blog, e-news, and on Facebook. Therefore, I selected stories that touched my heart and hold memories of real people where we have made a difference in their lives.



Meet Domingo from Tzanjomel, a small village on Lake Atitlan where Miracles in Action built School #31. Domingo is 14 years old, the youngest of 11 children. Three years ago, his mother died of leukemia, and Domingo needed to stay at home to care for her in her illness, cook meals, and work around the house. He could not attend school, and so he did not speak Spanish, only his indigenous language of Katchiquel. Domingo desperately wanted to learn, and he is quite bright. Despite his father's initial objections, he attended our school. He had to start in 1st grade with all the 6-7 year old children. His teacher tells us that he is such a help to her with the other students, and a role model. In this photo, Domingo is participating in their graduation celebration, receiving his "1st grade diploma". When I saw his shy smile, I was so proud to be able to impact Domingo's life with this opportunity of an education.

Having a 20-year career in nutrition, this next story makes me very happy. 2012 was the year to address sustainable solutions to improve nutrition. We are addressing Guatemala's staggering malnutrition problem – 5th highest in the world – by supporting agriculture and nutrition education programs where we can make a lasting difference. Working with ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization) in Florida, we learned about better crop choices like chaya, moringa, pigeon peas, and chia, plus effective gardening methods. We developed recipes and cooking workshops for chaya and worked closely with researchers at the University del Valle in Guatemala City. Much of what we learned is shared in a new chaya brochure and recipe booklet available on our website. In 2012 we hired Pedro Rodriguez, our first in-country Guatemalan project coordinator, who is passing along this learning to women's groups, teachers, and partner charities. Additionally, Miracles funds an organic farmer/ trainer, Shad Qudsi – his community garden projects have women harvesting nutritious vegetables from their very own community gardens. We know we are making a difference when children help in the harvest, and are seen washing and eating



carrots – just loaded with vitamin A!

For 12 years we have been supporting a cottage industry of Mayan artisans, helping their families by buying their beaded jewelry and woven bags and then selling them through a network of volunteer sales ambassadors. In 2012 we expanded our handicraft purchasing to help even more women to learn a trade that builds self-esteem and earns them income to feed and educate their children. We now sell to gift shops at a wholesale level, and we offer a wide selection in our online store. Through our vocational center with Amigos de Santa Cruz, we developed a program to teach beading, where they would learn to make simple friendship bracelets. I had the opportunity to give several student bead makers their first earned income for weaving bracelets. You can understand why we call this project "Beyond Beads – going beyond fair trade".



Student beader receives payment from Penny for her first work weaving bracelets for Miracles.

January 2013 marks the 8th anniversary of the inauguration of our very first school, a primary school funded by my mother Noreen Rambacher. Mom certainly named our charity correctly, as she has inspired so many others to make miracles in action. Naples Lakes residents, coordinated by Pat Dorian, have raised funds for the construction of our 40th school – a middle school located in the village of School #1. Pat has two adopted grandchildren from Guatemala, and she started volunteering with us by selling handicrafts. We have so many kind and giving volunteers, supporters, and donors. I would like to thank each and every one of you for your dedication, time, heart, financial support and spreading the word.



2012 stands out as the year when Miracle's progress required the hiring of our first Executive Director, Christie Brown. Christie works as a consultant through her own graphic design business in Cincinnati, Ohio. Our website and printed materials (including this letter) are created from her office. I have been freed up from handling the responsibilities of accounting, thank you letters, and managing projects. But, this does not mean that I am out of the loop. Christie and I speak daily, and she is truly my right arm.



The Ripple Effect reaches the remotest villages, bringing smiles with their 1st toys, a plush pig.

Two generous donors are committed to covering the cost of our Executive Director, so we can continue to apply 100% of your donation dollars directly to the projects in Guatemala. We hope that this holiday season you will consider gift giving via a gift certificate for a backpack, pigs and chickens, water filters, stoves, sewing machines, scholarship, or a general donation, where needed most. This can be done online or with our brochure, mailed to the Ohio address. Please visit our online store to buy beaded and woven handicrafts. Beautiful new items are available at store.miraclesinaction.org.

Mom believed that when you are going in the right direction, doors will open and miracles will happen. Thank you for helping us open doors and create many miracles.



Happy holidays,

Penny

Penny Rambacher, Founder and President



Miracles In Action

2244 Park Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45206
(513) 402-0642

241 Countryside Dr.
Naples, FL 34101
(239) 348-0815

info@miraclesinaction.org
www.miraclesinaction.org

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