



Fall 2012 Newsletter

From Landfills to Schools, One Bottle at a Time

We've just embarked on an exciting partnership with [Hug It Forward](#), building School #39 as what's called a "bottle school." And, yes, the school will be built from plastic bottles found at garbage dumps or as litter that trashes the beautiful countryside.

Bottle schools are built using post and beam construction, with concrete columns and beams reinforced with iron. However, instead of cement blocks, they use "eco-bricks." Eco-bricks are plastic bottles that are stuffed tightly with inorganic trash. The eco-bricks are stacked on top of each other then covered with cement to form walls. Children can easily help with this part of the construction, and Miracles in Action is also sponsoring the training of other partner charities in this construction technique.

A School With a Message

The school is located in Patzocón, San Martin Jilotepeque, Guatemala, where over 100 students and their teachers currently work in 3 classrooms. The villagers, including children, will build the school themselves, supervised by an experienced foreman working for Hug It Forward. Along the way the children will learn valuable lessons to reduce their impact on the environment. To learn more about bottle schools and how they're built, we encourage you to visit [HugItForward.org](#). And to help us build more bottle schools in other areas of Guatemala, [donate now](#).



(Left) Miracles' Executive Director, Christie Brown, visiting a bottle collection site with Hug It Forward; (Middle) Village woman from Patzocón delivering 50 eco-bricks that her family has collected; (Right) Another Hug It Forward school under construction.

Improving Health and Inspiring Future Leaders

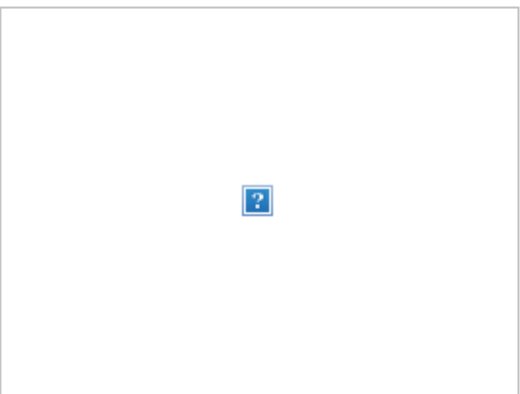
In August, we sent four associates – Pedro Rodriguez, Juan Pablo Echeverria, Shad Qudsi and Mark Ameson – to an Educational Concerns For Hunger Organization (ECHO) training in Florida to learn about sustainable agriculture techniques. The classes covered sustainable farming practices for soil & water conservation, integrated techniques for small-scale farms, underutilized plants & their uses and field case studies from various regions of the world. These men will be sharing what they've learned in a series of workshops in Guatemala.



At the same time, we've sponsored three Chaya Workshops this fall, educating women on growing the nutritious chaya plant using sustainable agriculture techniques. The workshops also provide practical tips for cooking with chaya and information on its many nutritional benefits.

Student Leadership Training

We're proud to have sponsored 60 students for youth leadership training through Project Seres. Youth Leaders for the Pachamama (Mother Earth) is a 3-day workshop for rural indigenous and disadvantaged youth. In addition to engaging and educating these youth about the region's environmental challenges, the project also focuses on empowerment and leadership, encouraging them to be role models for others in their communities. There's nothing more inspiring than seeing these students transformed by this life-changing experience, ready to take on problems in their communities.



Students from San Martin Jilotepeque felt that deforestation was a problem. After their Seres Youth Leadership workshop, they organized a drive to plant over 100 trees.

Change a Life with Vocational Training

Would you like to help a young person develop a valuable career that can lead to life-long employment? We're currently looking for sponsors for our vocational center partnership with Amigos de Santa Cruz and their vocational training center. The center offers training for teens and adults in sewing, computer education, carpentry, welding, culinary arts, English for tourism and foot loom weaving.



This vocation center is even more important when you consider that too many young people choose teaching as their career. This is because it is often the ONLY option for them in school, and a teaching career only requires a high school education. But there are currently over 50,000 unemployed teachers in the country! Vocational training in other areas is vitally needed!

Currently we need sponsors for the welding program, where roughly 25 students a year learn valuable skills and produce finished products such as railings, windows, doors and small metal handicrafts. If you or your group are interested in sponsoring this worthwhile project, please contact Christie Brown at [Christie@miraclesinaction.org](mailto:Christie@miraclesinaction.org).

Jewelry That Makes a Difference



Have you checked out the [Beyond Beads](#) section of our website lately? We've just updated it with a wide selection of fair-trade handcrafted bead jewelry and woven textiles made by Guatemalan artisans. These are beautiful items you can feel good about buying, because they support a cottage industry that gives women an alternative to doing back-breaking farm work. It helps them earn a fair income from home, supporting their family while taking care of their children.

Penny has worked with the artisans to perfect the designs and create unique pieces. She has a personal relationship with Cesar and Emy, an artisan couple, sewing to spec i-phone, kindle, and i-pad bags, adding zippered pockets for cords and adjustable shoulder straps. Penny said, "They are like family and I look forward to working with them each trip to Guatemala."

Our beaded items include everything from small pins and ornaments to elegant necklaces and bracelets in a wide selection of colors. Woven items include essentials purses, eyeglass bags, water bottle bags and more.

By purchasing these items, you give twice—once to your recipient and once to the women who are earning an income through your purchase. Take a look and [start your holiday shopping now](#).

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Give Thanks – Happy Thanksgiving!

You've heard of Black Friday and Cyber Monday? This year, take part in [#Giving Tuesday](#), a national effort to remind us that the spirit of the holiday season should be about community and not just consumerism. "The most meaningful gift we can give our children, loved ones, friends and neighbors is the commitment to work together to build a better world," said Kathy Calvin, CEO of the UN Foundation. On [#Giving Tuesday](#), November 27, consider a donation or purchase a gift that gives twice in our [online store](#). Or get a jump on your holiday giving and give today! [Gift certificates](#) are available.

DONATE

