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Hot News!

On July 6, founder Penny Rambacher announced her retirement from American Airlines. Penny worked as a flight attendant for the past 13 years, and with her retirement from this position, she'll be able to devote more of her energies to Miracles in Action, yet maintain her travel/flight benefits. American Airlines has helped Miracles in Action in many ways – Penny's flight benefits have allowed her easy transportation to Guatemala, plus AA has been supportive with allowing extra baggage and aid to be shipped in support of our work. Hats off to you, Penny & congratulations on your retirement!

Other News: Check out our newly redesigned website with more photos and easier to read font. Also be sure to subscribe to our blog if you would like to receive emails when new stories are posted.

Message from the Executive Director

First, allow me to reassure you that Penny is still VERY involved with Miracles in Action, and has not gone anywhere (except of course, back and forth to Guatemala!) You will still hear from her in future newsletters, but I wanted to share some thoughts myself in this edition.

I want to thank all of you – some of you whom I've met, but many of you I have not – who make up the Miracles family. It is this entire network of amazing people who make our work possible. It is my privilege and honor to be able to work closely with Penny and the rest of this Miracles team in support of the beautiful Guatemalan people. While the problems and obstacles may seem overwhelming at times, it's important to keep working toward our mission. Mixed among the many photos and Guatemalan mementos on my desk, I have a framed starfish as a reminder that we do make a difference.

The starfish story is of an old man who found thousands of starfish washed up on a beach after a big storm. As he walked along the shoreline, he would pick up starfish and throw them back into the ocean. A youth saw this and scoffed, saying, "Look at the thousands of starfish, how can you possibly make a difference?" And as the old man threw another starfish back into the sea, he replied, "I made a difference to that one."

It is my hope and prayer that we are able to make a difference to at least a few "starfish" in Guatemala. Thank you for trusting me with this important work.

Gratefully,  
Christie



Communications: social media, blogs, emails...

"People don't just want to write a check. They want to feel they're truly making a difference." While our mission is to serve the impoverished in Guatemala, we feel it's also very important to be able to show supporters like you how you are making a difference. To do this, good communication is important.

A recent article by Todd Levy and Paul Ghiz, managing partners of Global Cloud, points out that "Social Media is a cost saver, but it's also proving to be how a growing number of donors want to interact with their non-profits." They also point out that a \$50 donor might have a network of "friends" that could generate \$5,000, \$10,000 or more in donations.

We can grow Miracles in Action and be able to give a "hand-up" to many more children and families in Guatemala with a larger network. With your help we can make an even greater difference! We realize that different supporters prefer difference modes of communication. If you haven't already...

- LIKE us on Facebook
- Share this email on social networks
- Click "Share" under posts you really like on Facebook
- Forward this email to a friend
- Visit our new updated website and share with friends
- If you'd like to receive an email each time a new story is posted to our blog, update your email preferences and choose BLOG UPDATES



Miracles Year-to-Date

Each year seems busier than the last!

The beginning of this year was especially busy with the opening of 5 schools and a library!

Thank you to our generous donors – the Costellos, Jantzens, Hafners, Latshaw, Mincieli, Thomes and Moorings Presbyterian Church – for making these miracles happen.



- Thanks to many other donors, we also:
- installed safe, vented stoves in 100 rural homes
  - supported 70 more students with ongoing educational scholarships
  - provided 50 more families with water filters
  - launched 9 women's dreams to start a small business with micro loans
  - sponsored ongoing training for teachers, youth leadership, and vocational students

These are just a few of the highlights we are happy to share thanks to YOUR generosity!

See more photos of our projects in the Photo Gallery of our website.

New Projects Under Construction

School #38 in San Jose Chiaque, Huehuetenango had its first stone ceremony in June and we expect to have students begin attending early next year. This 3-room school will serve a community of 50 families whose average daily wage is 40-50 Quetzales (\$5-\$6.50). The community has no electricity or running water and the house currently being used as its school has a dirt floor, no ventilation and not enough windows to provide adequate lighting. We met with the community last year and were impressed with their commitment to education and strength in working together to make this dream a reality. They will provide all the unskilled manual labor for the construction. We thank an anonymous supporter from California who donated the funds for this School of Miracles #38! This village desperately needs stoves and water filters to improve health and quality of life – \$25 can make a difference.



Alirio Ochoa with PEILE, our partner charity, helps children carry cinder blocks to the construction site for school #3. San Jose Chiaque #38 will be our 9th school project working with Alirio in some of the most remote poor villages.

New Library in Xojolá, Sololá

How many of our supporters have enjoyed reading stories to their children or grandchildren? Having access to books and libraries is not common in Guatemala, so we are thrilled to support a library in Xojola. Construction began on International Book Day, April 23, with more than 500 students, teachers and school directors participating in a parade that ended with the symbolic laying of the first stone. This library will serve more than 1200 children in the communities of Xojola and Yoxoja. Additionally, there are more than 2000 other school-aged children in 6 neighboring communities who will have access to this library.



International Book Day parade; boys with shirts: "He who reads, progresses"

This library is being dedicated to Flo Cabana, who passed away in April at 95 years old. She was a long-time supporter and bead seller who sold thousands of dollars in beaded handicrafts – our first volunteer to sell over \$5,000 worth. Others have followed her lead, but Flo will remain our first big sales ambassador and certainly our oldest. We miss you, Flo!



Chaya - Chaya - Chaya!!

No, that's not a new Guatemalan cheer! Chaya is a native Guatemalan plant that is rich in nutrition and easy to grow. We're excited about it because it might be a key to high-quality, affordable and sustainable nutrition for impoverished Guatemalan families.

Did you know that Guatemala's malnutrition rate is the fourth highest in the world? In a land with such abundant natural resources, it's hard to comprehend that many children and families in rural Guatemala suffer from severe malnutrition. The photo at right shows two 5-year old girls. The girl on the left was raised in the U.S. and the girl on the right, who was raised in Guatemala, shows stunted growth which is one result of malnutrition. Miracles in Action has initiated innovative, sustainable nutrition and agriculture projects to address this appalling situation.



Chaya may be an answer

Miracles in Action is partnering with Universidad del Valle in Guatemala City under the direction of Dr. Tom Laaman (a food scientist in New Hampshire), to work with master's students in agriculture, food science and nutrition. They will study the nutritional benefits, the effects of cooking or processing on chaya, and the ideal variety and conditions to grow chaya. One study will help us to better understand how chaya helps lower blood sugar for diabetics. Our founder, Penny, is putting her experience as a Registered Dietician to good use!

We're also offering chaya workshops to teach women about the benefits of chaya and the importance of good nutrition. We let them prepare and sample different chaya recipes then give them chaya to grow at home. The first workshop was very popular and we've been asked to do more workshops. In the future, we'll promote and study other under-utilized "super foods" in addition to chaya.

You can learn more about chaya on our website, where we have a chaya brochure which explains its nutritional benefits and also a recipe book that was developed for a traditional rural Guatemalan kitchen. We are currently seeking grant funding to continue this project – please let us know if you have any funding ideas!

Introducing Pedro Rodriguez

Meet Pedro Rodriguez, serving as our first Guatemalan-based project coordinator for Miracles in Action. Pedro advises and assists us with project follow-up in addition to being a workshop facilitator and playing key roles in other nutrition and health initiatives.



at a chaya presentation in Panajachel. CNN filmed portions of this event to air in September.

Read More on our Blog

(click on the links in bold to read the entire story, or visit our combined blog page to catch up on all the recent stories.)

We have supported Youth Leadership Training through Project Seres. Find out more about this effort and why Corina Grace, founder of Seres, recently reported "...everyone was just SO blown away by the changes in the kids over the three days. I feel like it was the most successful we have had in terms of really developing young leaders."

Developing reading skills and a love of reading is not a basic fundamental in most of the schools we work with. Teachers need to learn skills to promote reading for both understanding and pleasure. Developing a Love of Reading tells more about our teacher training program.

Our scholarship students work hard to get an education and improve their situations. Meet a Few of Our Scholarship Students to learn more about their lives and interests.

Paisley Dee, a photographer from Miami, documented some of our work with photographs and stories during her visit to Guatemala earlier this year. See her powerful images and commentary about Life Saving Stoves, and how these are not the normal electric or gas stoves you might imagine, but have even greater benefits.

Sign up here to receive an email each time a new story is posted.

