



**miracles**  
*in action*



March 2013

### An Oasis in the Woods

In the tiny village of Tzanjomel, something remarkable is taking place. Several projects are coming together to create a better quality of life for the people there.

**Education:** We built our 31st school in Tzanjomel, dedicated last February. A Montessori-trained teacher, Marianne, teaches the preschool and first graders, and is also training a second teacher. Marianne reinforces the children's native Mayan culture and also teaches a love and respect for the environment. This year, the small school will receive additional classroom space for second grade, thanks to the generosity of donors Karen and Dick Theil.

**Nutrition:** This little oasis is even more green than usual, thanks to our funding of an organic agriculture specialist who is helping women grow community and personal gardens. They're learning which plants grow well together, how to replenish the soil naturally and how to maximize the yield from a small space or container.



One goal is to help families grow enough food to feed themselves, while improving their diets with freshly grown vegetables. This is especially important because more than half the children in Guatemala suffer from chronic malnutrition, in part, caused by diets lacking in fruits and vegetables. The school also adjoins a nutrition center where mothers cook a healthy meal for the children and learn healthy recipes.

Tzanjomel is a wonderful example of what can happen once a few great ideas take hold. And it's an idea we hope will naturally spread to surrounding communities as more people see the benefits of education and good nutrition.



### Beyond Fair Trade

You've heard the term "fair trade," but to understand it fully, it helps to think of the people living in impoverished countries like Guatemala, where rural Mayans often earn less than \$1.25 a day. Their options are limited: many pick coffee, sugar cane or corn in 12-hour shifts while their children remain home in the care of older siblings.

The beaded jewelry and woven textiles sold through Miracles in Action's Beyond Beads help women earn a fair income in their own homes while allowing them to care for their children. Miracles in Action sells their beautiful hand crafted work online and at farmers markets, home parties, presentations, and craft fairs, and we pay the artisans a fair wage for their work.

How we go "beyond fair trade" is by using our additional proceeds to provide the artisans' families with other important basics, like food baskets for the holidays, school supplies, and other needed support. We conducted a census of each artisan's home to see how many kids they have, if they have other sources of income, and did they have a safe stove, clean drinking water and other necessities.

Over the next year, we will use this information and assure that all of the artisans have these basics of living. Visit our [Beyond Beads store](#) to see their handiwork and purchase gifts for yourself or others.

#### 2012 Bead Sales Take Off

Beyond Beads had a great year, with 2012 sales of nearly \$175,000 and net proceeds of roughly \$66,000.

A special thanks to our dedicated Beyond Beads volunteers who organize home parties and sell our beadwork at farmers markets, craft fairs, church fundraisers, auctions.



### New Schools Update

New schools are popping up all over Guatemala, thanks to your support. This spring, we're opening 4 schools, making a grand total of 41 schools we've built in eight years. Look for details and more photos in our April newsletter.



School #39 is our first school made from bottles. You can't even tell!

### Miracles in Action Honored as Top-Rated NonProfit

Miracles in Action has been honored with a prestigious 2012 Top-Rated Award by GreatNonprofits, the leading provider of user reviews about nonprofit organizations. The Top-Rated Nonprofit award was based on the large number of positive reviews that Miracles in Action received – reviews written by volunteers, donors and clients.

People posted their personal experience with the nonprofit. For example, one person wrote, "What's impressed me most about Miracles in Action is the breadth of services they're involved in – from building schools to providing clean water systems, safe stoves and nutrition education. I love that they work with local NGOs and seek sustainable, long-lasting solutions to the problems of rural poverty. And it's all done in the most frugal ways possible, stretching every dollar to provide the greatest impact."

"We are gratified by Miracles in Action for its work," said Perla Ni, CEO of GreatNonprofits, "They deserve to be discovered by more donors and volunteers who are looking for a great nonprofit to support."

Being on the Top-Rated list gives donors and volunteers more confidence that this is a credible organization. The reviews by volunteers, clients and other donors show the on-the-ground results of this nonprofit. This award is a form of recognition by the community.



### Walking a Mile in Her Shoes

Not long ago I got an email that went straight to my heart. Our local scholarship coordinator passed on a request from the mother of one of our scholarship students, Catarina. Instead of using the Q65 (\$8.40) we set aside for a uniform, would it be possible for her to buy a pair of tennis shoes? The previous year, her daughter had to borrow shoes from her friends when it was time to play outdoor sports at school.

This simple story of poverty brought tears to my eyes, thinking how such a small amount of money could make such a big difference to this young girl. I wondered how many other students were in a similar situation, dressed nicely for school but without the basics we take for granted.

Of course, we made sure she got tennis shoes. But the bigger message is that money alone will not solve the problems of poverty in Guatemala. Only through our holistic approach of improving education, health, nutrition and job opportunities can we make a lasting, sustainable impact on the lives we touch.

Our work changes lives. As proof, just look at the stories here, and in [our blog](#), and on [Facebook](#). Your donations and volunteer time are making a difference. Penny and I both thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,  
**Christie**  
Christie Brown, Executive Director

To continue to support our "making a difference" work, donate today.

