



July 2013

Turning an Opportunity into a Success!

Meet Elvin Ley an indigenous "street kid" from Guatemala

At 15 years old Elvin was given an opportunity to help an American businessman, Curtis, who exported handicrafts to the US market. Elvin started by tagging bags with "Made in Guatemala" labels, and kept asking for more work, and to learn more and more. Curtis "adopted" this ambitious, intelligent teen, teaching him the business.

Today, 16 years later

Elvin recently graduated with a Business degree, and he successfully manages Curtis's handicraft business. Miracles in Action's orders almost all of our beaded handicrafts through Elvin, who distributes the work to Mayan artisans in the local cottage industry. Elvin also distributes work to CECAP Vocational Center, where Esther, their teacher, instructs students on beading gecko bracelets and friendship bracelets to fill our orders.

Helping the Artisans, Helping Miracles in Action

Elvin makes it easy to help the artisans earn an income through their bead work, and every year he coordinates Miracles in Action's school supplies and Christmas food basket distributions to the artisan's families. We are so proud of Elvin, a role model and inspiration to others. Through hard work and a person who cared (Curtis), Elvin become a productive, responsible businessman, husband, and father, and he has been able to help others to earn an income and educate their children, as well.



Elvin: with Penny, David and Esther, who is delivering a bead order; at his graduation; and delivering school supplies to a beader's family.

Meet Cesar and Emy

Beyond Beads is known for beaded jewelry and keychains but another significant cottage industry is woven handicrafts.

Cesar and Emy are an indigenous couple living in an artisan village called San Antonio Aguas Calientes. Many of the fabrics are made on a backstrap loom, as you can see in the photo of Emy's sister working out of their home. Other fabrics are woven on a foot loom. We asked Cesar to make fabric with American Airline colors (red, white, navy) and we went to the thread store in town to select the exact colors. Then, we went to Juan's house to discuss the pattern for the fabric. His family can produce yards of fabric, in whatever colors needed, on a simple, but large foot loom located in their living room. Once the fabric is woven, Cesar and Emy use their two sewing machines (purchased from a Miracles in Action micro-loan) to sew custom bags with zippers, straps, and velcro closures designed for use by flight attendants to protect and carry their "tablet computer."

Cesar and Emy also sew custom bags for Kindle readers, iPads, eyeglasses, bottles, passport/smart phone, and small "essentials bags."

When we bring groups to Guatemala, a favorite side trip is to visit their home, watch backstrap weaving, hear stories about their Mayan culture, and help make tortillas on an open fire griddle. Their beautiful work can be purchased online at store.miraclesinaction.org.



Emy's sister working on the backstrap loom; Emy with her grandchild; Cesar at his sewing machine making iphone bags.

Making a Difference - Beyond Beads

Last October we booked a trade show to sell our fair trade handicrafts wholesale to gift shops throughout the US. Our target stores were boutiques and gift shops interested in our story - how our products are hand crafted in Mayan households helping women to earn an income to feed their children and send them to school. We explained how we are a non-profit charity that uses handicraft proceeds to help impoverished Guatemalans help themselves through education, vocation, and sustainable projects. We are unique in comparison to the many vendors selling inexpensive, plastic, factory-made products. Buyers for shops carrying quality, custom designed pieces, loved how they could support a charity with their purchases going "beyond fair trade."

Zoo, Garden and Gift Shop Sales Take Off!

The Dallas World Aquarium gift shop is now our leading wholesale customer, purchasing gecko bracelets and sea life, flamingos, penguin, and bird keychains, which they display at the cash registers. The Naples Botanical Gardens in Florida is a long-term buyer of our keychains, gecko bracelets, and butterfly barrettes and pins. Their volunteer tour leader, Jim, wears our frog pin on his sandals and our lizard pin on his hat. Jim has children "Name that Lizard" and writes down all the names on a list, with Lizzie being the most popular. Lisa and Steve at Island Visions gift shop in Matlache, Florida sell the Mayan artisan's necklaces, bracelets, and earrings made from crystals, stones, and glass beads, plus 100s of gecko bracelets. Thank you to these and our other wholesale customers for spreading the message of Miracles in Action and the value of fair trade.

How You Can Help

You can help us to expand this business and help more artisans and "Miracles". If you know a gift shop buyer who carries quality, handcrafted gifts and jewelry, please refer them to our website and this e-news story. On your next visit to a zoo, aquarium, garden or museum gift shop, ask for the buyers contact info. (We can register them for our wholesale prices.) Miracles in Action has been successful because of supporters like you, sharing our work, talking about us, and spreading the word. Tanya Memme (photo on lower right) from A&E's *Sell This House* has been promoting our jewelry and spreading the word! Please pass this e-news letter along to friends, family, and others who can help us make a difference, going beyond fair trade.

Thank you, Gracias, and Matiox (thank you in Katchiquel, a Mayan language),

Penny



To access our online store, go to our website at www.MiraclesinAction.org and click on "STORE."

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Miracles in Action www.miraclesinaction.org

Naples Office: 241 Countryside Drive Naples, FL 34104 • Admin Office: 2244 Park Avenue Cincinnati, OH 45206