



August 2013

The Education Connection

Some people are born to touch children's lives through education. This month we feature two great projects that are linked through people who spent their careers working with young people.

Supporting the construction of a school or library in Guatemala is a meaningful way to honor the educators in your life. Do you have a teacher, counselor, or administrator you'd like to recognize? [Learn about funding one of our projects.](#)

A School Counselor's Legacy

The people of Antonio Sija never met school counselor Greg Rocca, and never heard of Cincinnati, Ohio. But thanks to the work of Greg and his many friends, they'll always have a close connection.

Miracles in Action first came to San Antonio Sija in 2010 to support the construction of its first Basico (middle) school. On August 6, 2013 we returned to create even more opportunities by dedicating a library and computer center in memory of Gregg, who died in February after a three-year battle with cancer. We were joined by his wife Mary Lynn, and Cincinnati-area supporter Pat Lehman, one of Gregg's colleagues, who helped spearhead fundraising for the project.

Students, parents, and community leaders gathered for the dedication, sharing their songs and welcoming traditions. This marked an important milestone for the town, because theirs is the only library for miles in this remote region of western Guatemala.

Greg touched thousands of students' lives in his 18 years as a school counselor, and now through his legacy, thousands more around San Antonio Sija will have better educational opportunities, as well.



Christie Brown with donors Mary Lynn Roca and Pat Lehman



Student in new computer lab



Students perform a traditional dance for guests as part of the festivities

Coincidence? Or just another Miracle in Action?

Here's another story with ties to Cincinnati educator Pat Lehman, mentioned above. Pat's parents were both teachers, and after visiting Guatemala in 2012, she knew she wanted to honor them by dedicating a project in their memory.

It started with a chance encounter this February. While returning from a school visit with our partners at Hug It Forward, our group stopped for lunch at a small café. As we were leaving, we were introduced to Lucy Cutler, a Peace Corp volunteer who had stopped in to chat with the Hug It Forward staff. She was scheduled to finish her time in Guatemala in 3 months, but had just learned that a critical part of the funding for a computer center she had been working on had fallen through. She had agreements from a Guatemalan cement company to donate cement, the Dalio Foundation was funding the computers and furniture, and the community had raised 10,000 quetzales (about \$1300) plus they were providing all the manual labor. After months of work and with little time left, Lucy was feverishly trying to find a new donor to fund the rest of the construction materials.

When Christie and Penny heard this story, they put their heads together and quickly came up with a plan. They both felt this project would be a great match for Pat Lehman, in memory of her parents. The location was perfect to combine with the trip to the San Antonio Sija library. Christie reached out to our partner, PEILE, to oversee the project using eco-friendly bottle construction (plastic bottles filled with plastic trash.) The room is a second-story addition to a school, and it was completed in time for our visit in August.

Both Pat and her daughter Bronwyn were able to visit the computer center, as well as attend the library dedication in memory of her colleague Greg Rocca. Thanks to a series of coincidences and connections, another town in Guatemala now has a greater chance to improve the lives of hundreds of people.



(L to R) Penny and Alirio Ochca give a thumbs up to bottle construction; Students in computer center; 2nd story is new computer center

Your Help Needed! Safe Water Matching Grant

We have an urgent need for donations to supply the town of Chuachum with a water system. Currently, women and girls wake up very early each day to walk 800 meters (about .5 mile) carrying heavy loads of water and wet clothes. Since water is so precious, it's only used for drinking and cooking which means health conditions are poor. Our partner, Behrhorst Partners for Development (BPD,) will supervise construction of the water system and follow up regularly to make sure it's working properly. Community members and the local government will provide all the manual labor. Funding the cost of materials for this project is a great example of how we give a hand-up and not a hand-out to people willing to work hard to improve their community.

A generous supporter has pledged to match every dollar we raise for this project to help us meet our goal of \$17,000. So please help! Click the "Donate" button below to help the people of Chuachum get the safe, plentiful water supply they need.



DONATE

