



EDUCATING CHILDREN, EMPOWERING FAMILIES

our mission: Common Hope promotes hope and opportunity in Guatemala, partnering with children, families, and communities who want to participate in a process of development to improve their lives through education, health care, and housing.

Fall 2007



COMMON HOPE NEWS

Partnerships across cultures

San Rafael el Arado announced as first satellite

Arriving at the village of San Rafael el Arado requires a long and very bumpy ride almost two miles down a dirt road, more potholes than pavement. This connects the community to the Pan-American Highway, a 40 minute drive northeast of Antigua. The ride cuts through some breathtaking countryside, a rolling lush quilt of fields and hills with patches of every shade of brown and green.

Following a lengthy research and assessment process, this village has been selected as Common Hope's first satellite in Guatemala. In line with our commitment to

increase by 50% the population served by 2010, many of our new families will be affiliated from here in the coming years.

In contrast to our current sites, which serve an overwhelmingly Ladino population, the residents of San Rafael are 100% Mayan, a Kaqchikel community. Women in the village continue to use the intricate and colorful traditional dress, or *traje*, and for many, Spanish is their second language.

The village is sustained by agriculture—the fertile lands in the area yield corn, beans, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, and other vegetables. Despite the land's richness, however, life is a struggle for these *campesinos*, and this is reflected in the village. Houses along the main street are built of block, yet these quickly give way to much more simple constructions of corn stalks and lamina sheets.



New preschool opening soon

Early childhood wing completed in September

Finishing touches to construction are being completed on New Hope School's early childhood development wing. The focus has shifted to furnishing the classrooms. Size appropriate chairs and desks, books and



The new cafeteria and kitchen area at New Hope School

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NEW WING continues on page 4

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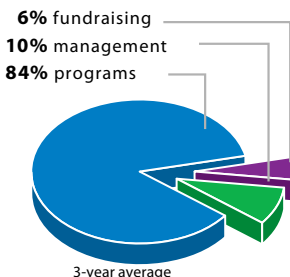
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USE OF FUNDS



A PROMINENT REMINDER

PROVIDING STABILITY AMIDST UNPREDICTABILITY



As I write this letter I'm in Antigua watching the volcano Fuego puff smoke into the skyline. A few days ago my family and I watched as it erupted thousands of feet into the air. The lava flow, which measured more than a mile wide at one point, could be seen easily from where we stood. We were far enough away from Fuego to not be affected, yet so close were riveted by its display.

It was spectacularly beautiful and an amazing site to see, but along with that beauty came the danger of the lava flows and fiery ash in the air.

More than 27,000 people who lived on the hillside had to temporarily evacuate their homes and hope and pray that the destruction did not reach their villages. Luckily, this time, there was little damage. Fuego settled down after a few hours, and families could return to their homes. Ash remained in the air and on roofs, but no lives were lost.

Fuego is a vivid reminder of the unpredictable lives the families we work with face every day. Most of that unpredictability comes from the danger of illness, lack of work, or not enough to eat—dangers which are far more prevalent and no less threatening than the lava and ash from a volcano.

While we watched it happen, the families on the hillside were living it. That created an internal tension that isn't unusual. We live comfortably in our homes and communities, sending our

“We cannot stop a lava flow, but we can provide opportunities for families to improve their lives.”

children to good schools and seeing a doctor whenever we need to. At the same time there are millions of families in this world that live with unpredictable danger every day. We are fixed on their images on television or in magazines, and wish they could build a better life.

Fortunately, we can do something to help. We cannot stop a lava flow, but we can provide opportunities for families to improve their lives.

This morning there is a hopeful energy around the Family Development Center in Antigua. It is filled with newly affiliated families who are working hard to make a better life for themselves. Their children are attending school, and they are working to earn new houses, vented stoves, and building materials for safer, dryer homes.

These opportunities are real, and for more than twenty years Common Hope has remained a source of stability for the families we serve. Because of your help, they will avoid many of the unpredictable dangers that come with living in poverty.

Please help us continue to provide opportunities to these families by sharing of your comforts.

Gratefully,

Shari Blindt
Executive Director

Common Hope is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation founded in 1986 and is audited annually. Contributions are 100% tax deductible as allowed by law.

Actions speaking loudly



AbeTech Vision Team, February 2007

What you can do

Create a Common Hope corporate partnership at your workplace.



Abetech corporate headquarters

AbeTech's pioneering charitable giving program

The uniqueness of AbeTech becomes apparent the minute you walk into their beautiful new facility in Rogers, Minnesota. From the front atrium's living room ambiance to the "Margaritaville" conference room that reminds employees of the island vacation they'll take when they reach their mission, this is not your typical workplace. That's largely because CEO Steve Schmidt is no typical business owner. His entrepreneurial, "keep it real" influence has built a successful national company providing bar code and RFID solutions with a company culture that is hard to beat. And automated data collection is not AbeTech's only type of service.

A quintessential quote for Steve is, "Your actions are so loud, I can't hear what you're saying." Thanks to the value of volunteerism that Steve learned from his parents, AbeTech has a formalized charity program that gives back four percent of pre-tax profits to three charities which are designated by employees each year. In addition to

monetary donations the company also provides in-kind support through employee volunteerism and resource donations.

AbeTech is a distinct Common Hope corporate partner because of the many creative ways they have supported our work. Starting in 1994 with Steve and his wife Cindy's sponsorship of a student (they currently sponsor five), AbeTech employees have traveled to Guatemala on a Vision Team, donated bar code software for our warehouses, stuffed a newsletter mailing, worked in our warehouse, sponsored our biannual Noche de Colores event, sponsored two students, and given presentations to tell others about our work.

AbeTech's commitment to philanthropy has benefited and energized the company tremendously, says Steve. "The Vision Team experience last February was the most powerful team-building experience you could hope for. People were dramatically changed by the experience of going; and

lacing our company together with that profound shared experience is priceless." It can also be a powerful hiring tool. Steve points to Wendy Cierlik, a recently hired account manager who chose AbeTech largely because of its philanthropic values. "You like to know you can work somewhere and make a difference at the same time," says Wendy. "You don't hear this value of giving from a lot of companies. I've never worked for a company that lets you volunteer on a workday—it's a huge plus to being here. It tells you what the company is made of."

We would love to see other businesses follow AbeTech's example, as one of our goals for the coming year is to create more corporate partnerships. Steve has offered to speak with anyone who would like to explore how to set up a giveback program for his or her own business or workplace. If interested, contact Steve at sschmidt@abetech.com or Mary Gautschi at maryg@mn.commonhope.org.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP IDEAS

Call Mary Gautschi at (651) 917-0243 for more information.

VOLUNTEER

Share your professional expertise, or provide legwork and elbow grease, through in-kind volunteer support.

VISION TEAMS

Form a workplace Vision Team. Now filling the 2008 and 2009 calendars!

MATCHING GIFTS

Inquire if your workplace has a matching gifts program and have your annual gift go even further.

HOLIDAY GIVING

Organize an office alternative gift party. Gift catalogs will be available in early November.

Give a gift to Common Hope in honor of your clients, instead of expensive fruit baskets or chocolates. Gift cards are available to include with your holiday cards.

Understanding Diabetes

Francisco finds renewed health through better management of the disease

Francisco with daughter Rosa and wife Odilia



It was about one year ago that Francisco Zuñiga began to notice a red light clouding his vision. Francisco, a jade artisan whose family is affiliated with Common Hope, had been diagnosed with diabetes around two years earlier; however his condition had been poorly controlled. Worried about breaking the news to his family, he tried to hide the change, but his condition continued to deteriorate, eventually leaving him unable to work for a period of four months.

Diabetes, and in particular type 2 diabetes, is a very common health problem seen at our Antigua site clinic, and it is a disease growing in prevalence across Central America. Since 2005 Common Hope in Antigua has accelerated its efforts to screen, detect, educate, and treat people suffering

from this condition. In 2005 the clinic diagnosed seven new cases, a number which increased to 118 cases detected in 2006. On the frontline of these efforts has been our Community Health Fairs, where patients are screened through glycemic testing, complimenting our routine on-site testing.

In response to the growing need the clinic initiated a specialized diabetes program in January 2007. The strength of this program is its holistic approach to treating the disease. It offers monthly group sessions led by our own clinic's specialists in the areas of medicine, exercise, and nutrition—three crucial areas that patients must control to stabilize and improve their conditions.

These sessions utilize plain language and

allow for the interactive involvement of patients. Visual aids are used to reach out to those who cannot read. Dr. Pineda explains, "I allow time for patient testimonials, which are probably more powerful than anything I can say to convince them to become involved in the treatment of their disease."

There are currently 68 patients enrolled in the program, and 70% have recorded improvements in their blood sugar levels since the beginning of the program. Francisco is living proof of the program's success; with a better understanding of his condition he quickly became an exemplary participant, not only swiftly controlling his own condition but sharing his experiences with others in the group.

Although the clinic arranged for him to see a specialist for an operation, this was eventually canceled. Against all expectations, his eyes appeared to be improving independently; and indeed, Francisco reports, "little by little my sight is coming back. The doctor told me he'd never seen anything like this before...but attributed it to the changes that I made in my lifestyle, and God's help, and I believe it."

What you can do

A gift of \$50 to Health Care will support diabetes treatment and education.

NEW WING CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



bookshelves, and games and educational toys will add all the fun and color that creates a preschool!

In September the three classrooms will be occupied for the first time by our 4-, 5- and 6-year-old students for several months of orientation activities, and the new wing will officially open in January for the start of the school year. A breakthrough program in Guatemala, where early childhood education is not readily available, it will give students an extra year of education so they can be more prepared.

"The teachers are very excited about all the teaching possibilities this new space will offer," said Mynor Lemus, New Hope School Director, a sentiment echoed by students, parents and supporters alike. Thank you to all who have made this construction possible!

Oh, the places you'll go!

Common Hope staff make great progress through English language classes



Ana Beatriz and Rita with their class certificates

Almost 30 Antigua staff are now at conversational level in their English studies, nine of whom were complete beginners just eight months before. This is thanks to an intensive year of classes through an employee development initiative.

Common Hope employs 155 Guatemalan employees at our sites, many of whom were once affiliated students themselves. An added ripple effect of our organization's presence in Guatemala occurs through initiatives like the English language classes, where staff can learn new skills that benefit them at work and at home, skills they will carry beyond their time at Common Hope.

On June 8 we celebrated with a graduation ceremony for staff participants. Among the graduates were Ana Beatriz, a hygienist in the dental clinic, who went from Level 1 to Conversation and has utilized her English in several events with Vision Teams. Juan Fernando, coordinator of sweat-equity hours, no longer needs a translator when he is working with English-speaking volunteers and Vision Teams.

Participation in the classes required a significant commitment from students,

who were expected to attend daily classes, complete daily homework, and take a weekly exam. Not only did all students study on top of their normal job; a large percentage were also juggling university studies and/or family commitments.

Doña Victoria is both a member of the maintenance staff and an affiliated mother who attended the course. She lives on the outskirts of Antigua with her mother, siblings, and seven children, four of whom are affiliated. "I wanted to study so that I could help my children with their English classes," she said. "I'm happy because now their grades are improving and my children are proud of me."



The advanced group of English students at their graduation

In addition to staff benefits from the training, our visitors will benefit from the larger pool of people who can help explain our work. As Jaime, one of our social workers commented, "it's so nice to be able to chat and communicate more detail about our families' situations."

As for our English teacher, long-term volunteer Lisa-Marie, she will now teach a new employee development program: computer training.

Welcome back, Joanne!



Common Hope welcomes back Joanne Arnold as the new Development Director. Many of you will remember Joanne from her previous six years on staff. After traveling to Guatemala this February with a Vision Team, Joanne was struck by the growth, involvement and maturity of the staff and programs and soon after re-joined the staff.

Joanne brings 15 years of non-profit experience, including her previous position with Common Hope (1995-2001). She has a degree in Public Policy from the Hubert Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota. Additionally, she has worked directly with impoverished children and families in the U.S. and Africa, studied human rights in Geneva, and worked for Habitat for Humanity International.

As Development Director, Joanne will provide direction and oversight to annual giving, major gift solicitation, planned giving, special fundraising events, donor relations, and communications strategies.

"I'm delighted to be back at Common Hope," says Joanne, "helping more individuals become partners in this excellent work."

Speech therapists needed

In January 2008 our speech language therapists will be launching an ambitious initiative to evaluate all affiliated primary school children, and we are looking for a short-term volunteer or two to help us! Volunteer requisites:

- Bilingual Spanish speaker
- Speech language pathologist or graduate student in speech language pathology
- Available for a minimum of 3 weeks to 4 months

For more information please contact Kate Heider at kateh@mn.commonhope.org. Check out our website for other long-term volunteer opportunities.



What will your legacy be?

One of Joanne's first initiatives is to formalize our planned giving program, helping supporters learn how to build a lasting legacy through their will and estate plan. Legacy Gifts are endowment gifts that benefit students and families for generations to come, ensuring that impoverished children and families in Guatemala have access to Common Hope's programs long into the future.

If you are interested in learning more about estate or planned gifts, please contact Joanne at (651) 917-0243.



“There are some families in this village who literally own nothing,” explains Rocio Gonzales, Satellite Coordinator. “By this I mean not a single bed, nor a table; just a small chair, nothing more.”

The San Rafael primary school is a brightly painted U-shaped building, wrapped around an uneven school yard where the kids work off their energy playing soccer or marbles. It houses 289 children from preschool to the 6th grade, with around 30-40 kids per class. The teaching is in both Spanish and Kaqchikel, and bursts of nursery rhymes in both languages can be heard as one approaches the school.

Although the teachers have made an effort to cheer up their classrooms with art and charts, the rooms are clearly run down, most lacking glass in the window panes and a good coat of paint. Almost as important as the education provided, the school has a government funded lunch program. “One of the factors that singled out San Rafael to us was the dedication we saw at the school—the mothers who have organized to prepare these lunches, and the teachers, who out of their own low wages buy colored pencils to hand out to the kids as rewards,” explains Rocio.

Despite these efforts it is estimated that there are 80-100 school age children in the village who do not currently attend school. Common Hope will initially focus on how we can support the educational program at San Rafael through teacher training and a school supply package for all children at the school. Helping to clean and repair the school itself will come later.

Another big objective will be to guarantee access to health care, says Rocio. While the community is currently served by one government health care outpost, it only operates once every 20 days. This is supplemented by Hands of Hope/FARO, a non-profit organization that delivers services twice a week. “One problem we have here right now,” says Rocio, “is that people wait until someone is really, really ill before visiting the doctor. It is often too late to help a patient by that time. . . . We would like to see this changed of course, however the first step is to learn the reasons for it.”

By finding Sponsors for a significant number of children from this

colorful village, our hope is not only to improve their prospects by helping these children at least through high school, but also to channel resources into facilities that will benefit the community as a whole. Still it is a process and the foundations of trust must be laid first. “We will tread softly,” explains Rocio. “We need to show not only that we keep our promises, but that we are also here to learn from the community, respecting their accomplishments and culture. This really will be our main task for 2008.”

LEARN SOME KAQCHIKEL!



While Spanish is the official language of Guatemala, 23 indigenous languages are spoken (21 of Mayan origin, 1 Garifuna and 1 Xinca). Kaqchikel is the most widely spoken of the Mayan languages.

English	Spanish	Kaqchikel
Good Morning	Buenos Días	Xseg'ër Kä
Good Afternoon	Buenas Tardes	Xqaq'ij
How are you?	¿Cómo está?	La ütZ awäch?
Well	Bien	ütZ
Thank you	Gracias	Matyöx
The USA	Los Estados Unidos	Pajotöl (otöl = north)
Work	Trabajo	Yatzamaj

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

A safe and healthy home is a key contributor to a student's success in school. With too much turmoil at home, it can be difficult to focus on school studies. Our programs work to provide the support and resources that empower families to create greater stability for themselves.

The struggle with domestic violence is regrettably a major barrier for many affiliated families. While women from all socio-economic groups are affected by domestic violence, a study by the World Health Organization suggests that women living in poverty suffer disproportionately.*

Strains caused by economic pressures, combined with alcoholism and deeply ingrained machismo, can intensify family conflicts considerably. Moreover the victim's ability to leave violent situations is often complicated by their economic dependence, lack of property rights, and limited knowledge of the law—not to mention fear of the abuser, being stigmatized, or losing their children.

When it comes to walking with families through these issues, Common Hope's social work and psychology staff are on the frontline. Alma Marroquin, Director of Social Work at Common Hope, notes that "the first step is getting women to talk; too many cases are shrouded in silence."

Our social workers have been trained to identify and work with domestic abuse

victims—providing resources and knowledge as to their rights as well as supportive programs that work to raise self-esteem and a sense of empowerment. Whenever possible, staff work with the spouses as well. Community meetings provide another opportunity for social workers to raise awareness and dispel myths. Much of this work focuses on expanding the web of access—connecting women to legal and employment services and empowering them to make positive changes for themselves and their families.

AS FOR THE CHILDREN...

Understandably, witnessing or becoming a victim of violence within the home has serious consequences for children. Common Hope has two programs specifically designed to cater to their needs. The Children's Group works with children from families experiencing abuse with the aim of providing a safe place where the children may find healthy ways to express their emotions through talks, art, and play.

A second program, called the Loving Parenting Initiative, has been particularly effective and adopts a more proactive approach. Aiming to lay a foundation for healthy family interactions, newly affiliated and current families are invited to participate. Through a series of workshops, parents learn to educate and discipline



their children in a non-violent and caring way while children attend complementary workshops. Parents also spend time reflecting on both their own needs and the importance of providing role models for their children.

As is true everywhere, violent disciplining techniques are simply learned behavior for the majority of parents. The Loving Parenting Initiative teaches alternative techniques, making time for hugs and boosting self worth. As Sandra Ortiz, Director of Psychology, reports, "The common theme of the feedback is an exclamation: 'It opened my eyes!'"

**www.commonhope.org/newsletterlinks*

What you can do

A \$100 gift to Family Development will support the Loving Parenting Initiative.

Supporter Profile: Stan and Donna Amidon

It started out as a short errand for a friend ten years ago. Stan and Donna Amidon were on a volunteer work trip in Guatemala with another charity. They were asked by long-time friend and Common Hope volunteer Kathie Amble to deliver medications to the Antigua site. As Stan describes it, they made the delivery, had a tour, and were hooked.



The short errand turned into a second trip, and a third. Since then the pair has brought friends and family as well. Stan found the first trip very "transformative," and finds it important to return. "Everyone

has high giving aspirations when they are there, and it wears off. But going renews the spirit," he says.

The Amidons have plenty of spirit. Through Stan, Amidon Graphics has provided substantial discounts to Common Hope's printing costs. In addition, Stan has involved Amidon employees, who now team up by department to sponsor students. For the past six years Stan has also been a member of our Honorary Board.

Visiting their sponsored students, Stan and Donna have been touched by how important the visits are to the families. Donna recounts one particularly memorable visit.

The family had just hauled big rocks, which they lined along the path to their house and painted white. The rocks were still wet when she arrived, and she could see how proud they were of how their home looked, how important it was to make a good impression. Donna and Stan have both been awed by "what the families enjoy and appreciate with so little."

When asked why they support Common Hope, Donna insists it isn't all altruism. "Really, it's a give and take. In many ways we take home more than we give. It helps you prioritize, be re-sensitized to the realities of poverty, and appreciate the things you have."



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Ideas for meaningful holiday giving



*Gift catalogs coming in early November.
"In Honor Of" gift cards are also available.*

As your planning for the holidays begins, consider the following ideas to bring smiles to many faces this season:

- Organize an alternative giving event with your faith community, school or civic club.
- Honor your clients with a gift of education, health care, or housing. It may mean more than another box of chocolates or tin of popcorn!
- Host a gathering of friends or family to select gifts that change lives for children and families living in poverty.

