



Students pick out books to read during an activity market at their school. Go to page 4 for the story.

COMMON HOPE NEWS

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More news at commonhope.org/blog

A champion for math and science

In a country where math scores are low and math teachers are hard to come by, a former student works for change.

Michelle Gonzalez is a busy young woman. The 19 year old works full-time during the week as a teacher and pursues a university degree in math and physics on weekends.

Weekday mornings are spent teaching first grade at a local elementary school near her home. In the afternoons, she heads to a junior high school to teach math and art.

On top of all this, Michelle manages to find time to spend with her husband and 18-month-old baby girl.

Ambitious goals

Having always been interested in math and science, Michelle hopes to

obtain a degree in chemistry and biology after the math and physics degree. Eventually, she would like to work in the pharmaceutical industry or as a chemist.

Advice from a mentor

To navigate her challenging workload, Michelle has found a mentor in New Hope's math teacher, **José Luis Gomez**, whom she visits a few times a week to get advice on her lesson plans and homework.

Michelle got to know José Luis in 2002 when she was a student at New Hope School and began attending his extra-curricular math classes. "Michelle was always one of the best students," says José Luis, "and she always liked math and science."



A CHAMPION continues on page 4

Not your average teenager



Cristhian López with his mother and family social worker, Alicia Ramírez.

When Cristhian Lopez's mother needed care after a debilitating stroke, Common Hope's medical clinic was there to provide care. So was he.

At first glance, **Cristhian López** seems like a typical 17-year-old. The 10th grader hangs around his house in a t-shirt and flip flops, enjoys watching TV, and, although a bit shy, opens up easily when asked about school or his goals for the future.

In reality, Cristhian's life is much different from most boys his age.

When crisis strikes

A few years ago, Cristhian's mother, **Doña Josefina Cajas**, had a stroke that left her wheelchair-bound, unable to speak, and barely able to move. At the time the family wasn't affiliated, so Josefina received medical treatment elsewhere, but they were not happy with the care she received.

The family joined Common Hope last year, so Josefina started receiving treatment at the clinic, including medication for hypertension, nutrition counseling, support from psychology and speech therapy, and biweekly physical therapy.

Ever since the stroke, Cristhian has spent his mornings helping his mother dress, bathe, and get ready for the day. He helps make breakfast for his family, washes dishes, cleans the house, and does his homework. Thanks to a scholarship from Common Hope, Cristhian spends his afternoons in school.

"My mother is sick, so we do what we have to do," he says.

His mother's cheerleader

Cristhian also helps his mother with her at-home physical therapy. He says that at times it is difficult, because his mom gets frustrated and emotional, but he tries to encourage her as much as he can. "I tell her not to do it for us, but to do it for herself," he says.

During his three-month vacation from school, Cristhian was a regular at Common Hope's Family Development Center in Antigua. Not only did he accompany his mother to her biweekly physical therapy sessions, but he also worked sweat-equity hours for his family's new *fibrolit* house.

A source of admiration and pride

Fernando Santos of Common Hope's maintenance staff describes Cristhian as "very responsible and above all else, polite." **Alicia Ramírez**, the family's Common Hope social worker, admires Cristhian's maturity and dedication to his mother. "He is very humble," she says, "and always there for his mom."

With all of his responsibilities at home, Cristhian still manages to get good grades. "I'm working hard [at school]," he says. He will need to work hard to fulfill his plan to graduate high school, get a job, attend university, and open an accounting office.

Agents of change

"This is why we do what we do," says **Tamalyn Gutierrez**, country director for Common Hope. "So that extraordinary young men like Cristhian are no longer living in the shadows of society but are

provided the tools they need to be successful in life and leaders in their community."

WHAT YOU CAN DO...

\$90 to Family Development can pay for a family's social work visits for a year.

Use the enclosed envelope to make your gift.

15-YEAR-OLD PUTS BABYSITTING MONEY TOWARD SPONSORING A STUDENT

At her young age, **Kerry Grove** already has a strong commitment to giving back. The teenager and her parents, **Louise and Keith Grove**, sponsor a student named César from San Rafael, and Kerry uses her babysitting money to pay half of the sponsorship. Kerry and her father traveled to Guatemala on a Vision Team last month. They had a very moving experience visiting their sponsored student.

Visit our blog for a brief video of Kerry talking about her sponsorship and about meeting César.

www.commonhope.org/blog

More than one kind of home improvement

Doña Bertha earned a much needed addition for her home and learned more effective parenting techniques at the same time.



Doña Bertha (r) with Lesbia García, her social worker

Until recently, **Doña Bertha Camey's** five children—two boys and three girls ages 12 to 24—shared a room in the family's small block home. Bertha and her husband, **Don Lorenzo González**, knew that having all of them together was uncomfortable.

As they grew older, the children were in serious need of more space. But as caretakers of a property in an upscale residential community, Bertha and Lorenzo never thought they would get permission from their *patrón* (Spanish for landlord-

employer) to add on to their house. This all changed when the family's social worker, **Lesbia García**, encouraged them to ask their *patrón*. To Bertha's surprise, he was agreeable, and the family immediately began working their sweat-equity hours to earn the addition.

Sweat-equity through education

Doña Bertha earned more than half the hours for their home by attending a series of nine Loving Parenting workshops put on by Common Hope's psychology staff. The series, launched at Common

Hope in 2005, teaches parents new skills in discipline and communication, with the hope of lowering rates of physical punishment as a form of discipline.

"I learned a lot," says Bertha, "my kids are older now, but sometimes they are very rebellious. [I learned that] I have to ignore them when they throw tantrums."

Even Bertha's kids have noticed her new parenting techniques. "They ask me where I learned this new attitude," she laughs. "It's nice to be able to learn new things."

Sizing up the next hurdle

The home improvements complete, Bertha has set her mind on the family's next goals. At the top of the list, she wants her four younger children to follow in the footsteps of their older brother and graduate from high school. "I want [my kids] to be professionals," says Bertha, who learned to read as an adult. Her husband has never had any formal schooling.

Eventually, Bertha and Lorenzo hope to buy land of their own—and thankfully their new home would be moveable if they do. For now, the family is excited about the new addition and grateful for Common Hope's continued support.

Says Bertha, "We are thankful to Common Hope—how would we ever have bought a house without this opportunity?"

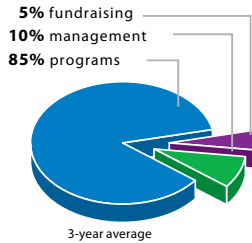
Common Hope makes first appearance at Chicago Global Activism Expo

Volunteers secured Common Hope a spot this spring in the Chicago Global Activism Expo, sponsored by the Chicago Public Radio show *Worldview*. The event attracted more than 3,500 people interested in causes like ours, a great way to spread the word. It was Common Hope supporter **Gary Doten** who got us an interview on the radio show several years ago. That feature brought us new Chicago-area supporters and an opportunity to participate in this major charity fair.

UK supporters launch Common Hope to first place in Global Giving challenge

Supporters in the UK gave a strong showing of support this April. Led by mathematician and author **Marcus du Sautoy**, 66 supporters donated nearly £4,000 toward education for impoverished Guatemalan youth, earning us a permanent spot on the Global Giving website. A last minute push by board member **Tom Joyce** and honorary board member **Annette Atkins** put us in first place, earning us a bonus prize of £1000. Many thanks to our friends who made it all possible!

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Update on the new school partnership initiative

The education promoters have begun hands-on activities in the schools, focused especially on reading and math. Early feedback has been positive.

Renato Westby, program development director, was in the St. Paul office this spring for strategic planning. He gave us a few updates about the school partnership initiative, launched in Santa Catarina and San Miguel earlier this year and in its second year in San Rafael.

Work begins in the schools

The promoters have begun offering weekly reading activities in each classroom (40 classrooms in total), and by now, students know them by name. “They’ll say ‘here come the book people,’” said Renato.

Promoters have also begun monthly meetings with the school directors, and from time to time teachers have asked them for ideas and help. This is a positive sign for being so new in the school—it shows the promoters’ perspectives are valued and trusted.

In addition, promoters have pitched in as substitute teachers, which has been challenging but has built their credibility with teachers. Renato explains that the demands on teachers are incredible.



Students choose a book to read at the activity market at their school.

“They do everything from teaching math to preparing snacks to cleaning toilets,” said Renato. “By stepping in as substitutes,” he continued, “it shows our willingness to help out where help is needed, and it shows that the promoters understand what the teachers are going through.”

Learning out of the box

Students and teachers have responded well to experiential activities—very new to classrooms used to rote learning. One was an “activity market” in the center parks of San Miguel and Santa Catarina. Kids could choose to read a picture book, do an art project, or play an educational game, and they had great fun with it.

Another activity was a science project offered in conjunction with a volunteer group, where students explored the power of compressed air.

Visit www.commonhope.org/blog for a video of the science project and more photos from the promoters’ first weeks in the schools.

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Sharing her love of math

Michelle’s love of her subject is something she tries to pass on to her students. “Being a math teacher allows me to help students develop their critical thinking skills,” she says, “which will help them resolve different problems they are presented with.”

“I want to help my country,” she continues, “so that kids value education and so they can be successful.” Michelle’s students are lucky to have such a great role model—and so is her daughter.