



Señora Carolina with her class in San Miguel.

COMMON HOPE NEWS

IN THIS ISSUE



Page 2
After 14 years, Emilce Farfán becomes a land owner



Page 3
Three exceptional student leaders



Page 4
Status updates: 2009 results • San Rafael

housing • Vision Team reflections • New Hope teachers in Chicago • 4-Star rating

More news at commonhope.org/blog

Innovative school partner initiative begins

Common Hope is pleased to announce the launch of school partnerships in the Antigua area—an initiative which will enhance support and resources for local schools, principals, teachers, and students.

Two public schools near Antigua had new advocates when the school year began this February. Common Hope education promoters started work in those schools as a part of our new School Partner Initiative, piloted last year in San Rafael.

The promoters will be in a unique position to impact the quality of education by modeling progressive and interactive classroom activities, encouraging greater attention to individual student needs through assessments and tutoring, and by providing access to Common Hope resources like classroom supplies, volunteers, and training. The promoters will also increase the consistency of daily learning by providing substitute teachers, not currently available in public

schools. Perhaps most important of all, they will facilitate early detection and intervention for at-risk students.

Overcrowded classrooms, inexperienced teachers, teacher absences, and lack of supplies are common issues in Guatemalan public schools, which Common Hope will strive to address. The education promoters will strategize with school principals and staff to prioritize the needs of each school and determine the best way to tailor support.

The initiative will begin in two public elementary schools: Santa Catarina Bobadilla and San Miguel Escobar, both near the Antigua site. Common Hope plans to expand the program to other schools in coming years. Seasoned educators have been hired to serve as education promoters in the schools. Along with **Renato Westby**, Program Development Director, and a host of volunteers, the promoters will harness the resources of Common Hope to enhance support to schools.

PARTNERSHIPS continues on page 2



Emilce and family look at photos (left) and stand in front of their home (right). The family became land owners after seeking a land title for many years.

Her own land

Emilce becomes a land owner for herself and her children

It is clear that **Emilce Farfán** and her four children take great pride in their home. Sitting close together on a bed in their concrete block house, Emilce pulls out a photo album and flips to an image of the house she lived in when she moved to the land 14 years ago: a small shack, patched together with scrap metal and wood.

Looking Back

Emilce smiles when she describes it, but she has no doubt traveled a difficult journey to where she is today. Emilce and her husband were squatters when they first moved to the land. Over the years they tried to get a land title, but their case was never followed up on by the auxiliary mayor of San Pedro nor the lawyer they hired.

Land titles are very expensive, a struggle to afford on Emilce's wages as a house cleaner in Antigua—particularly since she is often the sole provider. Her husband struggles with alcoholism and is not able to hold a steady job.

After years of frustration, Emilce decided to seek the help of Common Hope's lawyer, Celia. Celia moved the case through the legal system, and Common Hope paid a portion of the fee, a rate determined by the family's

need classification through the social work process. Emilce paid the rest with wages from her house cleaning job.

With the help of Common Hope, Emilce has been able to support her family so all her children are in school, two with Sponsors.

Looking Ahead

Emilce feels much more secure now that she owns her land outright. She had the foresight to get the title in her own name in case anything happens with her husband. She is happy to know that one day she can leave a small piece of land to each child.

Perhaps one day her eldest son Antony will bring another makeover to the Farfán property. This year he began studying technical drawing with the goal of becoming an architect.

What you can do...

\$190 can buy a land title.

\$85 can buy 200 cement blocks.

Use the enclosed envelope or visit <http://bit.ly/giftsofhope> to make your gift.

Partnerships

continued from page 1



Over the years, your gifts to Common Hope have provided impoverished Guatemalan children *access* to education, making it possible for them to attend school — a major achievement. Now your support will go even further, improving the *quality* of their education once children enter the classroom. By doing so, we hope to lessen repetition rates of students so they can graduate on time, with a solid grasp of skills that will make them successful employees and citizens.

Although the partnerships are still very new, we are confident that having a closer relationship with public schools will improve education quality and broaden our impact in the community. Better schools and individualized support for at-risk students are key factors for seeing more kids graduate from high school.

[read more @ www.commonhope.org/blog](http://www.commonhope.org/blog)

Student Profiles

Exceptional Student Leaders

Meet three exemplary agents of change. These young adults demonstrate the leadership skills and commitment to education that are the ultimate goal of Common Hope's programs.

19-year-old **Henry** has been sponsored by Common Hope ever since his family moved to New Hope Village in 2000. They relocated from the slums of Guatemala City when their home was destroyed by Hurricane Stan.

Now in his last year of high school, Henry has always been a good student. His leadership skills really blossomed, however, when he attended the New Hope youth program's leadership training. Afterward, he started to see the influence he could have as a youth leader.

Last year, Henry was elected by his New Hope peers to serve in the Guatemalan Parliament of Childhood and Adolescence. At the end of 2008, he spoke at a press conference in Guatemala City, discussing the importance of children's rights with Guatemalan officials.

Henry hopes the youth leadership program expands to different communities in Guatemala. He believes it creates "an open space for freedom of expression among youth, where everyone's opinions are taken into consideration."



Henry Benitez
HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR



Victor Grande Canel
SIXTH GRADE GRADUATE

Last November, **Victor** achieved something that few in his community of San Rafael have before: the 18 year old graduated from sixth grade.

It wasn't an easy accomplishment, says Victor. "It felt bad, being so old [for my grade]," he says. Victor repeated both second and third grade, but he continued to study.

As one of only six San Rafael students who graduated from sixth grade last year,

Victor is a trailblazer in his community. And he is determined to continue; he is already enrolled in junior high.

Victor isn't yet sure of his career track, but his goal is to graduate high school. He knows a high school degree will increase his earning potential and allow him to support his family.

"We could have things that we don't right now," he says, tears running down his face. "I am going to help. That is my goal, to help my family."

Silvia Maribel Marin Rancho
UNIVERSITY FRESHMAN

Last November, **Silvia** graduated from high school, and in December she was awarded a Common Hope university scholarship to study social work.

Silvia is another trailblazer like Victor above. Sylvia's parents attended school only through first grade. Her family's economic situation is unstable, and the death of Silvia's father has had a profound effect on the family. But Silvia

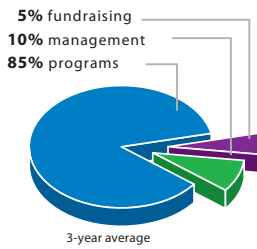
understands the importance of education and is motivated to continue with school. "With a university degree I will have more possibilities to get a good job," she says.

Silvia enjoys working with people, but she also believes that as a social worker, she can help create positive change in Guatemala. "I think [social work] has a lot to do with making progress in this country," she says. "It's all about helping people find solutions to their problems."



STATUS UPDATE

USE OF FUNDS



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RESULTS OF 2009

Thanks to your generosity last year, Common Hope ended 2009 on strong financial footing. We were able to keep our expenses in line with revenue by identifying ways to become more efficient. Contributing to our reserves has allowed for modest program growth in 2010. We welcomed more than 2,700 students to the 2010 school year, compared to just under 2,600 in 2009. And, we launched the school partner initiative—see page one for more info.



HOMES, LATRINES, AND WATER CONNECTIONS BUILT IN SAN RAFAEL

Last year, our Housing Program implemented some of its first projects in our satellite site of San Rafael. In 2009 volunteers and staff built the first two homes for families in the community. We also helped three families install connections to potable water and two families build latrines.

VISION TEAM MEMBERS: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A number of recent Vision Team members have posted reflections on their experience on Common Hope's blog. **George Allen** reflected on his experience of building a home for a man named Braulio, who he still remembers now that he's home. **Teresa Hermodson-Olsen** mused about her last visit with a sponsored family that is graduating. And **Joel Wanner** described his memorable visit with his sponsored student Nataly. To read their reflections, visit www.commonhope.org/blog and search keyword *newsletter*.



NEW HOPE SCHOOL TEACHERS TRAVEL TO CHICAGO

Teachers from New Hope School traveled to Chicago in December for a teacher exchange with Hubbard Woods School. New Hope teachers led projects in Winnetka classrooms, toured several urban schools, and visited Common Hope's U.S. office in St. Paul in time for the holiday open house. The Hubbard Woods teachers traveled to New Hope School last June for the first leg of this teacher exchange.

COMMON HOPE EARNS 4-STAR RATING

Once again, Common Hope has earned a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, one of the premier charity watchdogs in the U.S. The rating takes into account a nonprofit's financial health as well as organizational efficiency and capacity. Only a quarter of evaluated nonprofits receive a 4-star rating, meaning that Common Hope "exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause."