More than four walls.
A place to call home.
FROM THE DESK OF SHARI BLINDT

Dear friends,

The opportunity to live in a safe, dry home is one that is only a dream for too many families in Guatemala. Through Common Hope’s housing program and the generous support of our donors and volunteers that opportunity becomes a reality for the families we serve—families like Doña Florinda’s.

While living in a small one-room structure in which rain entered from above and below during the rainy season, Doña Florinda had always dreamed of having a decent home for her three children. An improvised bunk bed provided a place for her two sons and her daughter to sleep, but it had to be moved to the center of the room to avoid getting wet from the rain that found its way through wood plank walls and the deteriorating sheets of their metal roof.

As a single mother earning just $50 per month, her dream of a proper home was a distant one—one that others had repeatedly told her would never happen. Little did she know, her new partnership with Common Hope would not only help her children attend school, but it could also empower her to achieve her dream of a proper home for her family.

When Lesbia, her social worker, made her first home visit she encountered a small patio overflowing with runoff water from the property next door and an anguished mother wishing for an adequate house for her family. Lesbia shared with her that she had the opportunity to earn a home that would keep them all safe and dry; that Doña Florinda could apply and start working volunteer hours to earn a new home. Lesbia returned a few weeks later with our partner, ConstruCasa, to determine the possibility of building a block home for the family. When Doña Florinda learned she could earn a concrete block home it brought her to tears. Her dream might be possible after all.

There was work to do, however, before the home could be built. Once her application was finalized, she had three weeks to prepare the site. “Not a problem,” she said, “we’ll move out and clear the site for building.” She and her children went to live with her grandparents, and her extended family helped her to take down the old house and prepare the site for construction.

When the building materials arrived, Doña Florinda realized she wasn’t dreaming anymore. Two months later she and her family began waking up in the house she had been told would never be.

Doña Florinda wants the same things for her children that we want for our own—a safe, healthy place to call home, a doctor when we are sick, and the opportunity for our children to get a good education to provide for their own families someday. Through your generosity, more than 1,000 families’ dreams of a strong, sturdy home have become a reality over the years. This year our team (pictured right) plans to build 30 homes with the help of Vision Teams for families who have earned them, and will build block homes for another 40 families who own their land.

The moms and dads we serve dream of a better life for their families. Thank you for helping us create the opportunities they need to act on those dreams so they become a reality.

Gratefully,

Shari Blindt
Executive Director

COMMON HOPE’S HOUSING PROGRAM

The ultimate goal of Common Hope’s Housing Program is to provide parents with the opportunity to build a more stable, healthy living environment for their family and remove the barriers that prevent children from staying in and being successful in school.

at the core of the program

MUTUAL PARTNERSHIP

Our Housing Program is based on a mutual partnership between Common Hope and a family in need. Common Hope’s families fulfill a minimum number of required volunteer hours to earn a safe, dry house with a cement floor.

HOMES THAT ARE MOBILE

One of the most unique aspects of the houses Common Hope builds is that they are completely mobile. It is common for our families to be renting or living temporarily on community land. As a result, it is important for families to have this mobile option so that if they need to move, they can take their house with them. A house can be moved in approximately three days.

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

An important component of Common Hope’s Housing Program is that all of the houses are built through the support of volunteers who visit Guatemala as part of Vision Teams. The Vision Team experience can be transformational for visitors while also helping to deepen the relationship and partnership with the families. The power of being able to build an entire home in five days can be life changing—not only for those who live within its walls, but also for those who build it for them.

Turn to page 10 to learn more

THE HERNÁNDEZ FAMILY

Pictured on the cover of this issue are Doña Concepción and her grandson, Jayro. You may recognize Doña Concepción if you’ve been on a Common Hope Pueblo Tour in Antigua.

In Guatemala, it is common for generations of family members to share a home. This is true for the Hernández family. Doña Concepción and her husband Don Salomé live with their daughter, Doña Maira, the mother of Jayro and Heidi.

Before they were part of Common Hope’s programs, the Hernández family lived in one-room house. Over time, the wood began to rot, making it dangerous particularly during the rainy season. The family worked 100 volunteer hours to earn a new home. They have taken great pride in owning their very own home. They painted it their favorite colors and even added a patio area with shrubs and flowers. It is a beautiful, dignified space they call home.

“Before receiving this home, water would enter our home and turn everything wet, cold, and muddy. Now we do not have to worry in the rainy season, and we all feel safer and more comfortable,” says Doña Concepción.

The Hernández family’s home was built in March 2018 by the Pie Consulting Vision Team members Clinton Standish, Mitchell Rosenhall, Ryan Krug, Tyler Schwein, Brecken Gilmore, Kathleen Dickerson, and Cole Gilmore. ¡Gracias!
A small family home built circa 1993. The first family homes were built from wood. Later, homes were constructed from fibrolit, which provided a waterproof option that prevented rotting yet still allowed homes to be mobile.

EXPANDING PROGRAMMING TO INCLUDE HOUSING
Common Hope has always been committed to creating dignified, respectful opportunities for families to succeed. The goal is to establish a partnership with a family that provides the support needed to end the cycle of poverty. Education is just one piece of that puzzle. Housing is another. The independence and hope that having a place to call home provides compounds the ability of a student to succeed in school and a family to succeed in life. So in 1991, Common Hope's programming expanded to include housing services.

In the beginning stages of the program, Common Hope experimented with building one-room homes constructed from wood, then concrete blocks. Over time, these houses were modified and constructed from fibrolit (cement fiber) to accommodate the many families that rented or moved. Cement block houses remained available for those who own their land. Two-room homes were added later and continue to be the preferred option even today 20 years later.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE HOUSING PROGRAM
learning and evolving
...to best serve families needs

EARLY HOUSING PROGRAM PROJECTS
A new home was and is not the only thing a family can earn through Common Hope’s Housing Program. A variety of different improvements were available to families in the early days. To ensure they had a safe, healthy living environment, families could also work volunteer hours to earn a stove, pilá (large cement sink), roof, and other improvements. In the ‘90s, the program even included the Chicken Project, which taught families better methods of raising chickens, added protein to their diets, and helped them become more financially independent. Although this project no longer exists, Common Hope took what it learned from that project and adapted it to develop other ways to address nutrition.

“Seeing how much the family appreciated and valued their new home, and their gratitude, is a memory we will never forget.”

-Gene & Maggie Garmon, Vision Team alumni, 1995

BUILDING HOPE
In 2018, Doña Elida’s dream for her family became real. Working alongside the Allina Friends Vision Team, the family’s new home was constructed with lots of love and hard work.

“Common Hope was a ray of light during this difficult time. We are proud of our new home and thankful for the opportunity for our children to study,” says Doña Elida.

Thank you to the team members who made this possible: Nancy McCallum, Suzan Ford, Jennifer Mort, Mary Rahman, Mary Smith, Stacey Peck, and Mary Lambert.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME
stories of hope

Sometimes, circumstances beyond a family’s control force them into an unsafe living situation. Such was the case for the Landaverde Sac family.

Don Oscar had agreed to co-sign a loan for a friend. Sadly, his friend defaulted on the loan. This meant Don Oscar was responsible for paying it back. For two years, Don Oscar didn’t receive a paycheck. The loss of income forced Don Oscar, his wife Doña Elida, and their three sons to move out of the house they were renting.

Due to their economic situation, the family moved to a very small piece of land and built a shelter from scraps of metal, plastic tarps, and whatever other materials they could find. They had only one proper wall, which was their neighbor’s. This one-room shelter could not protect them from the rain, wind, or cold. Rats sometimes invaded their space and the wind would blow trash in. During rainy season, the rain would get all of their belongings wet. Mauro, Leon, and Alexander, Don Oscar’s sons, had to do their homework multiple times because it would get wet. Frequently, everyone in the family was sick. The situation for the Landaverde Sac family was dire.

AN OPPORTUNITY FOUND
Doña Elida cannot read or write. Growing up, her family did not make enough money to send her to school. Her dream was to build a better life for her family. She wanted nothing more than to see her sons graduate from high school and create a better future for themselves and their family.

The Landaverde Sac family began partnering with Common Hope in December 2013 before their economic situation changed. An urgent need for a new home was immediately identified by Common Hope’s social worker after visiting the site where they relocated. They were accepted into the Housing Program and Doña Elida began to fulfill the required number of volunteer hours in order to earn a new home for their family.
HOUSING IN GUATEMALA

factors that affect success
...in school and beyond

THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR BASIC HOUSING
Over half the population of Guatemala lacks dignified housing with utilities and sufficient space, which leads to many challenges including health issues and overcrowding. Sixty-seven percent of families live in poor quality homes and/or without roofs. Many of the families Common Hope serves live in homes with dirt floors and walls made of scrap metal or cornstalks. These unstable housing conditions are exacerbated by the fact that many families live on the side of the region’s steep hills or mountains at higher risk to be damaged significantly by floods, landslides, and earthquakes.

UNSTABLE CONSTRUCTION
Houses constructed from cornstalks and scrap metal are common. Poor construction leaves homes susceptible to weather and the elements.

OPEN COOKING STOVES
Many families cook over an open fire. Smoke coupled with improper ventilation, common in most homes, causes respiratory issues.

DIRT FLOORS
Dirt floors are home to parasites and bacteria, which cause an array of diseases. A concrete floor reduces parasitic infection and anemia by 80%.

CLIMATE & WEATHER
Rainy season in Guatemala poses one of the biggest threats to a family living in unstable conditions. Homes worsen as the days, seasons, and years go on.

LAND OWNERSHIP
Many of the families we work with either rent or squat on the land where they live. It can cause tension with landowners and lead to extortion.

ELECTRICITY SERVICES
Many families live without basic electricity because their home isn’t located on a grid or they need an advocate to help them earn this benefit.

WATER & SEWAGE
It is common that homes in Guatemala do not have running water for cleaning and bathing or proper sewer and drainage systems.

SAFETY & SECURITY
Poor construction leaves families’ homes vulnerable to theft and other threats to their safety and security.

GEOGRAPHY & LOCATION
Volcanic activity and earthquakes are not uncommon in Guatemala. Families living in poverty are most vulnerable to these natural disasters.

As our volunteers have experienced, no matter the condition of their home, Guatemalan mothers and fathers welcome them in. When a family decides to earn a new house, and then a volunteer supports their efforts, we demonstrate our organizational philosophy to build relationships. Families are no longer just a statistic, but instead a valuable family member reaching their goals and improving their lives.

“—Rebecca Sanborn, Country Director

784 Common Hope families qualify for additional housing support

344 families live in a house with a dirt floor

509 families, or 47%, have no access to a drainage system

364 families need access to utilities or another form of housing improvement

by the numbers

OUR WORK CONTINUES

COMMON HOPE’S HOUSING PROGRAM
plans to build 30 homes in 2019, plus an additional 40 block homes in partnership with ConstruCasa, a NGO working in the area. This partnership will allow us to build more homes for more families.

Be part of our mission to provide a safe, secure home to more families in need this year.

Visit www.commonhope.org/housing to learn how you can help.

The Figueroa Sarseeño family was living in a house constructed mainly from scraps of metal. Their new home was built by the combined effort of Deephaven Families United and Deppe Gibson teams in August 2018. Thank you to team members Catherine, Ingrid, and Greta Knutson, Chris Denton, Carlos Nugent, Alena Nugent, Resa, Brian, Laci, Nolan, Elise, and Abigail Schmidt, Roberta Deppe, Andrew Gibson, Isabelle Gibson, Cara Huss, Anna Patmore, John Patmore, Elizabeth Campbell, Hugh Campbell Jr., Susan Campbell, and Jane Alexander.
INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES
In addition to basic housing needs like roofs, cement floors, electricity and new homes, starting in 2018 Common Hope’s Housing Program goals included deploying new and innovative strategies that provide an environment that is healthy and stable, and supports a child’s ability to learn and be successful in school.

These pilot initiatives are currently being tested by families and may be adapted according to feedback. Today, we continue to learn and adapt these concepts throughout 2019 in order to give families the best possible outcomes.

HOUSING PROGRAM PILOT INITIATIVES
always innovating
...to improve outcomes!

what we’re trying out

ADDING STABILITY AND SECURITY
Many families we partner with live in areas that are susceptible to landslides and earthquakes. A retaining wall can make a huge difference in protecting a family’s home. This year, we will continue to build on the success of 2018 and plan to construct up to 10 retaining walls for families’ added protection during rainy season.

ADDRESSING ILLUMINATION
Two important modifications to the fibrolit homes were piloted recently in order to provide families with more light. By installing glass windows and inserting a transparent panel to the roof, families experience greater illumination without needing electricity each and every day.

IMPROVING LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS
It is not uncommon for children to sleep on the floor or three to four to a bed. From standard bunk beds to convertible beds that fold from bed to desk and chairs, our Housing Program is creating new ways to make homes more conducive to learning, starting by making sure each family member has a place to sleep and children have a place to study.

Seño Blanca and her three children used to sleep in one bed together. This led to many sleepless nights for the widowed mother of three. Seño Blanca and her family were the perfect candidates for a set of educational bunk beds. After working volunteer hours, they earned the new bunks and now Seño Blanca has seen a great change in their family. Everyone sleeps better and now her kids have a place to do their homework!

Visit commonhope.org to help make improvements like these possible for families!
VISION TEAM VOLUNTEERS
make home a reality
...and strengthen partnerships

FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND SOLO TRAVELERS
All visitors, whether it’s a group of friends, a family, or solo travelers, are welcome to join a Common Hope Vision Team and have the opportunity to build a home and experience the incredibly moving opportunity to create change for a family in need.

COMMON HOPE VISION TEAMS
Every year volunteers from across the country build the houses that Common Hope families will call home. In 2019, Common Hope is planning to build 30 homes via the support and work of over 300 volunteers. This means every other week of the year 10-15 volunteers give their time and talents to bring safe, healthy spaces to Guatemalan families who have chosen to earn their new home.

BUSINESSES, SCHOOLS, AND CLUBS
The Vision Team Experience is a one week holistic, cultural immersion designed to provide visitors with a glimpse into the realities of living and working in a country with some of the greatest socio-economic disparity in our world today. Vision Teams are a great team building experience for companies, student groups, or civic organizations.

“...and strengthen partnerships"

Are you interested in going to Guatemala and making a difference? Learn more about Vision Teams at commonhope.org/visionteams

“...and strengthen partnerships”
Common Hope’s mission is to promote 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.

USE OF FUNDS

Fundraising - 6%
Management - 12%
Programs - 82%

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.

PRIMARY CONTACTS

US » Common Hope
SHARI BLINDT, Executive Director
1400 Energy Park Drive, Suite 23
St. Paul, MN 55108
phone 651.917.0917
www.commonhope.org

GUATE » Familias de Esperanza
REBECCA SANBORN, Country Director
Km. 2 Carretera a San Juan del Obispo
Antigua, 03901 Sacatepéquez
Guatemala, Centro América

COMMON HOPE NEWS »

STACEY A. MINNICK, Director of Development & Strategic Relations
LIZZ PETERSON, Associate Director of Marketing & Events
VERENA MÜLLER-FRIED, Communications Assistant

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