Education as a way forward.
Fighting poverty with diplomas.
FROM THE DESK OF SHARI BLINDT

Dear friends,

The heart of Common Hope's work is education, and we involve the entire family to make that possible for their children. In this issue of our newsletter we share with you the breadth of our work in education—how barriers our students face are eliminated as they work to achieve their dream of high school graduation. With our holistic approach their families have access to all of our programs in health care, family development, and housing as long as their children continue in school. Your generous support makes this all possible.

You’ve likely heard, “no one can ever take away your education” or “education is an investment that will serve you for your lifetime.” And if you’re like me, you may have used them in talking with your children about the importance of school. They are certainly true, and on a recent trip to Guatemala I understood infinitely more just how true they are.

“My seatmate was an elderly caballero, whose traditional hat was on the seat between us.”

My seatmate was an elderly caballero, whose traditional hat was on the seat between us. We greeted each other when I first sat down, but for much of the flight I had my nose buried in a book I couldn’t put down—my favorite indulgence on early morning flights. Just before landing the flight attendant gave each of us our immigration forms, and he motioned for me to help him fill out his document. The type is very small, so I assumed he couldn’t read the fine print. It wasn’t until he opened his passport and I noticed the thumb print for his signature that I realized he couldn’t read or write. Together we filled out his information, explaining to him in my simple Spanish what each field was requesting and then filling in each of his answers for him.

I continue to think about this gentleman, and how reliant he must be on others for so much in his life. He was traveling alone and had to trust a complete stranger with his immigration information—that’s a vulnerability that would strike fear in most of us, and he lives it every day.

“...that’s a vulnerability that would strike fear in most of us, and he lives it every day.”

It’s why Common Hope’s work is so important—the ability to read and write empowers a person to be informed and make the best decisions for themselves and their families. Thank you for giving so generously to make education a reality for the children we serve.

Education is truly the gift that keeps on giving for a lifetime.

With gratitude,

Shari Blindt
Executive Director

Understanding the existing culture of education is where the work begins. Common Hope is proud of its commitment to being a learning organization. As such, it’s our work to keep a pulse on the evolving educational environment in Guatemala. Today’s challenges include low promotion and graduation rates, rote learning in the classroom, and more. Together, we are working to create change and tap the power of education.

PROMOTION & GRADUATION RATES
In Guatemala, only 32% of students complete junior high. Nationally, just 18.6% graduate from high school, as compared to 84.6% in the U.S.

GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENTS
By law, school attendance is only required through 6th grade, or between the ages of 7 and 14. Public spending on education as a share of GDP was reported at 2.8% in 2017 according to the World Bank as compared to 3% in the U.S.

EDUCATION FOR WOMEN & GIRLS
Women, especially young indigenous women, face the greatest barriers to education. The average years of school attended by women is 4.1 years and 3.5 for indigenous women.

RURAL & INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
Public schools are often sparsely located in rural areas leaving indigenous populations vastly underserved in overpopulated classrooms.

OFFENS IN GUATEMALA
Often in Guatemala, elderly men are referred to as caballeros, or gentlemen. It is typical to see them wearing a traditional Guatemalan-style cowboy hat.

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EDUCATION IN GUATEMALA

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
Early Childhood Education in Guatemala is rare. One-in-three children fail first grade. Many have never seen or held a book or pencil until their first day of school.

RESOURCES & TECHNOLOGY
It’s estimated that fewer than 15% of public schools possess the basic facilities needed for teaching and learning. Many face infrastructure challenges, overcrowded classrooms, and a severe lack of educational technology.

TEACHERS
Although the Guatemalan Ministry of Education supports a progressive, globalized curriculum, teachers are often not trained in delivery or supplied with the necessary materials. A study by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs revealed that 80% of teachers can’t pass the tests they give to their own students.
At the heart of Common Hope’s holistic model is education. Built on the fundamental belief that an education can end the cycle of poverty, Common Hope has supported the education of tens-of-thousands of students since 1986. Today, Common Hope celebrates success—Common Hope students graduate at three and four times the national average.

What started as a commitment to providing school supplies and school fee payments, has grown to a robust approach across ages, communities, and individual needs. The Education Program of 2020 is organized in three key areas of focus: The Education Core, Education Resources, and Education Support. By creating a well-rounded approach, Common Hope is able to meet students where they are and provide a system of interventions to ensure their success.

The goal is clear: GRADUATION. Common Hope’s philosophy is rooted in the belief that if a family is committed to keeping their child in school until graduation, they can end a generational cycle of poverty.

Imagine a scenario where your parents don’t want you to go to school. Even more to the point, a scenario where your parents don’t think you need to go to school because it would not be valuable to you as a female. Imagine that your parents believed your only job in this world was to be a mother and a wife, and getting an education—any level of education—would not be valuable to your work.

For most people, this is unimaginable. But this is the experience that María Francisca Chocoj Yucute lived.

Maria, grew up in a scenario, like many older Guatemalans, where her parents did not believe that girls should go to school. They didn’t see a connection to the work she would do as mother and wife. But María didn’t buy into that belief. While she accepted it, she was determined to create a different reality for her own daughters.

And she made it so. María’s daughter, Jovita, is one of 11 children she would ensure got an education. Today, Jovita is a mom, a wife, AND a professional and an AGENT OF CHANGE creating a better Guatemala.

Maria had a partner in making her dream for her daughters (and sons) come true—Common Hope.

Jovita Amalia Tay is a psychologist. She is a graduate of Universidad Mariano Gálvez de Guatemala. She is the Youth Leadership Program Coordinator at WINGS Guatemala. She the daughter of María and Gabino. She is a mother. She is a wife. And, she is one of María’s dreams come true.

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Education - a mom’s commitment

JOVITA AMALIA TAY, COMMON HOPE CLASS OF 2006

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Jovita and all 10 of her siblings have graduated from high school. Common Hope was the bridge, the support system for María’s and Gabino’s commitment to education and dream of making it happen. And, as a result, Jovita’s daughters will never know poverty. Common Hope, and María’s and Gabino’s commitment to education, has ended the cycle of poverty for the Tay Chocoj family.

Bottom line: Common Hope’s education program works! Jovita Amalia Tay, Class of 2006, is just one example of wherever there is education there is a way forward.

Common Hope’s Opportunities in Education*
Nearly 4,000 students are served directly by Common Hope’s education programs each year.

537 New Hope students attended Preventative Workshops in 2019.

Attendance at youth activities totaled more than 10,500 last year.

155 students received their high school diploma in 2019.

In total, more than 2,400 Common Hope students have graduated since 1996, the year of our first graduate.

Graduates earn about 50% more than non-graduates.

Female graduates earn three times more than non-graduates.
education resources

Opportunity and access change everything. Public schools in Guatemala face a severe lack of educational support resources. Libraries and computer labs in schools are extremely rare in Guatemala. These resources are critical to a student's potential and why Common Hope makes it a priority to create spaces and access to needed tools.

Homework Centers
Sometimes, a particular class or assignment can be especially difficult. Common Hope's homework centers give students a place to go to receive the help they need. We offer general homework help, support for reading and math, homework review, and also homework resources and materials like dictionaries, calculators, rulers, markers, paper, scissors, and more.
- 2,274 visits were made to Common Hope's homework centers in 2019
- 659 students participated in Math and English clubs last year
- A new homework center opened in San Miguel Milpas Altas in 2020!

Libraries
More than just a place to check out books, libraries serve as a center for learning for students and for parents. They are a place to experience new ideas and connect to the outside world. Common Hope's libraries are hubs where families can go to participate in programs, read books together, and so much more.
- 7,325 books were checked out from CH libraries in 2019
- 8,438 visits were made to CH libraries by students and parents
- A part of the new homework center in San Miguel Milpas Altas is a small library.

Computer Labs
Computer skills are critical to success in today's world. Computer labs create inclusive, structured learning environments where students can prepare for a tech-heavy future. Our computer labs give kids access to the internet in order to complete assignments, along with courses to increase their computer skills.
- There were 17,618 total visits to CH computer labs last year
- That's an average of 1,468 visits every month
- Thanks to a generous donation of computers from Perham Rotary, the San Miguel homework center is equipped with a computer lab!

Every child learns at a different pace and in a different way. Common Hope's education support programs give students what they need to be successful in school and in life.

Tutoring
Common Hope offers specialized tutoring and individual help to students. Tutoring is particularly important in mathematics and English because these are subjects that many students struggle with. We even offer transportation to 7th grade students to come once a week for math tutoring.

Youth Support Programs
Common Hope's Youth Support Programs strive to give adolescents the tools and confidence they need to make positive decisions as they enter adulthood, while providing them with the academic support to be successful in school. Our youth support programs include academic support, social and emotional support, leadership training, sports and recreation activities, arts and crafts, music, and workshops on common social issues facing youth in Guatemala today. In many instances, the youth themselves help coordinate these programs for their peers.

Habilidades (Skills Building Program)
The Habilidades, or Skills Building Program, seeks to help struggling first grade students develop and strengthen their learning skills so that they feel good about their ability to stay in school and succeed. Participants work on time management and organization so they can manage their day, neuro-motor skills development to improve mind/body coordination and improve problem-solving skills, and math and reading skills.

Marcos was one of the most outstanding students in Habilidades,” says Felipe, Common Hope psychologist and Habilidades coordinator. “He wanted to succeed. Now his level of reading is excellent and his neuro-motor processes are outstanding. He has proven that with perseverance you can achieve anything,” Felipe continued.

With a Little Help and a Lot of Perseverance
Since infancy, Marcos has struggled with a visual impairment which left him completely blind in his right eye. His impairment made school especially difficult, both inside the classroom and at home. Seeing the blackboard, completing work on time, and navigating the classroom were all daily challenges for Marcos. He also faced discrimination and bullying by classmates due to his disability.

Despite his best efforts, these factors caused Marcos to fail first grade. At this point in his educational journey, Common Hope stepped in. Marcos’ social worker, Jazmin, connected his family to the Habilidades, or the Skills Building program, which provides struggling first graders with extra educational support outside of the classroom.

While he was repeating first grade, Marcos was also attending Habilidades sessions twice per week. The sessions focused on neuro-motor skills development, math and reading skills, and time management and organization.

“Marcos was one of the most outstanding students in Habilidades,” says Felipe, Common Hope psychologist and Habilidades coordinator. “He wanted to succeed. Now his level of reading is excellent and his neuro-motor processes are outstanding. He has proven that with perseverance you can achieve anything,” Felipe continued.

With support from the Habilidades program, a referral for eye glasses from the Common Hope clinic, and an unwavering optimism, Marcos passed first grade with flying colors. He is now in second grade and doing well in school.
WHEREVER THERE IS EDUCATION

there is a way forward

Common Hope’s education programs are made possible because of a committed army of supporters. Thanks to YOU, thousands of students are receiving an education. Common Hope always need more help to reach more kids!

PARTNER
Becoming a Common Hope Partner with a monthly gift of any amount is one of the best ways to support Common Hope’s mission. Your unrestricted monthly gift provides a steady, predictable flow of financial support, ensuring that we can help students achieve the education they deserve and get the help they need along the way.

- $7/month can give a student school supplies for the year
- $25/month can help stock the pharmacy with medications

SPONSOR
Like Partners, Sponsors also provide much-needed recurring revenue that goes directly to supporting programs. More than 40% of Common Hope’s funding comes from sponsorship. But deeper than that, sponsors build a personal relationship with a student in Guatemala and their family supporting their goals and dreams. Sponsors provide motivation and hope on a student’s path to graduation.

- Join as a Lead Sponsor at $65/month (sole sponsor)
- Join as a Guiding Sponsor at $35/month (shared sponsor)

VOLUNTEER
Financial support isn’t the only way to join Common Hope’s mission to fight poverty with diplomas. Changing lives requires many people in many places doing what they can to make a difference.

From lending a hand in the U.S. office to helping deliver programs in Guatemala, Common Hope relies on volunteers to make it happen.

- Visit our website to explore volunteer opportunities in the U.S. office in St. Paul MN and at our site in Antigua, Guatemala

SUPPORTERS IN ACTION
making education possible

PARTNERING WITH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE AT NEW HOPE SCHOOL
The New Hope Early Childhood Initiative’s main objective is to give students the tools and resources necessary so that 90% of students are promoted to the next grade and meet the national standards in math and reading according to the Guatemala National Curriculum.

Thanks to the generous support of a grant from Charities Aid Foundation of America on behalf of Target, together we are achieving outstanding results at New Hope School. One-hundred percent of first grade students were promoted to second grade last year!

Target Guatemala has supported the Early Childhood Initiative at New Hope School since 2008, not only through the grant from CAF but also through engaging activities with the students that promote health and sustainability like planting a garden of herbs and vegetables with the preschool students.

TARGET
muchas gracias
Target Guatemala!
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

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3-year average

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.

Covid-19 is creating unprecedented times for our families, communities, staff, and friends. There is no more important time to SHARE HOPE. Common Hope is committed to creating and delivering safe and innovative solutions to navigate these uncharted waters. Thank you for your ongoing thoughts. To learn more about what we are doing visit our website at www.commonhope.org

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EVENT POSTPONED

NOCHE DE COLORES

NEW DATE, SAME LOCATION
OCTOBER 14, 2020
INTERCONTINENTAL SAINT PAUL RIVERFRONT

In order to keep our amazing supporters safe and healthy, Common Hope is postponing Noche de Colores. Please save the NEW DATE. We look forward to celebrating with you in October.

www.commonhope.org/noche