

Building Brighter Futures

FALL NEWSLETTER 2012

Village by Village, Chipping Away at a National Epidemic

When the village of Cojobal, Guatemala, partnered with Child Aid this year, it became the 50th community to take up the torch of literacy through our *Reading for Life* program. Cojobal's tiny school has 12 teachers and 245 students. That may seem like a drop in the bucket when it comes to tackling a nationwide illiteracy problem, but, with more villages joining our effort than ever before, that bucket is beginning to fill.

"Over the past three years," says Child Aid cofounder Rick Carroll, "our program has grown dramatically in Guatemala. We had 26 community partners in 2009, and this year we are working with more than 50."

Child Aid's *Reading for Life* program is transformative for remote indigenous villages that lack educational resources and have nowhere else to turn for support. In these places, teachers are often young and have limited training. For most of them, teaching children to read is an ongoing struggle, especially when they lack books and teaching materials. In places like Cojobal, indigenous children

drop out early, and most fail to learn to read beyond the simplest of sentences. When village teachers hear about our work, many are quick to contact Child Aid.

"More communities than ever are coming to us and asking that we work with them," says Sam Hendricks, Child Aid's Executive Director. "It's exciting. But it's tough. Our challenge

is finding the funding to meet the growing demand for our work. Currently, the only real limit on the number of kids we can help is just that – funding."

Next year, Child Aid expects to work in 55 communities. It's difficult but rewarding work that requires long-term commitment on our part. But it's paying off.

"We're creating real educational opportunity in these places," says Carroll. "And we'll keep on doing it, village by village, until we feel the work is done."

When village teachers hear about our work, many are quick to contact Child Aid.

Below: Teachers and students at the elementary school in Cojobal, Guatemala.



From Fearful to Fearless: The Power of Reading

In a country where many families are broken by poverty and the aftermath of civil war, Jasmine is growing up like countless children do. She was abandoned by her parents and lives with her grandmother in a small, bare bones house, on a tenuous income.

By sparking Jasmine's interest, we've ignited her ability to learn.

Jasmine is in fourth grade. When she started the school year, her teacher, Rode Mirtala, described her as introverted, uninterested and socially awkward. "It was as if she were on the moon," Rode told us. "She never talked. She never engaged."

The odds Jasmine would make it through primary school were slim and, like many rural students, she was not on a path to developing solid reading skills.

This changed when Child Aid began working with Jasmine's school in Godinez this year. Since Rode began using Child Aid's teaching methods – which not only instill the fundamentals of reading education, but bring creativity, interaction and fun to the learning process – Jasmine has opened up.

Rode told us that Jasmine began perking up during story time, which was newly introduced by Child Aid. Soon, Jasmine was interacting with the kids in her reading group, answering questions and enjoying herself. "She came out of her shell," Rode told us.

Now, says Graciela Sajbochol, the Child Aid literacy trainer who works in Jasmine's school, "she acts like the little leader in her reading groups."

By sparking Jasmine's *interest* in learning, we've ignited her *ability* to learn. Now that she's engaged, we feel hopeful she'll stay in school. That, in a nutshell, is the power of reading.



Despite her early struggles with school, Jasmine has become a star reader thanks to Child Aid's Reading for Life program.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

A Birthday Helps Hundreds

When Brenda Hunsberger turned 50 earlier this year, she skipped the presents and decided to use the occasion to make a difference. After reading about our educational work with indigenous children, she contacted Child Aid and set out to raise enough money to support our *Reading for Life* program



Brenda Hunsberger (third from left) and Patti Boote (second from right) with Child Aid staff in Santa Lucía, Guatemala.

in the village of Santa Lucía Utatlán, Guatemala. Over the course of a year, Brenda and her partner, Patti Boote, raised over \$9,800 for the community, all through modest donations from friends, colleagues and family.

Last month, Brenda and Patti traveled with us to Guatemala to see the fruits of their effort firsthand. They visited Child Aid partner villages, observed our field staff in action and journeyed by "chicken bus" out to Santa Lucía, where they spent four days volunteering in the village library they supported.

"The most special part," Brenda told us, "was the day we were invited to the principal's father's home for lunch. They made this big lunch for a dozen of us. No one spoke English and we hardly speak Spanish, but we had an absolutely wonderful time."

When we asked them about *Reading for Life*, Patti replied that "Child Aid's work was much more than we ever thought it was going to be. This is so much more than building a library – it's about supporting a whole community."

We have Brenda, Patti, and *their* community, to thank for that support.

Interested in sponsoring a community yourself? If so, we'd love to hear from you!



SPECIAL PROJECTS

Child Aid Makes Splash (of Color) at Portland Event

On September 29, nearly 15,000 people participated in the Portland Color Run, a cross between India's wildly colorful Holi Festival and a 5km organized run. For Child Aid – the official charity of the event – it was a rare opportunity to share its work with thousands of people in its hometown of Portland, Oregon, where Child Aid's U.S. office is located. The event, with a turnout far beyond expectations, was a high-energy day of fun, exercise and brilliant color, all for a great cause.

During the run, scores of Child Aid volunteers positioned themselves along the course and showered participants with multicolored powder as they ran. What started out as a sea of white-clad runners, ended with an ocean of people transformed into a patchwork of electric color. Music, dancing and a color festival topped off the day.

BUILDING
BRIGHTER
FUTURES

Child received a portion of the event's proceeds. More importantly, it had the opportunity to connect with a mass audience about its innovative literacy work in Guatemala.

Because of the event, hundreds of new supporters joined Child Aid to help make this year's *Reading for Life* program stronger than ever.

"Portlanders know the power of literacy and the importance of books," says Child Aid cofounder Rick Carroll, "So we were a perfect fit for the event. And we were very excited to take part in one of the

city's biggest runs."

Below: Photo courtesy of Brian Hall, taken at the Atlanta Color Run. For photos of the Portland Color Run (unavailable at press time), visit www.child-aid.org/color-run-portland or our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/childaidliteracy.



The Music of Opportunity

This month, ten teenage musicians from a small town in Guatemala will have the opportunity of a lifetime. They will board a plane and fly to North Carolina to perform at the 35th annual Lake Eden Arts Festival (LEAF), in the town of Black Mountain.

For the Guatemalan teens, who are rarely able to leave their community of El Tejar, let alone Guatemala, this is a chance to see the world. It's also an opportunity to meet kids their age from another country and to apply what they've learned through a unique Child Aid-backed music program.

Since 1998, Child Aid has partnered with a small Guatemalan nonprofit called FUNDIT, which operates a community-wide educational program in the brickmaking town of El Tejar. Child Aid and its funders provide scholarships, reading programs, a community library and training for local teachers. Thanks to generous funding and involvement from LEAF, combined with support from our longtime supporter PEG Partners, we also provide a unique music program for local youth.

"For children growing up in extreme poverty," says Sam Hendricks, Child Aid's Executive Director, "learning a musical instrument not only builds confidence and enhances learning, it brings joy to lives that are defined by struggle. Thanks to LEAF, we're helping kids build self-esteem and critical life skills through music."

LEAF International partnered with Child Aid in 2010, and has since funded the expansion and improvement of the music program in El Tejar. PEG Partners has been a Child Aid partner since 2006.



Children in El Tejar, Guatemala, perform a guitar recital as part of a unique music program operated by FUNDIT, a local Child Aid partner.

CORAL Hearing Center Reaches More Remote Villages

Founded by Child Aid in 1988, the CORAL Hearing Center in Oaxaca, Mexico, is now testing and screening more children than ever. This year, it expanded its Early Detection Program, a field program designed to get CORAL audiologists and hearing specialists into remote communities, where they administer hearing tests to infants and toddlers living in poverty. Through the program, CORAL screened and tested children in 28 rural villages, increasing the total number of hearing screenings by 66 percent. As a result, over 2,500 people (most of them children under six) were tested. Those who were detected with hearing loss were referred to CORAL's clinic and/or therapy program for additional treatment and support.

Child Aid's special projects remove barriers to creative learning.



Inside CORAL's hearing clinic in Oaxaca, Mexico, a therapist works with a child who has severe hearing loss in both ears.

When Child Aid was founded 24 years ago, our first project was to bring these kinds of services to deaf and hearing impaired people in Oaxaca, one of the poorest regions of Mexico. This work included the fitting and distribution of hearing aids for people who, without them, were living lives of isolation and alienation.

Over the years, the program grew into CORAL, a full-fledged speech and hearing center. Although it is now an independent organization, CORAL still receives significant support and guidance from Child Aid.

"We are proud to sponsor the only hearing center for poor families in southern Mexico," said Nancy Press, Child Aid's cofounder, "This work makes a profound difference in the lives of people who have nowhere else to turn."

Student Teacher Program Triples in Size

This year, Child Aid partnered with two more indigenous vocational schools and is now training over 240 young, Mayan men and women to teach and promote reading in remote villages. Students at these schools come from some of Guatemala's poorest communities. The majority of them plan to return to their homes as teachers, where they will bring the gift of literacy to children who have few opportunities. For these young teachers-to-be, we believe our work builds authority, experience and confidence they can carry into their future work with children.



Child Aid partners with three vocational boarding schools for young indigenous men and women in Guatemala. Two are for women, one is for men.

How You Can Help

- Sponsor a village by asking family, colleagues and friends to help you bring our *Reading for Life* program to a specific community. We'll connect you to a village and provide updates and photos.
- Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/childaid-literacy and invite your friends.
- Donate at www.child-aid.org. Your gift makes a lasting difference.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Eruption Brings Concern from Supporters

Dear Friends,

Last month, central Guatemala was rocked by the worst volcanic eruption in nearly forty years. When Volcán de Fuego blew on September 13th, more than 30,000 people were evacuated. In several communities where we work, families tensely waited to see if they'd be forced from their homes by ash and debris. Fortunately, no one was killed, and our field staff soon returned to their work in area schools and libraries.

But news of the eruption resonated with me for reasons other than the dramatic nature of the event. On that day, our U.S. office received calls and emails from supporters and friends concerned about the safety of our staff and of the children we work with. They asked about the impact of the eruption on particular schools and libraries, and wondered how the event might affect our ability to continue our work in nearby villages.

For these supporters, the eruption wasn't just a passing news item. It was an event that affected real people who they've come to know and care about through our work. And to these supporters, Child Aid is not just another charity. It is a group of dedicated people working to create positive change under extremely challenging conditions.

I marvel at the sense of community we've managed to build, despite the fact that our donors are thousands of miles away from the distant towns and villages they support. It's a community created around the shared belief that children who live in these places are just as important as children anywhere. For the people we serve in Guatemala, that belief, and the existence of this community, is life changing. Thank you for being a part of it.

Sincerely,

Sam Hendricks
Executive Director



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Two K'iché Mayan children who have participated in Child Aid's Reading for Life program for three years.



LITERACY, EDUCATION, OPPORTUNITY



In the village of Tzantinit, a girl reads a storybook provided by Child Aid. Storybooks are rare in rural Guatemala.

What We Do

Child Aid works with indigenous people in some of Latin America's poorest communities to create opportunity and alleviate poverty. We deliver thousands of books to rural Guatemalan schools and libraries and offer scholarships to children who need them most. We provide extensive training for teachers and librarians and bring reading programs into the lives of thousands of poor children. We also provide therapy, support and schooling for deaf and hard of hearing children in one of Mexico's poorest regions.

Giving for the Future

Legacy gifts ensure the future of our *Reading for Life* program, enabling us to continue our vital work with children, teachers and librarians. Members of our Legacy Society make a lasting difference by providing children with the skills and resources they need to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. If you are interested in including Child Aid in your estate planning, we'd like to hear from you. Please call 503-223-3008 or email legacy@child-aid.org.

Travel with Child Aid

Our 2013 travel dates are set! From March 3–8, we will host a small group of Child Aid supporters in Guatemala, offering them the chance to see our program in action firsthand. Participants will travel to partner communities, visit cultural sites, meet Child Aid's Guatemala team and more. If you'd like to join us, please email travel@child-aid.org.