

PROGRAM UPDATE — WINTER, 2013

More Village Schools Join Reading for Life

A few weeks ago, a young teacher in the village of El Naranjo, Guatemala began her first day of the school year. Like many of her colleagues, she went to work in a bare bones classroom crowded with children. She has only the most meager supplies on hand and just a few useable books for her students. And with only a high school diploma herself, she has had no effective training to help her realize her potential as a teacher.

LITERACY Education Opportunity This month, that's about to change. We're launching our three-year *Reading for Life* program in El Naranjo. For the school's seven teachers, we'll provide one-on-one training in literacy education, demonstrate new teaching techniques, provide materials and curriculum, and make sure each child has inspiring books to read and enjoy.

Your support is making our work in El Naranjo possible.

With the success of several village schools that graduated from our three-year training program in 2012, we are now bringing our literacy program to 18 new schools in 2013. In all, we'll be working in 52 villages, helping nearly 10,000 children build reading and learning skills.

Local Police Called In (To Help Children Learn to Read)

Thanks to her Child Aid-led training last year, librarian Ivonne Barrientos arranged for her library in the village of Tzumpango to host *Adventures in Reading*, Child Aid's school-break literacy program, for the very first time. With a surprising 600 kids showing up to take part in the program (she expected around 100 to enroll), Ivonne reached out to the community for extra help. She found support from an unlikely place – Tzumpango's police force. The town sent their officers to help lead small groups of children in reading activities. Our *Reading for Life* staff did a brief on-the-spot training for the police, and the sessions went very well. Despite initial fears that the officers might scare the children, the police presence actually helped build bridges of trust between the children, their families and the community. Though a challenge to work with so many children, the entire community pulled together to help Tzumpango's kids improve their reading skills.

Child Aid Creates College Fund for Guatemalan Staff

How common is a college degree in Guatemala? Nationwide, less than 2% of the population is able to move beyond high school. That staggering statistic is due to the fact that – with the vast majority of the



Girls share some of their favorite books in the village of Santa Catarina Palopó.



Literacy Promoter Jorge Sanum Buch reads with some girls in the village of Xojolá.



Boys participate in a reading and writing activity in the village of Chocol.

country's population living in poverty – and even middle class families struggling to meet basic needs – higher education is usually no more than a pipe dream for those who can't afford to go. We want something different for our literacy staff – those who are working every day to bring educational opportunity to young children. Last year we started a program that provides significant tuition support to our employees who haven't yet earned their degree. We're proud that five members of our staff are going to college in 2013 with the help of Child Aid's Educational Assistance Fund.

"My family sacrificed a lot for me to finish high school. Because of Child Aid, my family's dream of seeing me get my college degree as a certified middle school teacher is coming true," says literacy promoter Jorge Sanum Buch.

While the program has a profound impact on the lives of our staff members, there's also a big benefit to the children we serve. Our college educated trainers are able to bring advanced skills and more confidence to their work in dozens of schools and libraries.

U.S. Volunteers Transform a Guatemalan School

After the hammering stopped and paint dried, a group of volunteers took a moment to look upon their finished work from a week-long project to improve a school in the Lake Atitlán community of Santa Catarina Palopó, Guatemala.

Last November, a group from Portland, Oregon continued their annual tradition of traveling to Guatemala as Child Aid volunteers. Banding together as the self-described "Guatever Works Team," this group of 14 retired teachers, librarians and education enthusiasts dedicated their time, labor and talent to a number of hands-on projects. They built bookshelves for use in schools and libraries, and worked with local teachers to repaint the school – home to over 400 students. Together with teachers, administrators, and some very determined kids, the school was truly transformed by the end of the week.

Thousands of Books Reach Remote Communities

Thanks to a huge donation from International Book Project and several U.S. publishers, we shipped over 50,000 Spanish-language children's books to Guatemala late last year. This month, our staff is continuing the distribution of those books to remote libraries and schools in over 50 towns and villages. Every week we continue to deliver more books to the classrooms our trainers visit. Most of the schools we work with start the year with far fewer books than they need for their students.

"The books we provide give teachers the tools to promote reading, and they give students new ideas and the inspiration to write," says Dr. John van Keppel, Child Aid's National Director in Guatemala. He adds, "Without these books, teachers wouldn't have the most basic tools they need to help students learn.



Child Aid volunteers from Portland, Oregon build a bookshelf for a school in the village of Santa Catarina Palopó.



Trucks deliver shipments of new books to be sent to rural libraries and schools.

What We Do

Child Aid's mission is to create opportunity for Latin America's rural and indigenous poor through childhood literacy programs. We help thousands of children learn to read, and provide effective, ongoing literacy training to hundreds of rural teachers and librarians. We also distribute tens of thousands of Spanish-language children's books to partner schools and libraries in impoverished communities throughout Guatemala.



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