Dear Child Aid Family,
As many of you know, Rick and I began what is now Child Aid over 20 years ago. Our simple but deeply held belief was that it was not talent but opportunity that was trapping generation after generation of children in poverty.

In this Report, we have focused on our rapidly expanding Guatemalan Literacy Program. While Child Aid continues to devote a great deal of our efforts to working closely with our Affiliated Partners, we thought that by focusing on Child Aid’s expanding work in Literacy, we could give you, our supporters, a bit of insight into how we structure our work from the beginning with all our partners.

What you will see in this Annual Report is the almost geometric impact that occurs when one person or a small group of committed individuals is given the knowledge and resources to succeed. One person can literally end up bettering the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, for years to come. These stories are not the result of a one-shot project, but the result of an ongoing commitment to the librarians and teachers to help them acquire the skills, knowledge and resources they thirst for.

While Child Aid’s partnerships take many forms, all are based on bringing resources and skills to committed and motivated local people. Whether it be hearing aids, scholarships, books, trainings or financial assistance, the resources would matter little in the long run absent our dedicated local partners. We thank you and we thank them for partnering with Child Aid to help give every child a chance, regardless of the economic circumstances or location of their birth.

Best regards,

Nancy Press, Ph.D.
Board President

Dear Friends,
This is a year of tremendous opportunity for Child Aid. Through the hard work of our staff and partners, Child Aid is positioned to provide opportunity and a brighter future to thousands more children. Child Aid continues to do this with a careful eye on overhead so that we can make sure that over 90% of support goes directly into programs.

Child Aid can do this because even our small United States staff focuses much of its work on program development and travels frequently to Guatemala and Mexico. We also have numerous volunteer professionals who pay their own expenses and donate their time and expertise freely to help those less fortunate.

Without our donors’ financial support, none of the progress you read about would be possible. Without funding, there can be no work. Thousands of children would never hold a book, hundreds of scholarship students would never go to school, and thousands of poor children would receive no hearing services.

I think you will see in this report how Child Aid is accomplishing tremendous things with your help. We are humbled and grateful for the support you have given us. We will continue to focus on working efficiently and effectively to make sure that every dollar we receive has the greatest impact possible. As we at Child Aid often say, no big offices or fancy trappings, just dedicated and committed hard work focused on giving every child the chance they deserve.

Sincerely,

Richard T. Carroll, Ph.D.
CEO
Creating Lasting Opportunities

With its ancient Mayan ruins, smoking volcanoes and colorfully dressed indigenous people, Guatemala is one of Latin America’s most fascinating countries. In stark contrast to its incredible beauty, however, stands its tremendous poverty, poverty that has kept the poor of Guatemala trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of deprivation. At the root of this cycle is an educational system that prevents children from having any chance at acquiring the skills needed to improve their lives. Classrooms have no books, libraries, if they exist, have few useful books, and primary school teachers are mostly untrained high school graduates. Not surprisingly, given this recipe for failure,

- Only 42% of children enrolled finish elementary school.
- Only 24% of children finish middle school.
- Just 9% of those enrolled finish high school.
- In some areas, as many as 75% of the women cannot read or write.

As a result, Guatemala ranks lower on the UN’s Human Development Index than any other country in Central America. The vast majority of children behind these sad statistics are rural, indigenous Guatemalans, children with bright minds, limitless energy and vast potential. Due to Guatemala’s utterly impoverished school system, however, their talents and capabilities are rarely unleashed.

We believe education is far and away the most powerful, sustainable, economically efficient means of creating real opportunity for Guatemala’s children and their communities. It can break the cycle of poverty for good. But if you cannot read beyond the simplest of words, education will remain unattainable. It is for this reason that Child Aid works to create community libraries, train rural teachers and librarians and implement reading programs in communities throughout Guatemala. These communities desperately want better for their children but are confronted with an educational system that offers little hope.

Please read this Report and see how this recipe for failure is being changed.
A library should be like a pair of open arms.
~ Roger Rosenblat, Journalist

Needs!

- 50% support for librarian’s annual salary
- $500 stipend for student library assistant
- $300 computer for cataloguing
- $100 materials for physical improvement of library
Blanca Estela Esquina Alvarado de Montufar is the small dynamo librarian in Chichacao, Guatemala, a town of 48,000 people. She is a textbook example of what can happen when the drive and passion of a local individual is coupled with the training and resources that Child Aid offers. In just 2 years she has worked with her community to change a miniscule library filled with largely useless books into one that is a vibrant center of learning. A library that

- is fully catalogued,
- is over 3 times larger than the previous library,
- has lending programs for both children and adults,
- helped get reading into the classroom of 1400 students,
- has over 1300 users a month,
- has a vacation reading program that had to turn children away for lack of space,
- provides scholarships to students who assist in the library.

In addition to all Blanca has accomplished locally, she has actively participated in library and teacher trainings to share her newly gained knowledge and skills with librarians and teachers from her own and other communities. This one person, with the active support of the local library committee, is changing the face of education and opportunity for the entire community. It demonstrates directly what one dedicated woman, one committed group and one community can do when simply given the tools to succeed. This is why we at Child Aid say it is about people not projects.

At Child Aid we start with a simple proposition: It is the people in a community who create real and lasting change for their community. Blanca is one of these people. How do we identify other Blancas? We find them during our library trainings and while conducting follow-ups to those trainings in communities throughout Guatemala. There are always standouts. Individuals who have an energy and passion for making their library and communities better. Individuals who have worked minor miracles with the sparsest of resources. Who often have worked for minimal or no pay, who have gotten on a bus at 4 in the morning, traveled for hours on multiple buses just to reach the trainings and who, using these same buses, do not get home until 10 at night. They do this not for money but for the desire for knowledge, knowledge that will improve their skills and make their libraries better places for children to learn. Places that will give the children of their community a chance to have books, a space to do homework and, simply, a book to read. This chance would otherwise not exist.

What Child Aid brings to these committed people is resources and training. However, these are never just handouts. Rather, we work closely from the beginning of every partnership to help communities create a plan, a plan that looks to local resources, both material and human, and helps communities empower themselves. While we bring in books and shelving, help with cataloging, and help create lending programs, we always stress that it is a partnership. We will help, but it will always be their and their communities’ efforts that will create lasting success.
Books, to the reading child, are so much more than books – they are dreams and knowledge, they are a future, and a past.

~ Esther Meynell, mid-20th century novelist

Needs!

- $10,000 to ship $800,000 worth of donated books to Guatemala
- $5,000 to distribute books to communities throughout Guatemala
- $1500 to build a children’s reading area in a rural community library
- $500 to purchase needed reference books for a library
- $150 for a set of bookshelves
Success: The Melotto Library

Imagine a library.

Now imagine a cold, cement-block building with concrete floors, gray walls and two dilapidated bookshelves crammed into a corner, sagging beneath the weight of a hundred or so useless, musty old books. For the students at the Melotto School, a primary school for the poorest children of Chimaltenango, Guatemala, that cold, ugly library was reality.

Dismal as the library was, we saw tremendous potential when we visited: The structure was sound and had plenty of space for shelves and tables. The school’s director was passionate about the children, and the community was eager to get involved. Only one thing was lacking: resources.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Child Aid was able to partner with the local community and supply the resources it needed. We provided funds to hire local woodworkers to build bookshelves and tables. Locals and volunteers worked side by side to paint the walls and patch the leaky old roof. Child Aid supported the salary of a new librarian and provided the training she needed. We helped her establish a lending program – a rarity in Guatemala – so the children could bring books home to their families, families who could never afford to purchase books on their own.

The success of the Melotto library has been extraordinary. Not only do the poorest children in Chimaltenango have access to books and year-round reading programs, but the local community, including an active parents’ group, are fully committed to keeping that library alive.

Our Method: Step Two

We believe that the very best way to give poor children a brighter shot at the future is by empowering their community through literacy. Child Aid does this not by going in, dumping books and leaving. Rather, we provide resources through a process of partnership.

What are those resources?

In 2008, Child Aid delivered over $1 million in donated books to Guatemala. We are currently distributing them to over 30 community libraries throughout the country and getting them into classrooms that previously had no books. We provide funds for materials so communities can turn dismal spaces like the old Melotto library into cheerful, welcoming places of learning. We bring in volunteers to help librarians with cataloging, an imperative part of establishing a lending program.

Through all of this, the most rewarding part of the process for us is the community involvement, whether in the form of locals stepping in to help refurbish buildings on their own time, or parents forming committees and holding local fundraisers.

Only through the generosity of Child Aid’s donors can we get desperately needed resources – books, materials, shelves, tables, chairs, paint and more – to the communities we partner with. And only by providing those resources in the true spirit of partnership, not a top-down, we-call-the-shots relationship, will the impact of those resources endure. Because we do precisely this, the libraries we help create are truly sustainable.
"Education is a human right with immense power to transform. On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustainable human development.

~ Kofi Annan
Secretary General, UN

Needs!

- $3,500 to provide training to 30 rural teachers
- $500 for follow-up and onsite training for each group of teachers
- $300 to provide a shelf of books to a teacher's classroom
Through her passion for teaching, María Ines Guerra brings the transformative power of reading into the lives of children every day. She’s an energetic primary school teacher and has participated in the first series of Child Aid’s teacher training program. Through the program she is acquiring teaching skills she otherwise would never have received.

María’s love of children and unshakable dedication to teaching makes her the type of individual we seek to empower through our teacher trainings. Most importantly, María knows the tremendous importance of reading. “Through reading,” she says, “the children can improve their work skills. They are going to acquire values… They learn, and this learning is for life, not just for the moment, but for all of their life.” Could there be a greater investment?

By giving individuals like María the resources they need, Child Aid helps undertrained teachers reach their fullest potential. And when an inspired teacher has access to a good library with a trained librarian, she can teach children to read and conduct research not just with competency but with a mind that thirsts for knowledge. “With the library,” María explains, “more fertile terrain has opened up, so to say. It’s been of great use because now the children are not simply left with what we gave them. Rather, they go out and explore. They seek out further knowledge.”

For Child Aid, it’s all about reach. María is just one of hundreds of teachers who make their way to our teacher trainings on their own time and their own dollar. Arm one teacher like María with more powerful teaching skills impacts the hundreds of children she teaches throughout her career.

In rural Guatemala, a good library can empower an entire community – provided its children can read. Who teaches a child to read? Teachers do.

On a recent visit to a rural school in Las Canoas, we spoke with a fourth grade teacher who told us that only four of his 23 students could read effectively. Why is the situation in Guatemala so bad? Schools in rural areas, which comprise most of the country, are horrendously underfunded, and teachers rarely have anything beyond a high school education. Most teachers have received little if any teacher training, and certainly no training in how to teach reading.

Child Aid provides teacher trainings in poor, rural communities so that teachers can gain the knowledge and skills they need – and want – in order to bring reading into the classroom.

- Child Aid’s teacher trainings span three daylong sessions, reach hundreds of teachers and impact thousands of children.
- After the trainings, Child Aid sends staff to teachers’ classrooms for six one-on-one follow-up sessions; these are critical in ensuring teachers are truly able to apply their new skills and have all questions answered.
- Our trainings focus on active reading, comprehension, retention and research.
- Teachers learn, for the very first time, how to create lesson plans.
- Child Aid helps teachers implement school-year and summertime reading programs.

We conducted our very first teacher training in 2007 and today, because word has spread about the value of what we teach, we cannot meet the demand from communities. This year we plan to conduct 14 teacher training sessions for up to 400 teachers. The skills acquired by these 400 teachers will benefit, in just one year, a total of 13,000 children. So, you can see the immediate and ongoing impact is truly vast.
We are coming to realize... that there is a certain sterility in economic monuments that stand alone in a sea of illiteracy. Conquest of illiteracy comes first.

The Children

Nikte Ixkik Cun Canun and Raxchel Cun Canun are sisters. They are sweet and very close – so close that Nikte, who is 5 years older, would accompany her sister Raxchel to the vacation reading program for younger readers and assist the teacher with the children. Nikte and Raxchel began in one of our reading programs two years ago. When we were able to help get a lending program started at the library, both girls were enormously excited to be able to, for the first time, take a book home to read. They have since devoured nearly every available book: Raxchel filled up over three checkout cards worth of books, and Nikte, after running out of books to read has begun to reread her favorites. In November, the girls again returned to the vacation reading program, and Nikte once again acted as an assistant to the librarian. Nikte’s only wish was that there might be more books for her to take out.

Raxchel and Nikte are not middle class children but children from an extremely poor background who, prior to our working with this community, would never have had a book in their home.

Their father, Carlos Rafael, must travel over 4 hours each day to find work in Guatemala City to support his family. Their mother, Doña María, loves the fact that reading has made her daughters such good students that they are now both on the Honor Roll at school. She says now, rather than simply idling around when chores are finished, they read the books they’ve brought home from the library. She is hoping that someday they can become professionals and help others in their community. These are just two examples of the thousands of children whose lives are enriched each year.

Our Method: Final Step

Creating lasting change does not happen over night. It takes commitment. This is why it is so important to partner with individuals in each community who have been there for generations and will be there for many more. These individuals are deeply invested in improving the lives of their children and their community. Their newly acquired knowledge and skills will strengthen the community and impact generations to come.

Building a skill and knowledge base is like building a bridge across a river. It provides the path to a better life and the means to bring a larger world into the present and the future. When it comes to libraries, we have seen impressive buildings that offer little to students in the community and we have seen libraries in small rented spaces that are exciting centers of learning. The difference between them is people. It is not about architecture but impact.

With our partners throughout Guatemala Child Aid is helping communities create bridges of knowledge for literally tens of thousands of children that will allow them to cross into a brighter future. One of the most amazing aspects of our work is that it occurs largely by word of mouth. We do not advertise or spend resources seeking out specific locales. People hear of us, come to our trainings and then ask for our help with creating a better future for their children and their community. Unfortunately, the demand exceeds our resources – and this is where our supporters are critical.

Hopefully we have made clear the enormous and far-reaching impact your support can have on the lives of children like Nikte and Raxchel. By contributing to Child Aid, your impact grows exponentially and will last not for just a year but for a lifetime – and for generations to come.
Affiliated Partners

Affiliated Partners are entities that we have worked with for many years to assist to become independent. Our present direct involvement and level of support varies but the overriding goal is the same: to help these entities exist as programatically and financially independent organizations.
CORAL

 Begun by Child Aid in 1988, CORAL (the Oaxacan Center for Rehabilitation of Hearing and Speech) is a nonprofit health center located in Oaxaca, Mexico. It provides low-cost hearing aids, services and programs to hearing-impaired and deaf children living in extreme poverty. CORAL works to fully integrate deaf children into their families and communities so that they may lead richer lives and have greater opportunities. Without CORAL, literally thousands of hearing impaired and deaf children would grow up in an alienating world of partial or complete deafness.

2008: A Year of Transformation
Thanks to our supporters, 2008 was a year of tremendous change and accomplishment at CORAL. All of CORAL’s facilities were greatly improved and the new General Coordinator, Saul Fuentes Olivares, brought the management of CORAL to a level of professionalism that CORAL had never experienced. With these changes CORAL is now perfectly positioned to identify and treat more children than ever in the years to come.

2008: Accomplishments

- CORAL provided treatment to 1,254 hearing impaired patients.
- As part of its Social Work Program, CORAL personnel visited 1,139 clients and their families in communities, homes and schools throughout Oaxaca in order to conduct studies and assist with client integration into normal everyday life.
- CORAL expanded its work with SEDESOL, the local government agency that supports nursery schools for children from poor backgrounds, to provide testing to 542 children at 25 different nursery schools.
- In addition to its work with SEDESOL, CORAL continued its community and health center testing, performing 1,110 studies at 24 different locations.

Thank You!
None of CORAL’s accomplishments would have been possible without the thoughtful and generous support of our donors and the hard work of dedicated local individuals. CORAL is a testament to what can be accomplished when local groups and individuals are given the support to improve the lives of their children and their communities. Child Aid and CORAL have ambitious plans for 2009 which will continue the growing professionalization and reach of all its programs. With your support, we can continue this amazing partnership that gives so many children the gift of hearing for the first time.
Monica Azucena Patzan’s father died when she was seven. She and her five siblings were raised by her mother, who earned about $5.50 per day selling handmade tortillas and carrying giant piles of firewood down from the mountainsides to sell in El Tejar, Guatemala. When she had time, Monica’s mother made and sold chuchitos (a type of tamale) for extra income.

For the most part, Monica’s childhood was hardly extraordinary – in fact, for Guatemala, it was quite ordinary: Most children in rural Guatemala grow up in similar conditions of extreme poverty. Although public education is technically free, excessive costs (primarily for uniforms, shoes and materials) and an underfunded school system make enrollment low and dropout rates high.

Something extraordinary did happen in Monica’s life, however. She received scholarships that allowed her to study all the way through high school. Once she graduated, she committed herself to giving back to her mother and her community. She felt the best way to do both was to become a teacher’s assistant at CEDIN, the Child Aid-funded, Montessori-type preschool near El Tejar. Not only does working here allow her to help her mother financially, but it allows her to impact the lives of children like herself who would otherwise not have a chance at an education. She wants to help give them the opportunities she was so fortunate to receive. Monica’s work at CEDIN also allows her to attend university in nearby Antigua on weekends, and every Saturday she takes one more step toward realizing her dream of becoming a certified teacher at CEDIN.

When she receives her degree, this dream will come true. Her incredible spirit and love of children makes her a natural teacher, and she will be a great benefit to the school, the children and the community. Your support of our partnership with FUNDIT (the organization that operates CEDIN), is what will bring this special young woman into the lives of hundreds of children and help them create and realize their dreams.
PROBIGUA

PROBIGUA and its founder Rigoberto Zamora Charuc were Child Aid’s first partners in Guatemala. In more than 15 years of our ongoing partnership, we have worked together to establish small libraries and computer centers in over 26 communities. In communities where there are no libraries, we worked with PROBIGUA to obtain funding and support for two mobile libraries that visit a myriad of small communities on a weekly basis. Child Aid continues to work closely with PROBIGUA on book distribution, library support and its organizational development. Many of the libraries that we now partner with directly through trainings and resource development began as PROBIGUA libraries. PROBIGUA is now focusing more of its present efforts on a large project in Rigoberto’s home community of Yepocapa at a local school and library that Child Aid continues to support.

PROBIGUA Language School
Child Aid helped Rigo establish a Spanish Language School in Antigua. The school provides low cost, one on one instruction along with family home stays. In addition to providing employment for the teachers, all of the profits from the school are used to support Rigo’s work with rural communities. When students finished their Spanish language studies at the school and return home, they can continue to takes lessons from the same teacher over the internet through low cost one-on-one lessons using SpeakShop. A portion of the fee goes to support PROBIGUA and the rest provides income to the local instructor, another win-win situation.

“Your parents were given arms to fight for the right to be free, today we are giving you books to do the same.”
~ Rigoberto Zamora Charuc, founder of PROBIGUA, to a group of Guatemalan school children
Child Aid Allocation of Funds

Child Aid is a Four Star Charity with Charity Navigator, the nation’s leading independent evaluator of charities. www.charitynavigator.org

Overall Rating
Organizational Efficiency
Program Expenses 94.5%
Administrative Expenses 3.1%
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Fundraising Efficiency $0.02

Efficiency Rating

Organizational Capacity
Primary Revenue Growth 28.4%
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(Charity Navigator’s 2008 ratings do not become available until fall of 2009.)
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