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## July 2022 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

In June, Greg Mihalevich and Larry Lewis made the trip to Merida. In most newsletters you hear us speak about miracles that occur on our visits to the Yucatan. This one has a miracle that starts with us at the airport in Miami, Florida. About 15 minutes before we were scheduled to board our final connecting flight to Merida, American Airlines canceled the flight. The plane was sitting at the gate and our two suitcases filled with eyeglasses were already on board.



There were 4 or 5 of us standing at the gate counter trying to find out why our flight was cancelled, but no one from American Airlines was around to tell us anything. One of people in our group was Willy, a middle-aged man who was trying to get back to his home in Merida from a business trip in the U.S. Willy tells us that there is only one American Airlines flight per day from Miami to Merida, but there are several to Cancun every day. He also explains that it is a 4-hour drive by car or a 6-hour bus ride to Merida from there. Willy says he plans to fly to Cancun then somehow

make his way home to Merida. We ask if we can join him, and he graciously invites us to tag along.

We check the departures board and see a flight to Cancun leaving from a nearby gate in 30 minutes. We hoofed it over to the gate and all three of us got tickets for that flight.

Willy tells us that the company he works for has a couple of rental car franchises in Merida. He makes a phone call and finds out that one of their rental cars is at the Cancun airport and needs to be returned to Merida. Turns out we will be doing the rental company a favor by bringing their car back for them.

So we fly to Cancun with a total stranger from Mexico, get into his rental car and head for Merida. During the 4-hour drive we explained to him what the Merida Foundation does in and around Merida. He said that his company encourages their employees do charitable works in their local areas and that maybe he could arrange to have some of his employees assist as a charitable contribution.

Larry started talking about some of the needs that Escuela Hogar has without mentioning Escuela Hogar by name. Larry was just about finished when he mentioned Escuela Hogar by name. Well that sparked a whole new conversation. When Willy was in Junior High and High School, he, along with others from his class, would visit Escuela Hogar to interact with the boys attending school there. Now he was inspired to contact Escuela Hogar to see how his company could possibly help them out.



Then that 4-hour drive got shorter. Willy told us that one of his daughters has a full ride scholarship as a high jumper for the MIZZOU track and field team and the family rides Amtrak to Jefferson City when they fly into St. Louis for visits. Could this be happenstance or is it fate? As Escuela Hogar's Fr. Victor would say it's "Providencia." We choose to take the word of a total stranger and put our faith and trust in him to get us to Merida. Willy is our best friend now!

Since our luggage (the 1,000 pairs of glasses) was in the "care" of American Airlines for the next two days we decided to spend our time visiting the schools



that we provide food for. The next morning at breakfast we decided which schools we had not visited in a while and were off to the first one in Telchaquillo. The principal was in Merida attending a meeting so Esther, one of the teachers, showed us around. As you can see from the picture the school is well kept. They were teaching the kids about plants and

vegetables and were growing several of them in the school yard.

After spending some time with the kids and the teachers we headed off to the next school at Pixya. The principal was there, and we visited with her and her staff. It was mealtime when we arrived, and the kids were being served food at each one's desk. The food was prepared at the site which now has a new kitchen but there is no water in the building, and they must carry water from another building on site. They are going to provide Luis with a cost estimate to install a water line, storage tank, sink, and drain line for the new kitchen. We agreed to pay for it if the estimate is reasonable.



From Pixya we returned to Merida to visit Gabriela at Emmanuel community center. Gabby, as she wants to be called, serves children in an afterschool setting where they prepare a package of food that is sent home with the kids when they are picked up. She also serves approximately 30 senior adults. This, too, is in a send-home package. We currently provide \$500 USD to Emmanuel each month to help fund their operation.

Next, we went back to Escuela Hogar to check how the Orphanage was doing. They first showed us the newly furnished computer lab that the foundation had helped fund. The boys are very proud of their new "digs". Each boy came to us to shake our hands. After all the hand shaking was done, the boys left so Fr. Victor and Jaime could talk to us about their other plans for the orphanage and how they want us to assist them. They have many special projects. Some need

attention now and some can be dealt with later as they increase the enrollment. Some of the projects are ones that only require Habitat-for-Humanity-type skills such as installing toilet and shower stalls and installing LED light fixtures. If you are interested in helping, we can arrange for you to volunteer your skills, meet the boys, and maybe relax a little.

After we finally got our glasses back from the airline, we spent the next three days providing many people, old and young, with better vision. In Ixil we set up in a park and had a steady line of people for about 2 ½ hours. It was hot and as the sun got higher so did the temperature. Eventually the line disappeared, and we were the only ones left in the heat, so we disappeared, too. The next day was similar. We had steady traffic, but it was slower than usual. In the first two days we served about 300 people total. Our last day was totally different. We set up in the larger village of Hunucmá and we hardly had time to take a sip of water. The crowd doubled the length of the lines the previous days. It was fun to be helping them find a pair of glasses that would enrich their lives.

It was a wonderful trip. With you as our partners, we were able, once again, to help the villagers see better and their children to eat better. Thank you for helping us keep Dorothy's vision alive when forty-plus years ago she saw a need and acted upon that need in a simple gesture of handing out a few pair of used eyeglasses. We couldn't do it without you.



Larry Lewis & Greg Mihalevich  
For the Merida Foundation Board

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