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December 2022

Dear Friends,

Anne Scott, Larry Lewis, and Larry's friend Sue Higgins were in Merida Nov 12-19. WOW!!! What a week! Luis retired, Sandro took on more responsibility and we brought Seidy Gutierrez on as a fulltime employee. We visited all eight rural schools in our nutrition program as well as Emmanuel and Escuela Hogar, our partners in the city.



We will miss Luis as he has been involved with our founder Dorothy Lemke and then with the Merida Foundation for more than 40 years. He was Dorothy's-cabby and guide on her first trip to Merida and then joined the Foundation as it's only employee when it was formed in 2003. He knows a story about each trip, where we delivered glasses, and which villages needs to be re-visited.

Most importantly he has been a friend and supporter of the Foundation. We wish him well in his retirement.

Sandro has accepted our offer to expand his role with the Foundation. He is committed to, not only delivering food and working with our existing partners but helping us to expand the services we provide.

Sandro has warm and serene way about him, a good and growing command of English, a youthful enthusiasm for the work, and has developed a real skill at fitting glasses. We are so grateful that he accepted our offer to join us full time and excited about what this can mean for the foundation.

We met with Seidy to invite her to a new position with the Foundation. Seidy is a nutritionist and has done some work for the foundation on a contractual basis. Part of her duties will be to develop a "nutritional education" program for the parents of our school kids, teaching them basic nutrition and demonstrating how to feed their family a better diet.

We have contracted with her to develop this program before the first of February when her employment begins. We are eager to



get this going because it will further benefit our kids and have a greater impact on the community. Seidy will also work with Sandro to deliver food.



Our goal for this trip was to focus specifically on the Foundation's nutrition efforts. During the pandemic, we had little success in getting food out to the villages and to the children. Now all restrictions have been lifted and we can really get our work done!

During our week in Merida, we started each school day at 6:30 to get to SAM'S to purchase groceries for two schools. Our first school was Xcanhakan where we met Principal Ana. We asked her if she had any special needs. She told us that if they could get 1,500 pesos for an internet connection, the parents will pay the monthly fee. She also mentioned that she needed help to buy a Christmas gift for each child as many would not receive a gift at Christmas. That was 2,700 pesos and, trusting the generosity of our friends back home, we gave her the money for both.

At Sabacché, Principal Ilse told us that during the pandemic that the tableware and pots and pans “walked away.” They needed to be replaced and she provided us with a list of the items. That afternoon we went shopping for those items and delivered them on Wednesday.

We visited Emmanuel where our friend Gabby currently feeds 67 kids in her aftercare program plus 42 senior citizens. She told us her roof was leaking. She will get us a bid to see if we can help with the repairs. She also has a plumbing issue that we may be able to finance.

Tuesday, we visited Cacalchén to deliver food. One of the teachers needed a large screen TV to use as a teaching tool. She had been using her personal laptop in her classroom. With the board's approval we purchased the TV and delivered it to the school on Thursday.

Our second stop on Tuesday was at Bokobá, our newest school. Principal, Elizabeth, told us that they were having a fundraiser Saturday to raise 8,000 pesos to start repairing the playground equipment. They expected to raise about 3,000 pesos and we offered to pay the difference. The fundraiser netted 3,500 pesos and we will provide 4,500 pesos or about \$225.





At Escuela Hogar, we were greeted by Fr. Victor, Fr. Anthony, Jaime Garza, and several of the boys including the newest and youngest at 6 years old. They brought us up to date on their progress with their projects.

On Wednesday we visited Telchaquillo. Principal Seidi informed us she needs a new stove and would like to get a microwave. She will send us a budget on the stove and microwave. We also left \$150 USD for Christmas gifts.

Next, we visited Pixya where Principal Ida showed us a library room that wasn't being used because it was too hot. She is going to use it as a classroom if she can get four fans. The cost 3,310.04 pesos for the fans and 1,400 pesos for the installation.

Principal Mayra at Petectunich, showed us the new playground equipment from the government. The problem is that it is metal sitting on a concrete slab which makes it too hot to use. They have asked if we could provide artificial grass to cover the concrete. The cost for the project is 21,500 pesos.



On Thursday at Yaxkukul, Principal Maxima pointed out how bad the playground was. Over the years the trees that provide a shaded area have caused the concrete to buckle which is now a hazard. This is beyond our means, but they were also in need of brackets and connecting cables for the 5 overhead projectors they have. We purchased these for \$325.

Thursday night we met with Willy Diaz, our new friend from our June trip. He brought Carlos Fernandez, the Social Service Coordinator for their company, Bepenza. Carlos coordinates projects to which Bepenza employees volunteer their time and labor. We invited Jamie Garza from Escuela Hogar to talk with Carlos. The initial meeting went very well, and plans were made for the two to meet soon at Escuela Hogar.



This was Sue's second trip and she commented: "I was overwhelmed at the number of young children in each of these eight villages we visited. I know this is the age when the proper balance of food can create a brain that can think and follow the curiosities of young children. I saw what the Foundation has been able to do. The children are so animated and excited to learn. At each village the teachers love the children and take such good care of each of them."

With the help of these teachers, we are now providing food for over 600 students. Most of these students come from poor families, but their schools are poor as well. By helping them with little things –like internet service or brackets for projectors, they are better able to utilize the educational resources available to them.

Through food and classroom projects, the Merida Foundation wants to help these kids get an education so they can be leaders and productive members of their communities, so that they can break this cycle of poverty.

But we need you. And we need you now. 2023 is going to be a year of big changes and even great possibility. We invite you to be a part of this by making the Merida Foundation a part of your Christmas giving. Your gift, large or small, is going to make a difference for some hungry kids. Please be generous.

Thank you for all your help in the past and we hope to rely on your continued generosity in the future.

Merry Christmas!

Anne, Sue & Larry

P.S. One more request. When you are finished with this newsletter, please pass it along to a friend or family member whom you think might be interested in our work.



Merida Foundation Founders

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