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Dear Friends,

Ixcán Ministries didn't plan to have a scholarship program. But in 2008 one by one young people alone or with their parents appeared at my door. They wanted to continue their studies but didn't have the finances to do so. Could I help? That year Ixcán Ministries helped fund education for a dozen students mainly at the Junior High level, some at the High School/Career level. Thus began our program.

Things have progressed since then. We formed a committee of five consisting of two women: Carmen Jimenez and Antonia Villatoro and three men: Samuel Raymundo (director of the Junior High School in Santiago Ixcán), Rafael Perez (primary school teacher) and Javier Gonzalez. We developed requirements, guidelines and service projects.



Since then our program has grown and each year it seems more and more young people are knocking on our door requesting a scholarship. Ixcán Ministries awarded the following scholarships for the 2015 school year: 17 recipients for the Junior High Level, 14 recipients for the High School Level and 3 recipients for the University Level. A total of **34** young people are being helped in their education process through our ministry.

Unemployment in Guatemala is high, especially in rural areas and small communities like ours where jobs apart from agriculture and construction are nonexistent. Opportunities for employment throughout the country are limited even for young people with degrees like teaching and accounting. In spite of all the obstacles we believe education is a way to better prepare young people for leadership in their communities, to gain employment to earn a living wage and to grow as persons.

Two young men, past beneficiaries of our scholarship program, come to mind.

Santos Baten Perez came to visit. He was excited. At 21 years old, he had recently been named secretary on the local governing committee for the *puesto de salud* (health clinic) in our village. This was his first appointment by the community to fulfill a leadership role. He came to thank me for the scholarship he had received back in 2011 when he graduated from Junior High school. He is so proud to use his education as he explained, “Ninth grade is very different from a Sixth grade education.” In this culture Santos is equipped academically for the responsibility of secretary on a committee. And he has no plans of leaving the village.



Santos' father is a farmer and is semi-handicapped. The oldest son, Santos is needed to plant and harvest the corn and beans that the family will survive on and also to grow the cardamom crop for cash. Moreover, he was married last year and he and Esperanza are expecting their first child.

Santos is a literate future leader of our community. "Now my education is being used to help my community! I am secretary of the committee!" he beamed.

Then there's 17- year old Manuel Baten Ixcoy. He is the oldest of six children in a household with his parents, Andres and Elena, and his grandmother and aunt.

Manuel took a different career path than the usual. He decided to go to cooking school rather than study for the usual college preparation degree or teaching and accounting careers. But his parents couldn't afford the entire cost of sending him to Cobán to realize this goal. Thus, he applied and was awarded a partial scholarship through our program. It was the economic help he and his father needed to move him forward.

Following eight months of training, Manuel earned a technical diploma in *cocinera regional* – regional cooking and landed a job at the Park Hotel, a four-star hotel outside of Cobán where he had done his practicum. Interestingly, he cooks German food at one of the three restaurants at the hotel. Manuel is happy to have employment and is learning new things. Moreover, his beginning wage is more money than most adults make in Santiago Ixcán. I know that he will be helping his family financially with some of his earnings.



Manuel's aspirations go beyond the Park Hotel. His dream is to continue his studies and earn a degree in Business Administration with a focus on tourism, hospitality and food service. His savings from this job will allow him to pay for future education costs.

During a recent visit I had with Manuel at his work he said, "The support from you all always helped me. Thank you."

These are two examples of the varied ways education is enhancing the lives of our scholarship recipients. Education is never wasted. It is an investment that lasts a lifetime.

Thank you for your support of Ixcán Ministries. If you have an interest in directly supporting education through our scholarship program please indicate on your donation.

May God continue to bless you and yours in this Easter Season as we journey toward Pentecost!

Sincerely,



Kathy Snyder

Mission Update: Kathy returned to Guatemala on March 16th and continues to walk with the people of the Ixcán in the joys and challenges of life there.

Kathy is posting on her blog as internet access allows. You can find

Reflections from the East Window on our website: www.ixcanministries.org.



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries provides a prayerful, pastoral presence through lay missionaries living in solidarity with the poor of the remote Ixcán jungle of Guatemala to learn from as well as to assist both spiritually and materially the people with whom life and ministry are shared. The organization strives to be a bridge between two cultures and nations allowing for the exchange of varying gifts between the rich and poor for the ultimate purpose of empowerment and transformation of lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible. You may contact us at:

Ixcán Ministries
PO Box 51
Mandan, ND 58554

Purchase Ixcán Creations products at:
Susie Q's 411 W. Main Mandan, ND
or on our webpage
ixcanministries.org

ixcan_ministries@yahoo.com
Marlane Peterson
(701) 663-3798