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Dear Friend,

On the 10th of every month approximately thirty women, some with babies at their breasts and toddlers trotting behind their skirts, swell into the mission house. The women are Maya jewelers and weavers who make up our microbusiness - Ixcán Creations. They come to pray.

The women understand while sitting at the loom weaving multi-colored scarves, shawls, and table runners, and laboring with beads, seeds, stones, and wire creating earrings and necklaces; that prayer is an integral and important part of their work. They attribute the success of Ixcán Creations to their prayers and hard work both in Guatemala and in the United States where another group of women inventories, markets, and sells their product.

Their growth from six to twenty-three jewelers and nine weavers plus the enhanced quality of their product over the years have impressed me and our U.S. team. Moreover, I have watched the majority of these humble women blossom in their self-esteem empowered by their ability in making beautiful jewelry and textiles that help sustain them and their families.

In Santiago Ixcán, a leadership team of elected members organizes, supervises, and manages the group. They have their own bank account in Playa Grande, write and cash checks, and pay each woman her earnings according to a list compiled and e-mailed from our U.S. accountant.

At their January payout, I was designated to pay the weavers their earnings. I know Ixcán Creations outreach makes a real difference in the lives of these women but that day showed me *how much* of a difference it is making.

Like in the case of weaver, Josefina Mendez.

Josefina sat before me in the mission house chapel while I reviewed the payout list. Her nine-month-old daughter peered with big dark eyes from behind her back wrapped tightly in a shawl; on her head jutted pigtails, one on each side. I knew Josefina's husband was an undocumented immigrant working in the U.S. and she was alone caring for five small children. Before telling her the amount of money she had earned, I asked,

"How are you doing financially?"

"Hermana, I have nothing! No corn, there is nothing in the house to eat! Ruben isn't working much and hasn't been able to send any money. The baby is too young for me to go out of the home and work! What am I going to do? Help me, God, I prayed! And then I got the call that our earnings had come!"

I looked at her and said, "Josefina, you made Q1550.00 (\$200.00)"

As I counted the bills placing them one by one before her on the desk, her eyes filled with tears.



"This is a miracle, Hermana! It is a great blessing! God is great! Thank you!"

Josefina's story moved me and I shared it with Marlane Peterson (former President of our board of directors and co-foundress of Ixcán Ministries) who at the time was in hospice.

Marlane loved this story.

I know this particular outreach of Ixcán Ministries was especially close to Marlane's heart. She worked tirelessly on the U.S. side of the bridge co-managing this microbusiness. Moreover, she had visited the mission many times and knew these women personally. She loved them and they love her.

During the final months of Marlane's life battling cancer, the women of Ixcán Creations wept and prayed for her healing. During the final days of her life, they wept and prayed for her peaceful passing.

That prayer was answered. On January 27th, our beloved Marlane (Marleny) peacefully left us and entered into her eternal home.

It is with deep sadness I share this news. Marlane's friendship, wisdom, love, humor, leadership, and faith are irreplaceable. But she told me, "When my work is done, I will go."

Her work is done from here but like saint St. Therese of Lisieux, who promised to spend her heaven doing good on earth, we will be watching to see how Marleny will be acting on our behalf from heaven.

I hear in my mind now the words of scripture from Matthew 25 that seem directed to her, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of time: 'For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me ... Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to Me.'"

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for our ministry with the poor of the Ixcán, and for all of us who knew and loved Marlane as we grieve this deep loss.

Marlane Peterson, Presente.

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider



Marlane and weaver Petrona with son Miguelito

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Maya people in the Ixcán jungle of Guatemala. We act as a bridge between cultures for the exchange of gifts to transform lives and society.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

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