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Dear Friends,

The bridge has been a theme of Ixcán Ministries mission since our beginnings. Our mission statement states that - *the organization strives to be a bridge between cultures allowing for the exchange of gifts between the rich and poor for the ultimate purpose of empowerment and transformation of lives and society.*

This bridging is often what we do – connecting people and resources together empowering the exchange of gifts between cultures and ways of life for the common good. Some of these gifts are tangible- some are not.

I'm thinking of a recent instance which happened right before I left Guatemala for the United States this year. It involves education.

Ixcán Ministries was instrumental in building a Jr. High School in Santiago Ixcán in the year 2000. Since then the school has thrived- staffed by four Guatemalan teachers with university degrees and attended by approximately 130 students from the village and surrounding area. It continues to grow at a pace that teaching staff and building space can hardly keep up with.

In the face of these on-going challenges the Guatemala Department of Education has been less than helpful. In fact, just recently they slapped on a new mandate ordering all Jr. High Schools to implement a computer course instead of typing as a requirement for graduation. This is a good thing - the catch is- they won't pay for the computers or the teacher's salary to teach the class!

Years ago the village was granted money through an organization for a special project that fell through. The community decided to use this money to purchase the needed computers. But it wasn't enough to even buy the minimal 10 computers to begin with.

The school governing committee came to me with this dilemma and Ixcán Ministries agreed to help with a matching donation to purchase the minimal number of computers to begin. The problem is none of us knew anything about computers nor how to navigate in ominous; traffic, exhaust, crime choked Guatemala City to purchase them! Help!

Then I remembered Chico.

I had recently met Chico, a middle aged man from the U.S. who has been living in Guatemala for over 20 years. In addition to being a mechanical engineer, teacher, and human rights activist he is skilled in getting practical things done or fixed. He also is a computer whiz and knows Guatemala City.

During a meeting with the school committee, I called him. After Alejandro Hernandez, president of the committee, and I explained our situation, Chico said, "Yes, I will help you." He changed his schedule and mobilized.

Within a week Chico drove all the way to Santiago Ixcán and parked in front of the grounds of the Jr. High School with not 10 but 20 computers he had found at a reputable company selling good used name brand computers from the U.S.! He had personally worked on each of them in his home adapting keyboards to Spanish, installing programs and making sure each worked perfectly before making the 8 - 12 hour trip from the Capital. As one of the committee members marveled, "It's a miracle!" It maybe wasn't a *bona fide* one, but it sure felt like it to us.



After the work Chico, Alejandro and I were invited to a simple meal of vegetable soup made of greens with hot fresh tortillas in the home of Jorge, another school committee member. We basked in his and his wife's gracious hospitality. When members of the committee thanked Chico, he replied, "I'm happy to help in the education of the youth of the Ixcán."

I'm glad I had met Chico and able to connect his expertise and good will – to share his gifts with the people of Santiago Ixcán. I know he in return left Santiago that late afternoon with a full belly and I think, a full heart, in doing what he does so well – helping others. What he gave to the people that day was tangible. What he received wasn't.

Ixcán Ministries was happy to be a part of that exciting endeavor as well. As I write the computer lab is operating at full force. The teacher's salary is being paid by the parents of the students of the Jr. High School.



If you notice on the top of this page our logo has changed... into a foot bridge more common to our jungle life, crossing a river of cultures, based at the foot of the cross – bridging for transformation and hope.

Like initiating a computer lab to empower and educate young people in the remote Ixcán jungle.

Thank you for being a part of that.

Mission Update: Kathy's mom Joell is doing well in her healing path to fight cancer. Kathy has also healed enough from her recent health challenges and will return to Guatemala on July 31st. Board member, Marlane Peterson will accompany her for a two week visit.

Please check out our new look and visit our updated website at www.ixcanministries.org.

A special thanks to Ruth Snider, graphic artist, for designing our new logo, Mary Jo Savageau (Wide Open Skies) for web design, and Spirit of Life parish for the many ways you support our mission.

Sincerely,


Kathy Snider



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:

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