



Friends of FORMA

November 2015 Newsletter

Our Purpose: To provide educational and nutritional assistance to youth and children living in impoverished rural areas of Guatemala.

Who We Are: Friends of FORMA is a small group of individuals that came together with the common belief that sustainable change can occur in impoverished communities in Guatemala through programs that provide educational and nutritional assistance to youth and children. Friends of FORMA is a non-profit corporation and 501(c)(3) institution. Donations are tax deductible. 100% of donations go to projects. Board members pay administrative costs.

Your Contributions At Work: Since August 2015 Friends of FORMA contributors have funded the following projects:

- Twenty-four scholarship students for 2016 school year, which begins in January, have been funded.
- A public restroom and septic tank system for the elementary school in the Buena Vista community is funded and is currently under construction.

Thank you for making these projects possible!



Left -- the old bathroom structure. Right -- the new bathroom at the Buena Vista School. Bottom -- under construction.



The Blessings We Receive When We Help Others *From Craig Orr*

About a year ago I received a call for help from Candelaria, the founder and director of our partner organization, FORMA (Forging My Tomorrow) Guatemala. Candelaria explained that there was a young person who knocked on their door seeking a scholarship to be able to resume her education. All the FORMA Guatemala scholarships for the upcoming year had been filled. However, Candelaria saw something special in this student that caused her to reach out to me.

The young person's name was Vilma. She was an excellent student but had been forced to drop out of school at age 14 when her family could no longer support her. She went to work for 2 years making tortillas in a tortilla shop in Guatemala City. The work was hard with employees working 15 hour days 7 days a week for \$75 a month. She returned to her family home and village determined to complete her education. After thinking about it I let Candelaria know that my wife and I would be honored to cover her educational expenses for the next year.

When we visited Guatemala 3 months later, we met Vilma and her family. We were moved by the heartfelt appreciation expressed by Vilma and her mother. Vilma is excelling in school and is giving back to the community as a librarian at her school and tutors younger students in her village.

I am grateful for the work of our partner FORMA Guatemala. The blessings my wife and I receive in seeing Vilma and the other scholarship students do well in school far exceed the assistance we have provided.





HOME GARDENS PROJECT *from Wayne Brown*

One afternoon while in Guatemala this summer. I had the opportunity to accompany Candelaria Xep, coordinator of FORMA, and Marta, social worker for FORMA, to Santa Caterina Palopo to plant gardens at the homes of 12 parents of primary school students who attend the Saturday tutoring sessions. The parents had already attended two classes on preparing a small garden bed at their home. Some plots were in the ground while others were in half barrels or troughs. Everyone had protected the garden from playing children and scratching chickens. The soil content had been enriched by compost, natural fertilizer or other organic materials. We had brought starter seedlings of broccoli, spinach, and parsley and seeds for radishes and cilantro. We climbed steep alleyways and paths (there are no streets except the main road through town) of the town to reach all the participating homes. We helped with the planting and Candelaria and Marta gave praise for the work of preparing the beds and answered lots of questions. We visited with each family before continuing on to the next home. By now (November) the radishes have been eaten and perhaps replanted and the other veggies are providing accessible nourishment to the tutored students and their families.

Excerpt from letter from couple who participated in Jabel Tinamit Spanish Language School in Panajachel, Guatemala and met Friends of FORMA scholarship students in July and August 2015

“...On the second Sunday of our four week stay about 20 or more of us gathered on the third level of the school for a Jabel Tinamit fund raiser meal. We were Spanish students and staff including the Mayan founders of Jabel Tinamit Gregorio and his wife Candelaria who told us her story of being born and raised very, very poor and how that factors into the school’s outreach to the youth and children of the area. Joining us were about 8 young ladies who have received scholarships from Friends of FORMA. Some of these young ladies told us their stories as well.

On this second Sunday we Spanish language students paid for the privilege of cooking a Guatemalan meal together after which we sat at a table with the younger students and staff. Leon and I were very moved and impressed by the level of compassion and commitment Candelaria and Gregorio exhibit for their Mayan “people”.

Besides being positively impressed by Gregorio and Candelaria, Leon and I left Guatemala with a strong admiration for a new friend whose name is Wayne Brown. Each time I saw Wayne he was just returning from a visit to a student’s home or just coming out of the library, where he had been teaching a student or two English. Because of him and others like him we returned home strongly committed to giving our own funds towards a scholarship and asking our family and church friends to listen to the story of Jabel Tinamit and to help educate a Guatemalan young man or woman who lacks the resources to pay for their education....Go to their website www.friendsofforma.org and inquire how you can get started helping a student for only \$350 a year. We did it and we are living on retirement benefits. Won’t you join us?



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