



# Friends of FORMA

## September 2018 Newsletter

### Message from the Board by Craig Orr, Board President

We are in the final three months of the academic school year in Guatemala, which ends in October. Our scholarship students are working hard and our academic support programs (community learning centers and tutoring for elementary school students) are in high gear. We are making a difference in the lives of 600 students and their families in the Lake Atitlan region of Guatemala. It starts with the dedication and compassion of Candelaria and Gregorio Garcia, the leadership team of our partner organization FORMA Guatemala. They nurture and encourage the students and families supported by our programs to push through obstacles and never give up.

At right, Craig meets with mother and younger brothers of Vilma, a scholarship student.



### Meet New Friends of FORMA Board Member, Renee Franklin

Renee is a retired senior Human Resources professional with over 25 years of experience helping people and organizations on several continents maximize their potential for success. She lived and worked in Mexico City for 3 years.

As a member of or consultant to corporate leadership teams, Renee provided executive counsel and was often responsible for: leadership development, succession planning, organization design and capabilities, labor relations, and compensation and benefits.

Renee has been a supporter of Friends of FORMA since its inception. She has made two trips to Guatemala in a volunteer role for Friends of FORMA programs. She and her husband, David, split their time between Las Vegas and Southeast Michigan.



Renee visits with scholarship family.

### Eruption of Volcan De Fuego In Guatemala

The [June 3, 2018](#) catastrophic eruption of Volcan de Fuego resulted in the loss of lives of up to 300 persons and impacted 1.7 million persons in Guatemala. Fuego is located southwest of Guatemala City and is a very active volcano.

The children and families assisted by Friends of FORMA primarily reside in rural communities in the Lake Atitlan region. Although this area is only 25 miles from Fuego, FOF children and families were not directly impacted.

### The Value of Letter Writing Between Scholarship Students and Donors

All Friends of FORMA scholarship students are paired with donors and exchange letters at least twice a year. These letters from donors provide encouragement to students to continue to work hard, keeping their personal goals ever before them. They also give opportunities for students to practice reading and understanding of English. The letters from scholarship students allow them to think, compose and write clearly in English and share bits and pieces of their family life and culture. Letter writing forms important links between students in Guatemala and donors in the United States.

**Women's Literacy Program**

Friends of FORMA is sponsoring literacy programs for women in Buena Vista and Monte Mercedes, two communities in the Lake Atitlan region of Guatemala. This is the third year the program has been offered to women in Buena Vista. Participants in each of the two communities meet two afternoons a week where they focus not only on basic literacy skills but also preparing nutritional meals and building self-esteem. The photo shows a session in Buena Vista being led by FORMA Guatemala executive director Candelaria Garcia.



**SOFIA MARICELA**  
Sofia, 12, is from Chicacao Suchitepequez, and is the 5<sup>th</sup> of 7 children. Ten years ago her parents decided to move to Panajachel for better opportunities in employment and education. Her father, Victor Manuel, 38, cleans sand in the river bed for construction. Her mother, Rosa Salazar, 38, is a domestic worker. They rent a house in Panajachel. Sofia attends 1<sup>st</sup> year of basico, 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Her favorite subject is natural sciences and her goal is to be a doctor.

**Introducing Two Middle School Scholarship Students**

**LIDIA BAQUIN**  
Lidia is from Monte Mercedes, Sololá and is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 7 children in the home. Her father, 43, is a farmworker and her mother, 34, is a domestic worker. Both are illiterate. During the school vacation months of November and December, Lidia works making tortillas by hand in a tortillaria to help the family economically. She is in the first year of basico, 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and is enthusiastic to continue her studies. Her favorite subject is math and she hopes to be a teacher upon graduation.



Left: Students put new laptops to use at the Community Library at Montes Mercedes.



Right: School celebration for parents and students.

**When you select Friends of FORMA as you shop at Amazon Smile, 0.5% of your purchases will be donated to us.**

**Please note our new mailing address. We held elections and our new treasurer lives in Decatur, GA.**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Friends of FORMA<br>1501 Oakridge Court<br>Decatur, GA 30033<br><a href="http://www.friendsofforma.org">www.friendsofforma.org</a> | <b>Board Members</b><br>Craig Orr<br>Lynnette Brown<br>Tony Rothschild<br>Renee Franklin | Charley Hoffman<br>Randy Stephenson<br>Wayne Brown<br>Lucy Potts |
|--|--|--|