

# GuatesUP?

September marks the start of our 3<sup>rd</sup> year ministering full time in Guatemala. I keep thinking, “next year things will settle into a new normal”. I am beginning to realize, there really seems to be no normal in sight. Though we try to have somewhat of a schedule and routine in our lives, the only thing that normally occurs is the need to change most plans that may have been made. Something more urgent tends to come up or the 30 minute errand turns into a 4 hour market search for the correct screw needed to finish the installation of a window. One of the best tests of my patience to date was the time when I placed an order for construction materials. When going to pay I was told the price would be significantly higher if using a card vs cash. I left to get cash from an ATM. It took 4 different locations and about 2 hours to find a functioning ATM and return to the store. I pulled out the Q2,000 max allowed per day, exactly enough to pay for the order....Wait for it..... I was informed the order was now Q2,100 because the price changed between the time I placed the order and the time of payment. Now I am Q100 short and the store is closing....really??? I could only laugh or cry.

Constant adjusting, flexibility, patience, forgiveness & grace is needed to survive in Guatemala. We are learning to embrace the idea that these frequent and often frustrating “detours and derailments” can often lead to unexpected opportunities to cross paths with someone God wanted us to connect with or to give us the opportunity to respond to the situation or person with the grace of Jesus vs frustration and anger. I admit I have failed that exam more times than I would like to admit. I am convinced Guatemala is this way to hone our patience & prayer skills and to remind us that God directs our steps. But we need to be watching for the blessings that are all over the path, blessings we will miss if we are too busy doing “our work” to see them.

Though we “fit in” better and understand how things work (or don’t work) than the newbies we were 2 years ago, we are still aware that we are different. If you are “pure” Guatemalan you are referred to as “Chapin”. This means you were born in Guatemala, use certain phrases and words that are not actually Spanish and you need to be late for everything (Tiempo de Chapin). If you are white and from the USA, you are called a “Gringo” or “Gringa” (female form). As I worked to complete over 125 family visits over the course of the past 2 months, my Spanish language skills were stretched & grew significantly. During a visit, someone called me “The Chapinga” as I was conversing with them and threw in a few Chapin words for practice. It took a while to process what a Chapinga was and if I should be offended. I realized it was a mix of being called Chapin & Gringa. I laughed and felt a bit of joy to realize that I was being paid a compliment. It marked a milestone in becoming a little “less different”. Every day for us is an adventure filled with countless opportunities to learn and show God’s love to each person we encounter.

Brad came back a few weeks ahead of me and will return back to Guatemala September 25th. I return October 23rd. We are looking forward to some time to recharge and reconnect with family & friends as well as raise awareness and funds for continuing on the mission we are called: To Go, Love & Serve like Jesus in Guatemala.

Serving together, Shawn Johnson, Missionary for Recycled Lives



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**Please check out the attached pamphlet to learn about our programs and ways you can partner with us to fight poverty**

## Praise & Prayer

- Praise God for the resources to continue to build houses and to give stoves, lamina & bunk beds to families in great need.
- Praise God for the blessing of Christian friends & helpers that have come alongside our missionaries in Guatemala.
- Praise God for the blessing of funds to purchase a pickup in Guatemala. Gabe the truck is serving well.
- Pray for God's continued guidance in developing a long-term plan for ministering in Guatemala
- Pray for God financial blessings to cover the ministry budget.
- Pray for God's voice to be heard by those He is calling to become members on the committees and Board of Directors.

*A small act done with great love, positively changes lives in BIG ways!*

This past Mother's Day, we did something different and special for our mom's in San Gabriel. We decided we needed to have a mini mental retreat & refresh time with our moms. Being a parent is just plain hard. Being a parent living in poverty is another level of harder. Poverty piles extra layers of stress on top of the mountain of "normal stress" a parent experiences. Living daily with the worry of not being able to adequately provide for your child's nourishment, clothing, shelter, education and health, no matter how hard you try, causes intense daily stress that cannot easily be escaped. Constant stress can cause physical and mental illness and it can rob a person of the ability to experience joy or see the blessings around them. Simply put... poverty makes you feel poor in every way.



Following our typical monthly food distribution where parents were given a special message about God's creation and His special love for them, each person received a plant and were invited to stay and play some games. At first many were reluctant and left. But once we got started and the laughing and joy was heard for probably a mile away, moms began to filter back in. We had over 100 moms participate.

They had a blast watching & competing in various competitive challenges. Minds that were typically filled with worries & burdens were focused on stuffing marshmallows into mouths, scooping up invisible cotton balls, sucking up peas with a straw, stacking cups, sorting M&M's, threading noodles and fanning fish across a room. The community was filled with contagious laughter at the goofiness of it all. Minds were given a much needed retreat for a few hours while everyone laughed until stomachs hurt and tears filled our eyes.

In my 10 years of ministering, I have never heard so much friendly cheering, encouraging words, friendly competition and uncontrolled laughing during an activity that we have hosted. I was happy crying because it was such a blessing to see faces typically wrinkled with worry and eyes sockets darkened with stress brighten and glow with pure joy. I am sure many laughed harder than they have in quite some time. I know the healing power of laughter and this was an incredible time of joy and healing. I know this activity didn't solve problems or reduce the level of physical poverty these moms are faced with every day. But one thing that I do know is that these moms experienced what it feels like to be rich in love, laughter, joy and worth.



*She is clothed with  
strength and dignity;  
she can laugh at the  
days to come.  
Proverbs 31:25*



**Recycled Lives' Faith & Mission:** Recycled Lives is rooted and built upon the belief that faith in Jesus Christ renews and transforms broken or lost lives into something beautiful and purposeful - Jesus Recycles our Lives.

## What we do

The heart of Recycled Lives beats to glorify God in all we do. We carefully assess individual and community situations associated with poverty of resources, spirit and hope.

Using our God given gifts and resources and lots of prayer, we give our best to help those living in poverty. We seek ways to help while nurturing independence and teaching skills for a better future.



### The San Gabriel Garbage Dump Guatemala

Currently we are loving on a community based on and around a rural garbage dump in Guatemala. There are well over two-hundred families that call this community their home and utilize the garbage dump as their sole source of sustenance. Men, barefoot children and women dig through the trash searching for plastic and metal to recycle for less than \$2 a day. Sometimes they are forced to find their food in the trash. These conditions do not make sense in a world that has plenty. Recycled Lives has been working to change this community's story through bringing help, hope and dignity to those suffering here through our consistent presence and showing them the love of Jesus Christ.

Recycled Lives News  
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Donations can be made by check or Online

We are a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization  
Your donation is tax deductible where allowed by law

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## Recycled Lives

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

~We are advocates for ceasing poverty for all of God's people throughout the world~



## Monthly Supplemental Food Program



Since September of 2013 we have been providing monthly food packages of rice and beans. Currently we are aiding 147 families each month with a food package.

- \$8 provides one monthly food package
- \$100 sponsors a family for a year

## Cook Stove & Cement Floor Program

We are bringing a healthier cooking & living environment to families. Many families cook by burning plastic & trash within their home. Not only is this a fire-hazard in a shack constructed of sugarcane stalks, cardboard or tarps but it leads to life-long lung problems. Dirt floors are



also a problem for health. Providing families with a ventilated and efficient wood burning cook stove or a cement floor in their home helps improve health & safety. A stove or a 10 x 12 foot floor costs \$200.

*Sponsoring food packages, cook stoves, a home, or making a donation can make a great honorary gift for a birthday or holiday. You can also make a memorial gift for a loved one or a special event. We can send a certificate directly to the recipient on your behalf describing your gift and the impact that it made.*

## Mission Team Program

We LOVE leading mission teams to further expand the love of Jesus into the communities we serve in Guatemala. Shawn Johnson is the Founder, Executive Director and Missionary for Recycled Lives & has over 10 years of experience organizing & leading mission teams. The cost for a mission trip varies depending several factors such as the duration & number of travelers but average cost is \$125/day (not including airfare). Please contact us to reserve your dates & receive a quote for yourself or a team! We believe that God provides where He guides!



## General Funds/Missionary Support

Shawn & her husband, Brad, serve as full time missionaries for Recycled Lives. They carry out our programs and disciple our fellow brothers & sisters in Christ through building Christ-centered relationships in Guatemala. Would you consider coming alongside the work Recycled Lives is doing through becoming a monthly sponsor? Your pledge will help provide the funds needed to continue the ongoing work we do for God's glory. Monthly giving can easily be set up through your bank's bill pay option.

## Home Building, Family & Educational Support Program

Recycled Lives constructs durable yet inexpensive homes to families that do not have suitable housing. The total cost for the style homes we construct is \$4,500 for a double bedroom home with a corridor, kitchen & bathroom. As of 2019, we have been involved in the construction of over 40 homes. We involve the family throughout the construction process and we hire local masons to help, which improves the lives of workers in the community. Smaller homes or basic lamina homes are constructed for families that do not own their own property.



We work to bring a better living environment to families by building bathrooms & kitchens and repairing roofs & walls through the distribution of corrugated metal sheeting (lamina). We believe in supporting a better future & self-sufficiency through providing tools & materials for work opportunities and school supplies, shoes, uniforms & school tuition assistance.

To learn more about sponsoring a need on our family care list, please contact us for projects that can fit in your giving budget.