



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

2023 Ministry Year



Brad & Shawn Johnson, Missionaries to Guatemala

## A MESSAGE TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Dan, John, Lina, Clyde, Dennis, Julie, Kelly & Mara:

We give praise to God for the blessing of each of you. We are blessed with the confidence of knowing we have an amazing Recycled Lives' board of Directors that prays for and supports us in a multitude of ways. Thank you for giving of your time, support & wisdom so we can be here serving God's people in Guatemala.

Each of you are Godly examples to us, helping us to grow in our missionary and personal walk with Our Savior Jesus.

In the love of Christ Jesus, Shawn

"<sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup>so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:9-11

*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” Acts 4:32*

Father God, We come to you in humble adoration to celebrate the amazing things that you have enabled us to accomplish over the past 10 years. May you receive all glory and praise for the accomplishments. Thank you for how you weave redemption, reconciliation, healing, help, hope, peace, strength, belonging and purpose into each of our lives individually and as a community that can come together to help strangers know and experience the same. We pray you will continue to use each of us as vessels for your glory and to inspire each of us to know & experience the many ways we are equipped to bless and serve those near and far. You use each of us woven together in a multitude of ways to help a village of people in Guatemala that you love. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to serve others with the blessings that you are the maker and provider of. May we seek Your will, walk in Your way and love others like You love. Thank you Father, we love You. We pray this in the mighty name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Dear friends, This year we celebrated 10 years of Recycled Lives being a nonprofit organization. Many of you have been cheering and supporting my service in Guatemala since my first trip almost 16 years ago! I give thanks to God for each of you that have come alongside of Recycled Lives, Brad and me.

Even though on a daily basis I see the difference being made through what we are blessed to be doing here in Guatemala; it is during these milestones years, as we reflect back, we can view the “bigger picture”. We can see the growth that has gradually happened over the course of 10 years. We can see answered prayers and answered questions that we had those first years of ministry when God called us to move full time to Guatemala. By the grace and goodness of God we now see how the hard lessons and even the hurts were recycled into the wisdom and grit that pushed us to do things better. We have been witness to tremendous growth in love, hope and unity within the community and people we serve.

Though we have witnessed so much positive change in the people & ways we serve; we also see that the need for our presence and help we give has not changed. As the world experiences the cost of living increasing, that also means the impoverished become more deeply entrenched in poverty. A pound of beans that used to cost .46 cents, now costs \$1. Gas that used to cost \$2.75, now costs close to \$5.00. For the first time in 10 years of ministry, the costs have grown faster than our donations and we are ending our fiscal year in the red. However, thanks to many of you that sent in an extra year-end gift, that gap was closed a bit more.

To keep doing what we do, it requires us to petition our brothers & sisters in Christ to keep partnering with us in blessed generosity into the next 10 years! Thank you for your partnership in carrying out what Jesus instructed each one of us to do: *to love & serve others*. Together we are making a huge impact in the lives of the suffering. Every prayer keeps us pushing forward and every contribution keeps us serving in Guatemala. We need every one of you to give your very best as we give our very best as well.

Thank you for 10 amazing years of ministry! In Christ’s abundant love,



Shawn Johnson, Founder, Executive Director & Missionary Recycled Lives

Submitted by SMJ 1-10-24

*“2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.”*

## 2023 Praises & 2024 Prayers

### GENERAL MINISTRY UPDATE

Brad and I have been living full time in Guatemala for 7 years. We travel back to the states approximately every 6 months for an average of 6 weeks to renew our visas, fundraise and conduct the organization's business operations required to maintain Recycled Lives' nonprofit status. We have an amazing board of directors that do so many things to keep us raising awareness and funds needed, but we do not yet have the funding to hire staff for accounting, donor management, etc. so it is both a full time job for me to operate the nonprofit and a full time job ministering in Guatemala. We strive to serve in a way that not just helps through provision of physical resources but to do so in a way that empowers our beloveds to become more independent and resourceful while experiencing God's love. We extend to you huge thank you and big hug from each of the recipients of these blessings.

I want to share some accomplishments made over the past 10 years because of your support. We have celebrated the construction of 63 houses in Guatemala, 43 of those have been in San Gabriel alone! We started with 20 families on the monthly food distribution, and we now serve 200 families monthly and 20 additional families every other month! That equates to 960 persons that receive nourishment in food and God's Word. We have distributed more than 2,000 laminas (corrugated steel sheets) to improve housing for families. 170 wood cook stoves have been installed to improve health and save money & time needed to gather wood. Your gifts have purchased over 70 beds to help get kids off of dirt floors and get better rest. 31 washtubs for bathing, washing clothes and dishes have been installed to help improve living conditions. We have helped numerous children receive education by paying the salary for a high school teacher in the community as well as distributing school supplies, backpacks and paying tuition for sponsored students that attend college or private schools. We have hosted 130 persons on mission trips that have volunteered their time and resources to serve alongside of us in Guatemala. We have mixed and poured hundreds of bags of cement, so families no longer live in a hut with a mud floor. None of these things could have been possible without God's blessings through the generosity of our donors. Praise God and thank you!

We pray that 2024 is a year filled with not just material blessings to make life better for those living with less, but that it is a year that through these blessings, hearts are more greatly turned toward God & relationships are deepened.

### HOME BUILDING PROGRAM: (click heading for home building video)

This year we continued to work with the modified style and design of our standard home construction. Researching material costs & utilizing the same construction workers has enabled us to continue to build better, more sturdy and longer lasting homes. The average home now costs \$5,500. This year, 5 homes were constructed and the theme for these houses was one of honoring loved ones that have passed and strengthening family bonds. Each family has a personal story of their struggles and also of miracles that happen before, during and after their home is built. It is a blessing to share these personal stories with the

donor(s) and to cover the family and donor in prayer. Brad makes beautiful videos from the collaboration of photos that we and the construction team take over the course of building the home. 1. Anonymous donor: [A home for Yanira](#) 2. Anonymous donor: [A home for Flor](#) 3. Anonymous donor: [A home for Roxanna](#) 4. ReMaxTeam Lundeen: [A home for Alba](#) 5. ReMax Team Lundeen: [A home for Don Gollo](#)

**HOME & COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:** (click heading to view a video about lamina & stoves)

We installed several Chispa wood burning stoves this year, less than previous years as we were involved in a study that Chispa did to help determine wood savings. The 20 participants in this study are now on our list for 2024 to hopefully receive a stove as we seek donors for them. This year we also assisted several families with enough lamina to repair their roofs and siding on their houses. This was less than in previous years, however it was because we focused much of our energy on and funds on employing Marvin to work full time. He started in August and when he was not constructing a sponsored home, we invested home improvement funds into the labor and materials needed so Marvin could work full time and families could be helped. He poured 10 floors in homes to improve health and living conditions, built 5 light poles which brought electricity to families and constructed 5 septic tanks. He made 5 drainage canals to improve rain drainage and the street condition. He also did the cement work for 5 sidewalk bridges to give families safer access to their homes.

Homelessness and lack of a dignified living space continues to be a challenge for many families in the San Gabriel area. Nearly 90 of the families on our food distribution list need a home or need significant housing improvements made to their current home. Most of these families do not have land in which to construct a home so shelter improvements are the only thing we can do for them. Please join us in praying for solutions for the many people that do not have safe housing and are affected greatly during the rainy season when roofs leak and floors become mud. We need a miraculous amount of funds for houses, laminas, cement floors and beams for roofs and walls.

**FOOD PROGRAM:** (click heading for food program video)

Nearly 1,000 persons are impacted by the monthly food distribution. We provide 10# of rice, 10# of beans and a bottle of cooking oil to 200 families. The grains cost an average of \$3,200/month. The food is distributed in groups of 50-75 where a special message of God's love and prayer is shared. In 2024 a sponsorship will cost \$185 and provides a monthly package for one family. A \$200 gift sponsors a family and helps to provide an unsponsored family with 2 months of a food package.

Pastor Liz Cheney volunteers as our food sponsorship coordinator. She works hard to find new donors and seek renewal of sponsorships. Family photos were updated and families made thank you cards which have been/will be provided to the sponsor. The process of translating cards, messages and emailing to donors is a big undertaking and we give thanks and praise to God for Pastor Liz's willingness to help me with this task.

Please pray for each person that receives a food package to receive it as spiritual nourishment & God's love. Pray for the renewal of sponsorships for each of the 200 families for the 2024 year. We praise God for our faithful food program volunteers, Saul, Perlita and Liz whose help is crucial in carrying out the food program.

#### **INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY CARE PROGRAM:**

We have been diligently working on our family care program via having established, consistent office hours where our families know they can come to the ministry center and share their needs with Luis. A database is being developed from this information gathered so I can petition and host fundraisers for the needs encountered. Each year as I reflect on the growth of the community, relationships and connections made there are so many moving memories and stories that lend evidence to God's work that is always happening. Families know they can depend on us to be there for them in the good and sad times. Families know that we do our best to share their needs to gain the help necessary to make life a little better.

This year I wrote for Thrivent action Team funds so that I could take family photos and have a print made for both the family and for the food distribution sponsor. At Christmas, 200 families received their family photo. Even in the age of cell phones, many of our families do not have one. Even if they do, they do not have a printed photo of their family or children. I hope to continue with this photo project through taking regular photos; both family and individual. With Brad's help, we made a video using some of the photos I took of the children in San Gabriel, 10 years ago and remake photos taken this year. It brings tears to my eyes to see the growth of these kids. The whole process of taking photos, interacting with the families and surprising them with their photos at Christmas was a great highlight of the work being done in San Gabriel building relationships with the families and providing connections with our donors.

This year has been special in seeing the personal growth and healing that has happened in our construction lead, Marvin. He is a somewhat timid man of few words. But the words he shares are often deep and thoughtful. I have seen him grow so much deeper in his love and relationship with God. Though he doesn't share much, he has opened up and shared with me some stories of his past which has helped me understand him more, encourage and pray for him and to see some of the work God is doing in Him. Nearly every day he shares how much he enjoys working with and for us; not just for the work and the pay but because he feels valued, trusted, and appreciated. Hearing his testimony of not feeling worthy or valued by his alcoholic father, being treated horribly, even as an adult, to now feeling he now has a greater purpose in his work and life. A purpose greater than putting food on his table and a roof over the heads of the families he builds for. This was demonstrated in his reply when I asked the team what was their favorite home to build and why. His answer brought me to tears and confirmed our earlier decision to hire him full time and trust that the Lord would provide the funds and materials needed and had a plan beyond the material things. I see it unfolding each week. It is beautiful to see Marvin advocating for his neighbors and lifting the team up with his daily group text message giving thanks to God for another day to live and serve God. Marvin is one of the hardest workers I know, and it has been a blessing to see that he is learning that his value is not based on how fast and hard he can work to receive accolades from others. He is learning that his value and his purpose is found in God.

I praise God for our construction team; Marvin, Orlando and Luis and I pray not only for their physical wellbeing and safety as they work but most importantly for the building of their personal relationships with Christ. That they can be a light to the families they serve alongside us.



*But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. Psalm 33:11*

## **Report on 2023 Executive Director's Annual Goals**

I feel this past year has been filled with so much growth and development of God's work in San Gabriel as well as within myself in humility/living simply and living more in the moment. Daily life in Guatemala is, in general, a challenge; even when having access to all the resources needed to meet my basic needs (food, shelter, water, love). It humbles me every single day to remember that even amongst the daily frustrations and difficulties... I AM BLESSED!

### **2023 Executive Director Goals**

- 1. More intentional discipleship of volunteers & contract help that play key roles in helping with ministry activities/projects.** *Testimonies from Marvin, leaders and members in the community lend truth that our presence and work in the community is meeting this goal and making a difference in individual's lives as well as in the community as a whole.*
- 2. Facilitating community development projects by seeking collaboration/involvement of the municipality leaders, church leaders and/or community (cocode) leaders.** *Luis sought election for president of the community association (Cocode). I see him utilizing his learned organization and leadership skills to make efforts to improve community relations via leadership. He is beginning to approach requests for help for the community in a more collaborative manner. The community came to their own solution when needing a major repair for the community water pump. There has been improved planning/intervention on the Cocode's behalf with our request for with communication to nonprofits or governmental programs that want to provide an activity or help in the community: to do so via a calendar and communication (in the past, organizations would schedule activities or simply show up on the same day there is an established activity (food distribution, community Christmas party) and duplicate helps/aid to the same recipients vs "spreading out the help".*
- 3. Advanced planning in scheduling larger projects, messages & activities surrounding holidays for the San Gabriel community to allow for special fundraisers if needed.** *This is much improved in requesting guest speakers and planning food distribution messages in advance. Also planning for activities for holidays in advance has been better.*
- 4. Improvement of managing data & statistics of our sponsored families. Keeping data up to date sooner than end of year.** *Still in progress as I train and provide reminders to Luis to improve his documentation and organization of helps, petitions and maintenance of updated family data as part of his responsibilities. Still seeking an application/database that would help with recipient management. Access to internet services is necessary so that computer database access and management can be completed while in San Gabriel.*
- 5. Seeking ways to improve the ministry center in use, security & cleanliness.** *Have created a weekly responsibility check list for Luis. Still requires supervision to assure completion of tasks. Roof vent screens & windows installed to minimize sugar cane ash from entering. A projector was installed for movie nights. We host a weekly family activity on Thursdays which varies week to week so all can enjoy and participate (crafts with a bible story, playing games and having competitions, decorating the center for holidays).*
- 6. Scheduled time on a regular basis to study Spanish.** *The sole studying has been practicing in conversation & task completion without the help of a translator. This has grown my conversational Spanish but I need to prioritize formal study to improve grammar, giving instructions, written communication & my comprehension.*

## 2024 Executive Director Goals

**The following are areas in which I will focus work efforts in the following year. Results will benefit meeting our organization's purpose and mission.**

1. A more fixed schedule in travel/work in San Gabriel. Installation of internet will allow more remote work when tasks are program development related and supervision related tasks that I will be able to do via video meetings. This will also allow me to have more regular time dedicated to prayer, program development & studying Spanish.
2. Advanced planning in activities surrounding holidays & larger needs/projects for the San Gabriel community to allow for special fundraisers if needed.
3. Implementing data management & statistics of our sponsored families. Keeping data up to date sooner than end of year. Gathering brief family histories to enhance connections with donors to their sponsored family.
4. Create job descriptions, procedures and work policies for Luis & Marvin that will provide clearer expectations and lend to greater independence with less supervision/instruction.
5. Making preparations so that I can take a sabbatical/furlough.