



Dear Friends,

At the bottom of the hill from the mission house, I often pass a home bustling with children. In that household of eight, lives seven-year old Hamilton. From the distance, I didn't notice anything unusual about him. I didn't know that he stuttered and couldn't pronounce his r's. I didn't know Hamilton suffered bullying at school because of his speech impediment. Later, his father told me, "We didn't know what to do. We took him to a doctor in Playa Grande hoping that maybe there was a surgery or something to correct this. But no one could help him."

Health care facilities in Santiago Ixcán are limited to a government-run health post with rarely a doctor, and supplied with medicines that treat only common ailments. The public hospital, two-hours away in Playa Grande, is only equipped to do maternity-related surgeries. Apart from that, specialized services don't exist in the entire region and require long distance travel to Cobán or Guatemala City. Speech therapy? No one had even heard of it. That is, until one young woman from Santiago Ixcán, eighteen-year-old, Sindy Raymundo, decided to study.

Sindy graduated from Santiago Ixcán's government-run primary and junior high schools. (Ixcán Ministries was instrumental in building the only junior high school in the area in 2000 through a donation by a North American, Mr. Tom Glennon.) The eldest of two children, Sindy determined to step out of the cultural tradition of early marriage with cleaning, cooking, and raising children and set her sights on higher education to attain her dream of becoming a professional to impact her world.

Sindy explored professions that were needed but unavailable in the Ixcán region. She decided to pursue degrees in two specialized areas: Psychology (there are only two psychologists in all of the region) and Speech Therapy (there are none). "These are the challenges in Guatemala, in the Ixcán and other rural areas. There are mental problems and speech problems here," she explained. "I hope to open the minds of the people and bring knowledge. I want to live in the Ixcán and attend to the needs of the people as they deserve."

University costs are higher, and even though Sindy's parents are both educated and working (her father is the director of our junior high school and her mother is a secretary), the costs of putting two students through University (her brother is also studying) put a hardship on the family's finances. Sindy heard about our scholarship program and applied.

Our program allots partial scholarships for students from Primary to University levels of study. We partner with the parents to help defray costs of their children's education, and in many cases is the game-changer in keeping children and youth in school. Our scholarship committee consists of: Javier Gonzalez, Carmen Jimenez, Professor Myke Perez, and myself who manage the program.

Potential recipients are required to write an essay (levels junior high school and up), provide an estimate cost of their studies, show up for an interview with their parents, must maintain at least a 70-point grade average, attend classes, and exhibit good behavior. In addition, they are asked to do some community service.

Sindy shone bright. Her essay, grades, and interview earned her a scholarship with us for "Excellence".

Pursuing an education in rural areas, like Santiago Ixcán, requires grit and determination. The Covid pandemic didn't help. Sindy's classes at San Carlos University branch in Cobán shut their doors and went virtual. She returned home. Unfortunately, there is no reliable internet connection in Santiago Ixcán. She shared, "I was in the middle of a Zoom class when internet reception went out. I called my dad and we drove 25 minutes away to the edge of the Xalbal River where there is a tower. I did my class in the truck!"

Because of this particular hardship, Sindy (and others) have to live in other communities with good internet connection to access their classes.

This year, Sindy did her speech therapy practicum in Santiago Ixcán. She learned of Hamilton's speech difficulties and with his parent's permission, began to work with Hamilton. "Every day I learned more. Each child has distinct challenges. Hamilton's problem wasn't that hard to correct." Her intervention made all the difference to this boy who suffered humiliation and frustration in simply trying to talk.

Hamilton's father shared, "Thanks be to God for her. The opportunity came just when we needed it. Sindy gave us her help that turned into joy for Hamilton. He walks through the house repeating over and over again 'carro', 'cerro', and 'loro'. It's so beautiful and is going to help Hamilton's future!"

This year we are helping : 8 children in primary school, 4 in junior high, 2 in high school/technical school, and 3 in university to study.

We hope to continue to better people's lives through our scholarship program. It is a small thing that makes all the difference to the one. And to another one. And another.

Thank you for your continued prayers and financial support of our ministry! May God bless you and yours.

Sincerely,



Kathy Snider



Mission Update:

Mission Update: The mission in Guatemala continues to thrive. All our outreach and educational programs are in place and touching the lives of the people.

Kathy is back in the U.S. for Board of Director and program development. On a personal note : she is anticipating a possible surgery for a rotator cuff tear.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Ixcán Ministries is a Christian lay mission serving as a ministry of presence with the Maya people in the Ixcán jungle of Guatemala. We act as a bridge between cultures for the exchange of gifts to transform lives and society.

Our programs include- Scholarships, Community Library, Women's Micro-business, Medical, Housing, and Food Assistance, Spiritual and Pastoral Accompaniment, and Promotion of Peace and Justice.

Ixcán Ministries is a 501(c) 3 organization. Your contributions are tax deductible.

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