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“Yo quiero tener un millón de amigos y así más fuerte poder cantar...”

by Bethany Cok—Volunteer

A few weeks ago our World Renew Guatemala staff traveled with a short-term mission team from Pease (Minn.) CRC to Esperanza Miralta, where we were greeted enthusiastically by an elementary school full of children. As part of their presentation, they sang a song with this line in the refrain: “Yo quiero tener un millón de amigos y así más fuerte poder cantar...” (“I want to have a million friends, so we will be able to sing more loudly...”).



This line stayed with me and with many of the team members from Pease, and I think it’s a fitting sentiment for a beneficial view of short-term missions. Teams come to Guatemala not just to serve but also to learn, build relationships, and witness the kingdom work being done in and by these rural communities.

This was the sixth year that a team had come from Pease CRC, so it was a week both for newcomers to be introduced to World Renew’s work in Guatemala and for “old-timers” to catch up with friends they have made in the communities. We spent time with the kids in the schools and listened to challenges the communities were facing; some team members also made home visits to pray with community members.

During a week like this, there are so many stories that make an impact on our team. For example, La Palmera is a small community of around 40 families who make their living growing coffee, and World Renew is working especially with agricultural training in this area. The team from Pease visited for a full day in this community, spending the afternoon at the school conducting a vacation Bible school session for the kids and chatting with their parents.

One of the parents that a few team members and World Renew staff spoke with was an older gentleman whose wife died a year and a half

ago. He was now raising four daughters under the age of 10 by himself, while also battling addiction to alcohol. Several of the team members encouraged him and prayed for him and his daughters, reminding him of the value of what he was doing.

Sometimes stories like these can be challenging to hear, and I know that many of us who were there that day won’t quickly forget this man’s four little daughters. But listening, letting these stories shape us, and supporting organizations that help empower these communities and community members are valuable parts of what we can do.

World Renew’s work in Esperanza Miralta and La Palmera involves more than working with coffee farmers. We count hosting short-term teams as an important part of our work—not just for their presence but also for the way it empowers these teams to be ambassadors of God’s work in their own cities and countries.

As the children in Esperanza Miralta expressed in song, it is when we have a million friends, a community, that we are able to sing loudly about what matters and to advocate for the importance of the work of World Renew and similar organizations around the world.

Prayers for Guatemala

- Please pray for security for all the people involved in the work of World Renew Guatemala. Violence has increased in recent months not only in cities but also in some rural areas.
- Pray that the directors of our partner agencies may have wisdom, health, and patience to conduct the programs in the communities toward the goal of community transformation.
- Pray for the churches in the communities where World Renew Guatemala works, that they may understand their responsibility as Christ followers in the development of their communities, and take action.
- Pray for the participants of our programs, asking that God will continue establishing his kingdom in the Guatemalan communities through the work of World Renew.
- Please also pray for short-term mission teams that are coming in 2017, that the Spirit of the Lord may guide everyone involved in the planning, execution, and evaluation of their work.

*“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast.”
1 Peter 5:10*

Global Volunteer Program

You can volunteer in Guatemala!

There are no specific needs at the moment but there's always the possibility for discovery tours and learning groups from supporting churches, or there may be something that can be crafted to suit your skill set.

See also: worldrenew.net/globalvolunteerprogram

Disaster Response Services

Volunteer in North America. World Renew Disaster Response Services can use your help to restore homes of disaster survivors. Volunteer for one, two, or three weeks from Alberta to New Jersey to Florida and in between. Groups, individuals, and couples are welcome and there are reconstruction and non-reconstruction opportunities. Visit worldrenew.net/drs to get started.