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Alexandra – Growing & Blooming with Pura Vida

We've watched Alexandra grow up since first meeting her in 1999 as a toddler. This resulted in one of our longest running relationships with the people of Guatemala.

Indeed, Pura Vida didn't even exist until 4 years after that first meeting. Alexandra may not realize the impact she had on the eventual formation of our educational programs in the country.

Alexandra spent her early years at the Methodist Orphanage in Santa Cruz del Quiché, the eventual site of the John Wesley School. In 2001 she moved with the rest of the orphanage children to a newly constructed facility in Lemoa.

Due to frequent Pura Vida visits, Alexandra was well known to our teams. In 2009, thanks to her academic performance, economic need, and a recommendation from the orphanage director, she was selected for a Pura Vida scholarship.

Under the scholarship, Alexandra began her primary education at the Dr. Braulio Pérez Marcio Adventist School. She attended high school at Juan de León JV Mixed Normal Institute, earning a Bachelor of Science and Literature with a focus on Education. She moved on to San Carlos University in Santa Cruz del Quiché, obtaining a teaching degree in Bilingual Intercultural Primary Education. Her dream of becoming a professional had come true.

Alexandra completed her studies at the Mariano Gálvez University in 2023, earning a Bachelor of Science in Bilingual Intercultural Education. She also completed a beginner's level English course with the support of Pura Vida. In 2024, she studied English via a distance learning program at the "English for Us" Academy located in San Juan Sacatepéquez. She obtained an intermediate English diploma.



Alexandra is grateful for the support of sponsors Richard and Linda Ely, whom she considers as part of her family. She thinks they contributed greatly to her success.

With the
support of Pura Vida
...I obtained the teaching
degree in Bilingual Intercultural
Primary Education, fulfilling one
of my dreams of becoming
a professional young
woman.

Alexandra recently had the opportunity to travel to the United States last year through the English Academy where she was taking classes. She is currently working as a substitute teacher in a rural community near Santa Cruz del Quiché.

Alexandra will be featured in an upcoming video from our Dreams Comes True online email campaign.



Alexandra's sponsors,
Linda and Richard Ely.



Alexandra has been a part of the Pura Vida family since the early days (photo from 2001).

Pura Vida is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with programs in Guatemala.

The mission of Pura Vida is to facilitate the sharing of resources with communities in Guatemala in a meaningful, respectful, and long term way. Our primary focus is on providing educational opportunities for children in rural villages through scholarships, tutoring, and support of local schools. We encourage others to work with us as we give our time, knowledge, and resources to help poor rural communities attain a standard of living in which their children can thrive.

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From the Executive Director

We are sad to report the passing of Sister Helen Werner on January 10, 2025. She was 105 years old. The following are some memories of Helen from Executive Director Mark Ely.

It turns out I wasn't just there for the cookies. Or the home-made chicken, mashed potatoes, and gravy. Or the shower with actual hot water. Those certainly were nice, but there was something deeper going on, although I didn't know it at the time.

It took months of living in the new orphanage in Lemoa for me to find my way to the Maryknoll Contemplative Community just down the street. That I didn't discover it earlier is a tribute to a single-minded focus on figuring how I could best help the community on my own. The day Sister Helen walked into the orphanage I had no idea that my mindset would soon change completely.

Sister Helen and co-worker Lilla took me under their wing. I went from occasional meals with them to lodging in one of their spare, monk-like cells facing the plaza. I integrated in some of their daily activities (except for the rising at 4 AM part). A sense of great peace began to rub off on me.

I was still determined to do something for the people of Guatemala. But now instead of trying to work things out on my own, I had Sister Helen to gently guide me. She knew everyone in Lemoa, and had some ideas for partnership. She introduced me to the teachers at the local elementary school. She was providing some scholarships there, and the teachers convinced me that more scholarships would be a good thing.



Our scholarship program resulted from that meeting. It has been going for over 20 years now, and roughly 1,000 students have passed through it, including a growing number of university graduates. I only wish I could delegate half as effectively as Sister Helen did in this one instance. There's no telling what else she may have instigated.

Some memories:

- Trying to keep up with Sister Helen when she raced up the steep hill from the main road
- Having my morning tea and toast with her, even though she had been up for hours by then
- Village kids ringing the doorbell during dinner, and Sister Helen always ready to answer, even in mid-bite
- The world-class pineapple upside-down cakes she made when I later visited from the States (she gave me the recipe, but it's just not the same)
- Celebrating Sister Helen's birthday with her at our temporary home on Lake Atitlan
- Not least, having my worldview blown out of the water by a humble nun living simply with gratitude

Much of what Pura Vida does is based on Sister Helen's thoughtful and community-minded approach. Over the last 20 years we have brought hundreds of volunteers to spend time with her. I hope some of the peace and gratitude she exuded rubbed off on them, too.

Mark Ely,
Executive Director

Partner with us as a 'Friend of Pura Vida'

To make more stories like Alexandra's possible, we need your help. Your recurring monthly donation is predictable and sustainable income for Pura Vida, which helps stabilize and grow our programs. It also allows us to focus more on our mission than fundraising.

This spring and summer we have the goal of adding 10 new monthly donors at the \$5, \$10, or \$15 per month level. These amounts may seem small, but over time they can be significant. Your monthly donation will help us strategically plan for program growth, and provide predictable funding in response to special needs.

Consider involving yourself with our mission on a monthly basis. In the end, your monthly donation will help make the dream of education a reality for more children in Guatemala.

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"Set it and forget it"



puravida.org/donate

You can set up your monthly donation in minutes at puravida.org/donate. You can modify your subscription yourself at any time using the secure interface.

Thank you for your support!



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From Sponsor to Board Member: Joyce Carnes

We are happy to welcome Joyce Carnes to our board of directors. With her background in engineering and small business development, she will be a good addition to Pura Vida. She also has a substantial history with our scholarship program.

Joyce and her daughter, Kristina, went on their first Guatemala work trip in the spring of 2006. On that trip, they fell in love with the locals and the students at the John Wesley School. On the way home Joyce reached out to Pura Vida requesting a student to sponsor, ideally a young girl. Joyce has always been grateful for the support she received throughout engineering school and her engineering/construction career and wanted to pay it forward in Guatemala.

The next year Joyce and Kristina met first-grader Angela in the courtyard of the John Wesley school. The shy little girl greeted them with two gifts – a yellow rosebud and a bright, blooming pink rose. A few years later, Joyce sponsored Angela's sister Dayana as well. Through the years letters, drawings and photos were exchanged and relationships grew. Joyce returned to



Guatemala when she could to reconnect with Angela and Dayana, often also meeting with their grateful and supportive grandmothers. Both students continued their schooling and graduated from high school in 2018 and 2019.

When the girls chose to continue their studies at the university level, Joyce gladly agreed to continue sponsoring them. Angela turned out to be an excellent and determined student. She completed her university courses and is currently completing her internship requirement in preparation for graduation. She has expressed many times that she is focused on supporting the legal rights of women in Guatemala. The country will benefit greatly from Angela's legal education and training.

It took a bit more work for Dayana to complete her education, but she has persevered and succeeded as well. Dayana is continuing her university studies and plans to graduate next year. Her focus is also in the legal arena.

Please join us in welcoming Joyce to her new duties as a member of the Pura Vida Board of Directors.

Pura Vida volunteers & staff - busy 2025 start

In late January, a regular team from **FUMC Loveland** laid the foundation for a house for Petronila and her family. Along with Petronila's husband, Cesar, the team continued laying block through the week and were able to reach the half-way mark before returning to the U.S.

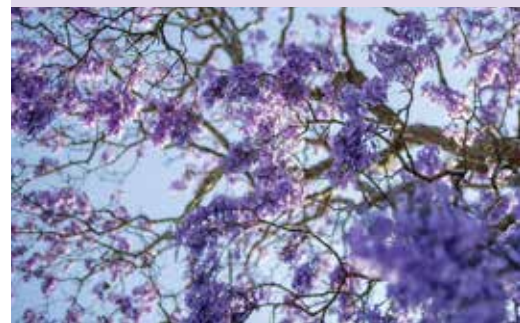


In early March, the annual team from **St. Luke's UMC** picked up where the Loveland left off. In addition to working on the remaining half of Petronila's house, the SLUMC team began construction on another home in Patulup for Maria and her family. Our Guatemalan construction team will continue working on these two homes through completion. Our thanks to FUMC Loveland and St. Luke's UMC for their efforts in making a difference in the lives of these families.

Our annual milk distribution took place on March 3rd. Thanks to your donations to our **Christmas Milk Program** our staff in Guatemala distributed milk to 399 families in the greater Lemoa area. Thank you for supporting this vital program.



Creative Giving



IRAs a Tax-Free Way to support our work in Guatemala

If you are 70½ years or older, you can request your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) plan administrator to transfer a gift directly to Pura Vida without paying federal income tax on the withdrawal. It's an excellent way to support our programs.

Learn More: Our Legacy Giving Team is here to answer your questions.

Visit: puravida.org/legacy or call (303) 215-0994 for more information. Our Tax ID Number is 33-1043116.

We hope you will consider making a tax-free gift today.

Employee Match Programs

Do you know that your employer might match your donations to Pura Vida? Many companies have generous matching programs to encourage and reward giving among their staff.

We have more than a few donors who routinely apply for matching donations from their company, which has expanded our capacity dramatically. These donations have become an increasingly important way to us to maintain our operations.

Check here to see if your employer will match your donation: puravida.org/match

Even if your employer is not on that list, check with your HR department to see if they might match donations. We can certainly put the funds to good use in Guatemala.



Pura Vida
PO Box 843
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‘Friends of Pura Vida’
make educational dreams
come true.



Help create brighter futures for the children in Guatemala

Pura Vida provided support for scholarships to make Alexandra’s dreams of becoming a professional teacher come true.



Here are some ways you can help us maintain and expand our programs:

SPONSOR A STUDENT –

The average student in rural Guatemala drops out of school by the time they reach 3rd grade. Your sponsorship can help them get to high school and beyond. Make a dream come true – sponsor the education of a student in Guatemala. [puravida.org/education]

TRAVEL TO GUATEMALA WITH US –

“Travel with a purpose” is a good way to describe what our international work trips are all about. Our emphasis is on developing and maintaining relationships with local communities and sharing our time and resources with our partners in Guatemala. Team experiences include building homes for families in need, teaching English to local students, and seeing first-hand the work we are doing in Guatemala. [puravida.org/trips]

DONATE ONLINE –

Support our Unsponsored Student Fund, which lets us keep more students in school while looking for sponsors. You can make a secure donation online at the link below. [puravida.org/donate]

LEGACY GIVING –

Help sustain our work in Guatemala far into the future by making a contribution through your IRA RMDs, wills, securities, and life insurance. [puravida.org/legacy]

ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS –

Do you want to make a really long-term investment? Our Legacy Endowment will one day give us flexibility to improve our programs and increase our level of support in Guatemala. Since this endowment is in the early stages of funding, we can really use your assistance in getting it up to speed. [puravida.org/endowments]