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Our First Agronomist

Havin's dreams have grown
with Pura Vida

Pura Vida sponsors Buddy and Margaret Key from South Carolina supported Havin (pronounced Ha-'vën) from elementary school through high school. From the rural agricultural village of Pocohil, Havin eventually traveled to Sololá to study agronomy. He returned home with new skills which allowed him to thrive with his own business. Our staff recently met with him in his greenhouse to check in on his progress.

When choosing my career, the first thing I considered was the need in my canton. Agriculture is an art that has existed in Guatemala for many years. I was interested in the idea of applying science to agriculture.

My Pura Vida scholarship allowed me to attend school in Solola to specialize in this field. Currently, I have small projects that I dedicate myself to daily. I

"When choosing my career, the first thing I considered was the need in my canton. Agriculture is an art... I was interested in the idea of applying science to agriculture."

constructed a greenhouse to produce ornamental flowers, specifically gerbera daisies. In another section of the greenhouse I have tomatoes in production.

Everything from planting to post-harvest involves hard work, proper management, and good agricultural practices. Some of the practices I use with my crops are:

- Irrigation
- Managing trellises
- Fertilization
- Pest control measures
- Pruning

Outside of the greenhouse I have sunflowers in cultivation. In my part of the country these are popular as cut flowers in the market for use in floral arrangements.



These projects have been the livelihood of my family, and have helped us get ahead. My vision is to develop more agricultural projects, both to keep moving forward myself and to create jobs for others. Because of these projects I've put my university studies on hold, but I still plan to resume them.

I want to thank Pura Vida supporters for their help, and ask that you continue supporting the children and youth of Guatemala so that they can have a better life, and may someday fulfill their goals and dreams.



Pura Vida has sponsored Havin since he was 8 years old. He graduated from high school and plans to continue studies at the university level.



Havin holds cut gerbera daisies ready for the market.

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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Pura Vida
PO Box 843
Salida, CO 81201

www.puravida.org

From the Executive Director



Meet Our Guatemalan Community Leaders

I recently had the privilege of spending time with our Guatemalan staff and volunteers. Every time we come together, I realize how fortunate we are to partner with such an amazing group of people.

Our community leaders are essential to the success of our programs. They are responsible for interacting with Pura Vida students in their communities, recruiting new applicants, gathering grades and letters, and helping when problems arise. They are the interface between the program and the students. Here are our current leaders:



Sebastián



Juan Miguel



Angel



Sebastiana



Miguel



Lucia



Danilo



Tomás



Saturnino

Sebastian Riquiac Bocel, Camanchaj

Juan Miguel Panjoj Sente, Chichicastenango

Angel Salvador Guarcas, Chontalá and Pocohil

Sebastiana González Chicaj, Lemoa

Miguel Ramos, Paquixic

Lucia Ixtán, Patulup

Tomás Riquiac Ixtán, Paxot (no picture)

Danilo Gaspar López Loarca, Quiché

Tomás Cuin Tevalán, Quiejel

Sebastián Quino Xaper, Xepocol (no picture)

Anastacio Saturnino Lux Tax, La Estancia

As we increased the number of students in our program this year, we added the community of La Estancia. With your support, we can continue to expand our scholarship program to help make dreams come true for more young people in Guatemala.

Mark Ely,
Executive Director



Lesly and Mark Ely

Gathering Celebrates “Pass It On” Culture

The October Annual Gathering was themed “Pass It On” but gratitude was the prevailing message as Pura Vida celebrated 22 years of work in Guatemala. Participants enjoyed delicious hors d’oeuvres while connecting with Pura Vida family and friends and bidding on silent auction items on display. St. Lukes UMC in Highlands Ranch graciously hosted the event for the sixth year.

We raised \$31,000 towards our goal of \$40,000 for the continuance and growth of Pura Vida programs in Guatemala.



Rev. Liza Stoltz-Hansen passes baton to Bill Ott.

Rev. Liza Stoltz-Hanson, associate minister at St. Luke’s, gracefully shepherded the program through featured speakers, videos and entertaining audience participation activities – all highlighting Pura Vida’s mission and ministry in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.

A “Pura Vida” relay baton was passed between speakers throughout the night and was a key element in videos. Pura Vida’s mission of creating brighter futures for

children places an emphasis on education. As Rev. Stoltz-Hanson shared, free education is only available to children in Guatemala through 6th grade with many students not advancing beyond 3rd grade. Parents with limited resources often pull their kids from school to help support their families. Passing on the importance of education requires a culture shift – one that Pura Vida’s programs work to pass on to future generations.

Bill Ott, a member of the 2024 Insight Trip to Guatemala with Pura Vida, spoke about his recent experience. Not a stranger to Central America, Ott served in the Peace Corps in Honduras before a career working in natural resource management. He is a teacher of English as a Second Language (ESL) and will be joining Pura Vida’s English Camp next June.

Ott shared his observations of how Pura Vida takes great care in offering a hand up rather than a hand-out. He said Pura Vida makes sure students and families who benefit from Pura Vida’s scholarships and home building have buy-in to the programs. They are participants, similar to Habitat for Humanity in home building and students must maintain their studies to continue with scholarships from sponsors.

Mary Small spoke about her yearly trips to Guatemala with Pura Vida and the joy of sponsoring students. Two videos from students who have benefited from Pura Vida scholarships were featured telling in their words how their dreams have been fulfilled thanks to Pura Vida scholarships.

In closing, Mark Ely thanked guests, organizers and donors for the support for Pura Vida and encouraged all to “Pass It On!”

2026 Guatemala Trip Schedule



Graduations of Pura Vida sponsored students are a milestone celebration for sponsors and students alike. If sponsors are on our trips and graduation dates align, Pura Vida tries to arrange for sponsors to attend graduation.

“Travel with a purpose”

is a good way to describe what our international work trips are all about. The emphasis of these trips is on developing and maintaining relationships with local communities and sharing our time and resources with our partners in Guatemala.

Scheduled Trips

February 13 - 22, 2026:

Hilltop / Loveland
Guatemala Work Trip

March 4 - 12, 2026:

St. Luke’s UMC Guatemala
Work Trip

June 12 - 21, 2026:

Guatemala English Camp

New home dedication, November 2025

Congratulations to Danilo & Mari



We are happy to share the news of the recent marriage of our Construction Supervisor, Danilo Lopez, to Mari Gonzalez, also a Pura Vida employee. Both Danilo and Mari are former graduates of our Scholarship Program. Danilo began working for Pura Vida in 2014, first as a photographer documenting our projects and work trips, and now overseeing all our projects in Guatemala. Mari helps with our student visits & annual Milk Distribution, and has helped tutor our students when needed. Congratulations, Danilo and Mari!





Pura Vida
PO Box 843
Salida, CO 81201

Sponsor a student,
nurture a dream



Help create brighter futures for the children in Guatemala

Pura Vida scholarships,
beginning when Havin was
8 years old, helped make
his dreams come true.



Age 8



Age 11



Age 13



Age 15



Age 17



Age 21

**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. [\[puravida.org/education \]](http://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. [\[puravida.org/trips \]](http://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. [\[puravida.org/donate \]](http://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. [\[puravida.org/legacy \]](http://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. [\[puravida.org/endowments \]](http://puravida.org/endowments)