

Hello everyone!

I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well and getting ready for fall. Minnesota weather in September has been quite warm. I am hoping for a transition to "real" fall, but fear we may skip this and go directly to winter.

Two notes from me before I share Rita's update with you.

Donation Reminders coming in November - I will be in San Lucas with Rita the week of November 13th. I will be sitting side by side working with her so that I can send you current information about your students - who is graduating, who is continuing to high school, and the amount for next year. I am hoping you will wait until you receive an email from me with this information before sending me your donation. I know this gets close to Thanksgiving, but this is the earliest we have reasonably accurate information about who will be continuing next year. If you need to send your donation sooner, please send me an email and I will try to confirm the amount for 2024.

The Dennis Evans Legacy Society - Through San Lucas Tolimán Scholars Dennis Evans changed the lives of thousands of young people. To honor Dennis, our founder, we have created the Dennis Evans Legacy Society. The Dennis Evans Legacy Society invites you to consider making a planned gift so that we can continue his legacy. Please look for information about this in your mail by the middle of November.

### **Julie**

And now, enjoy Rita's update!

Dear Sponsors and Friends -

It gives me great pleasure to greet you again. Time passes very quickly. My sincerest wish is that everyone is well and your family too.

Good news! In Guatemala, a new president and other officials have been elected. I trust that the election was well run and my hope is that for all Guatemalans the quality of life will be improved. I know that all this is a process that will take a long time, but now, we must start.

On August 14th we sponsored a large event – a conference with all graduating students of the 9th, 11th and 12th grades. We invited a professional speaker to talk about the topics of motivation. In the morning we worked with 9th graders on the topic "Studies open the door to a new world" and in the afternoon we worked with 11th and 12th grade students with the theme, "I graduated and now what's next?" The conference was intended to help students stay motivated and to value their studies and to seek a better future. We invited all graduating students from all schools, no matter if they are in our program. The town education supervisor and all the principals are very grateful to our program, because we are making a big contribution to the education of young people in San Lucas Tolimán. I am very happy about this!

Also in August, we started our selection process for candidates for scholarships for 7th grade starting next year. We created a fact sheet to interview students and we visited all elementary schools in San Lucas and surrounding communities. We have a few requirements, but essentially to be a candidate for a scholarship, the young person must:

- be a good student,
- have economic need, and
- have support from a parent or family member for continuing her/his education

After the interviews, we have a process to investigate that the information received from the student is correct. We classify the students, take photos, and write short stories about them, which we then translate to English which takes us a little time, but it is very entertaining and fills me with satisfaction about our program.

Like all schools in Guatemala, during the month of September schools and students come together in the celebration of the independence of Guatemala. It is an interesting month, because most of the cultures of Guatemala are relived/revived and presented, especially the Mayan culture, from their identity, dances, traditional dress and costumes, dances, gastronomy, art, and others. Three parades were held. On September 13th, the pre-primary children's parade took place, on the 14th was the primary parade, and on September 15th, the parade for students from grades 7 to 12 processed through the streets. Municipal authorities, representatives of the town, and educational authorities, accompanied the parades which were filled with talented performances by bands, dancers, gymnasts, and more.

Another way Independence Day is celebrated is with a procession of a torch which enters the town of San Lucas around midnight on September 14th. The cultural context of the lit torch entering San Lucas on September 15th commemorates Independence Day and represents light and knowledge, but more importantly, freedom and progress.

Also, during the first two weeks of September, there were presentations, festivals, competitions in marimba and dance, declamations, oratory, gymnastics, bands, and drawings and painting, and other activities.

The town fair of San Lucas Tolimán is approaching, in honor of San Lucas (Saint Luke) by the Catholic Church. This is another event that most residents of the town look forward to with great anticipation and excitement.

I am very proud to tell you that several of our scholarship students were on the honors lists in their schools. These students carry the Guatemala and school flags and have the honor of leading processions. We will be rewarding some of these students for their high grades and being the distinguished students in their schools.

Students will finish classes very soon. Graduations are coming!! For private schools there are only 3 weeks of classes left, and for public schools there are still 9 weeks.

I am very grateful to you for making possible another year of education for so many students in my community.

Please enjoy a few pictures and short videos: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12MjH98ovDGknZVkS0b7HW6C36utNW4yP>

Thank you!!

**Rita Chajil**