

**SLT Scholars**  
**September 2024 Newsletter**

Dear Sponsors and Friends,

After 25 years of traveling to San Lucas, I am still filled with gratitude by the beauty of and welcome of the people of this community. I recently returned from more than a week in San Lucas Tolimán. While there, I spent time with Rita and Alberta. One of the highlights of my trip was visiting 5 of the outlying communities which have junior high schools where our scholars are studying. I was welcomed by school directors, teachers, and students. All expressed their appreciation for the gift of education each of you provides our scholars. Thank you!

As fall begins, I know that many of you are thinking about sending your donation for your student(s) for next year. I will be sending out donation reminders in November. At this time, we expect to have good information about each student's plan for the upcoming year, which will help us better communicate this to you. If possible, I would appreciate you waiting to send your donation until you have received my reminder email. I will be sharing with you your student's plans, and the amount needed for 2025. Your continued support makes a significant difference in their lives, and I appreciate your commitment to empowering them through your generosity.

Additionally, I encourage you to think about friends and family who might be interested in joining our sponsorship program. Expanding our community of supporters not only enhances our ability to assist more students but also fosters a sense of shared purpose. If you know anyone who might be interested in making a positive impact, please feel free to pass along my information. Together, we can create even more opportunities for our students to thrive!

***Julie Marcotte***

Executive Director  
SLT Scholars

And now, Rita's message:

Dear Friends and Sponsors of SLT Scholars,

It is a joy to greet you again and give you an update on the activities and projects in our wonderful program.

Good news! As was last year, all schools have carried out all their scheduled activities which include learning workshops, sports, socio-cultural activities, anniversary celebrations, and excursions. Most schools have implemented innovative activities that we expect will benefit the lives of students. Examples are new music groups, learning about business management, and a barista workshop.

The School of Tourism held a workshop for all its students to learn about the skills of baristas, everything related to the process and preparation of coffee – hot and cold drinks, for example, cappuccinos, mochaccinos, frappés, and some dishes to accompany the drinks. Students found this very interesting.

The IMED school (largest junior high school in the center of town) celebrated its 51st anniversary. As you may recall, the school director retired at the end of 2023 after 50 years of service in this role. Julio Maldonado, the new director, is engaged and has very good ideas and expectations for the

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school. Prior to accepting this role, Julio was the IMED physical education and sports teacher. The IMED school celebrated with several activities throughout the year and ended with a social dance, where they invited a musical group outside of San Lucas. To add to the excitement of the festivities, two marimba groups from the IMED performed. I am very happy with this because it was made possible in part with Dennis' brother's gift to the school of two marimbas and a complement of instruments. Our program continues to make good changes in education!

We sponsored two excursions for our students.

- The first was in the month of May, for 50 sponsored students to go on a boat tour of Lake Atitlán to the town of Panajachel, a neighboring town of San Lucas Tolimán, where the students enjoyed touring this community. Some of our scholars had never been on a boat so it was a wonderful experience.
- The second was a tour of two cultural places in Guatemala. The scholars with the best grades were invited to participate. We visited Iximche-Tecpán and Antigua Guatemala, both of which are very interesting places to visit and learn. We had lunch at a restaurant in Antigua Guatemala and we ended with a tour of a shopping center in the city of Chimaltenango. It was a wonderful experience, because we found out that some of our scholars had never visited those locations, nor eaten in a big restaurant, and perhaps the biggest surprise, was encountering escalators in the shopping mall. My assistants on that trip helped me to guide the students in groups to keep the students safe.

In August we visited elementary schools and began the search for new scholarship candidates for the 7th grade for next year. Our process is to meet students with top grades in their classes in all primary schools in San Lucas and surrounding communities. We interview each student to learn more about them and their desire to continue their schooling.

We organized meetings with parents, inviting them to continue supporting their children with their education, and to highlight the value and importance of education. Families need to understand that they are an important part in the education of their children and their support is needed for their children to be successful in school.

Several sponsors visited San Lucas and we organized meetings with their students. Should you plan to be in San Lucas, please let me know so that I can arrange a meeting. Sponsors find it very meaningful to meet their student and family in their homes. And students love to meet their sponsors!

July 10th was the 3rd anniversary of Dennis' death. To honor him and to remember his legacy to us, we created an altar with his photo, flowers and candles, there was a prayer and singing at the IMED school, and then a walk to the cemetery with flowers that we took to Dennis' grave.

In the month of September, shoes were delivered to all our students. Shoes in September are important because this delivery aligns with the celebration of Guatemala's independence, and everyone wants to look their best.

September is a beautiful and interesting month, because all schools organize social and cultural activities, such as dances, songs, poems, oratories, dramas, and Guatemalan gastronomy in their school. In short, it is a party for the community, because families love to see their children participate. The festivities began with a parade of bands with a route through the town of San Lucas

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Tolimán. The parade started with an allegorical parade of pre-school schools on September 13th, primary schools on September 14th, and secondary schools on September 15th, where all municipal and education leaders participated.

A cultural night was organized on September 14th in which a group of people brought a symbolic flame of fire to San Lucas from the city of Patulul (about 18 miles from San Lucas), escorted by cars and motorcycles – entering our town at midnight, bringing a lot of excitement.

I will end with this. Every year we have a group of students awarded for educational excellence, having obtained the best grades in their class and school. During the parade for each school, these scholars can be seen carrying the flags in the band, identifying their outstanding academic achievement. This fills me with great satisfaction, and I am proud to share this with you. Without your support, many of our scholars would not have the opportunity of education, a chance for a better livelihood. We continue to bring the miracle of education to our scholars.

I hope you enjoy these photos of recent activities.

Thank you all for your generous support of our program.

***Rita Chajil***  
Program Director