

Amigos School Updates

September 2011

- The Amigos School marching band won first place in the area competitions for their Independence Day performances!

July 2011

- Pastor Len Maher of Freshwater Community Church Youth Group challenged his students to raise an extra \$100 above the cost of their trip in order to meet a need they would find in Guatemala. Each student rose to the challenge, and the group used that money to have all the broken and missing window panes in the entire school replaced. In addition, they provided \$1400 for the Amigos School teachers' salaries.
- Freshwater Community Church and the Orihel Family provided a new coat of paint for the outside of the Amigos Church and much of the school. What a wonderful facelift! The Amigos students who helped paint also added their handprints in primary colors to one wall. It was a beautiful added touch!

February 2011

God provides through his children! The Amigos debt has been completely cancelled, thanks to CHM friends! The remaining concern is an ongoing monthly deficit, resulting from insufficient student enrollment.

The plan in place to improve enrollment and therefore eliminate the deficit is for CHM to help in three primary areas in the school:

1—Facilities (painting, repairing, etc.)

2—Bible classes (providing Bibles, CD players and CDs with Bible songs, and improving the leaking problem in the Bible classroom)

3—English classes (bringing down authentic English-speaking teachers who immerse the children in English.)

We believe that as families see improvements in these three areas, the student enrollment should increase, which will create a balanced budget.

Amigos Christian School

Peronia, Guatemala

2011 State of the School

The church/school board of the Amigos School shared the following details as we talked about their financial situation this school year.

- The economy of Guatemala has been greatly affected by the worldwide economy. Businesses are closing down, and parents are losing jobs.
- Over 350,000 people have been deported from the USA and have returned to Guatemala, creating a burden on the job market.
- The present government has made big promises of quality public education for the poor. Although they are not able to fulfill these promises, the hope for free computer and English classes has drawn many families to public schools. Where before they did not allow class sizes to exceed a certain number, there is now a law that all children must be allowed to enroll in public schools, even if this means there are 60 students in a classroom. Students who came to the Amigos School because they were turned away from the public school have now returned to the public school because it is free.
- The government has put a strict minimum wage on employees (\$200 per month) and at the same time it requires two additional monthly pays per year, plus medical benefits (although the benefits of this public health care are terrible!). While this is good for the worker, it has greatly affected the financial situation of the school.
- The government also is very strict with private schools. They allow them to raise their tuition only 5% every 3 years. Unfortunately, the last principal of the Amigos School was young and did not know to register with the government when he raised tuition. The present principal is working with the minister of education to try to be “grandfathered” in to allow for this raise in tuition, but even if it is allowed, they will not be able to raise tuition for another three years.

Given these economic factors, the school has slowly lost enrollment each year for the last four years. They are not alone in this, as eight ACSI schools have closed in the last year, most in much better areas than Peronia. There are still 210 students in grades K-9 (down from 250), but the smaller enrollment is creating a monthly deficit. Our sponsorships help many students stay in school who otherwise would need to leave.

In light of all these facts, and especially the monthly deficit, the school administration felt they could not continue to operate after this school year. I think most would agree that their decision was the only wise conclusion they could come to, given their situation.

As I talked with the administration, we discussed the following:

- Purity of life. Each of us (faculty, administration, CHM) must be sure we are seeking God and asking him to purify our lives of sin so that He can bless. The school has taken some hard steps to rid itself of a couple pockets of sinful practices that were going on a few years back. I feel like they have been faithful in this area.
- Integrity. We must be accountable to use every penny wisely and as it has been designated. I feel like the school has cleaned up some areas of waste, and has done several wise things to trim the budget.
- Surrender. As we seek God, we must be willing to allow him to close the school if He knows that is best, even if we do not want that or do not understand why.
- Prayer. Once all these are in place, we will ask God to end the school year in the black and allow it to continue to minister to the children and families in Peronia.

After our discussion, the school board agreed they would wait until the end of the school year (in October) to decide whether or not to close the school for the 2012 year. The determining factor will be whether or not they are in the black at the end of October. We all felt that would allow for God's provision for the school.

The obvious question is how great is the need, and will it be ongoing. The monthly deficit for operations is about \$800. The school is now debt-free, and the administration has promised not to borrow more money. This however, has resulted in the teachers waiting to be paid, sometimes up to a month or more.

An obvious concern is that unless there is a growth in enrollment or continuing outside help, the school will not be able to continue to operate in the black, even if it ends the school year that way. So that is another request for prayer. Teacher sponsorship would be one possible solution.

If it were not for those precious little brown faces and big smiles of children who need to know the Lord, I would say this is impossible. But God has been faithful to raise up this little school in a needy area of Guatemala, to bring people from thousands of miles away to help, and I know we can trust God to continue the work He has begun. Thank you for praying!