

Housemother and manager Dora, a recent graduate, Maria, and I just returned from Coban. We were contacted by Chahim, the daughter of the local radio announcer. Chahim works as administrator in a law office. During our emails, and Skype call, she sounded passionate about helping her Mayan people. She also had four applicants from the 17 that applied as a result of the radio story. In view of our bad experience with FundAP, I was somewhat dubious and the distance was double our previous girls.

Upon arrival, we organized a radio show with her father Victor. Dora and Maria told their story. It was a grand, but nervous experience.

Saturday, we climbed the 184 steps for the reunion of applicants, families and interested people. It was an amazing experience, ending in tears for me. Some 15 people showed up plus Chahim and her father. Most of the older women guests spoke only Quiche, the eastern Mayan dialect. Others spoke some Spanish. The Applicants understood Spanish, but Maria told me she did not understand much Spanish when she came to us. I had not realized the past Mayan girls overcame so much. Maria, Mariela, Rubi, Wendy and Filomena are all extraordinary students in spite of their deficiencies in the past. These will be the same.

I was often in shock, while hearing the stories of these, now six girls. Two extra came as a result of the 8PM radio interview. These parents are desperate to educate their children, but live in villages high and isolated in the mountains. For middle school, one walked 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) each way to school. She left very early in the mornings. Four others went to school at a foundation called Brothers of something... However, they learned hours of guarding the cows and mucking out the pig stys. When they weren't guarding animals, they were cooking in the kitchen. Remaining time was for classes and a half hour of study time. I could not believe they were able to earn 80% or more GPA. Another father is taking out loans to educate his children. Loans in Guatemala are diabolical at 18% on the original principle. As the top income of these people was \$140, they will never get out of debt.

In order to come to the reunion, one family left their house at 2AM, walked 3 hours for another 2 hour bus to Coban. The others had slightly less travel time.

After the presentations, which were translated by Victor or Chahim, I met with individual families. Following this, the families got together to discuss logistics and funding of the partial transportation. These families became a team, something I did not see previously. In spite of their poverty and different regions, they wanted education enough to make it happen. I could see the hope, but stress on their faces. How to make this opportunity a reality.

For myself, I fought to hold back tears, because I only had 4 sponsors, not the seven needed (there is one more on Tuesday). Finally I could not say no to any of them. So much desperation, sacrifice and hope in those faces for their daughters. Mayan graduate, Maria, is absolutely sure they will make it.

So, I am asking you to send this letter on to your friends, in the hopes that they will give one of these Mayan girls a future.



Bigidia Cacao Xol

16 years old

8 in the family

Family income \$140, her % \$17.50

Her GPA 87%

(see explanation below)

BRIGIDA CACAO XOL is 16 ½. She lives with both parents and 8 siblings. Her father earns about \$140 per month. Neither parent has been to school and her mom doesn't speak Spanish. She went to school at the cow and pig farm, so is used to living away from her family. Her GPA is 83%, (math 84%, accounting 88%) an amazing result!

She wants to study more so she can help her siblings go to school in the future. She also wants to build a house for her parents, as the current one is made of wood (probably scraps). She does want to learn English and knows that to do so, she will have to live and eventually work far from home. She says she is a good candidate because she has gained good grades and overcome the many obstacles in her life. Her parents have helped her get her good grades.

When answering what else she thought we might like to know about her, she said when she studies at her Mayan school, she guarded the pigs, herded the cows, learned to clean, etc. Her "English paragraph". "My name is Brigida cacao xol, iam 16 yard old our fater juart in jeaven licin in may fader and may moter, tri sister and four brozers tenkui" Well, for the third language, it was an effort.



MARLENY ICO POP

Age 17 ½

Number in family 7

Family income \$127

Her share is \$18

GPA

Marleny also cared for cows and pigs said she had to be up very early to take care of the animals. Also of Mayan descent, she is 16 ½. Her recent GPAs are 87.5%, then 83.5% with accounting at 87, math 72 and English 75%. I asked about her math grade and she said there was no money for paper. Again, what an accomplishment! Her father completed 4th grade and her mother never went to school. There are six in her family, an older brother and a younger brother and little sister. Her parents earn about \$4 per day selling what they grow. She has an older brother who works and contributes to the family. She writes she wants the scholarship because her family has no money for further education. She wants to study accounting so she can work to help her family. She wants to be a professional. She participated in a group of young people to learn more of agriculture so they could better their lives. Marleny spent considerable time in the application process since they heard the radio news story about the scholarship program. I have a photo if I can separate it from the PDF file that was sent.



SAQ CHE COQ

Age 17

Number in family 7

Family income \$127

**Her share 128 per
month**

GPA 80%

Saq also Mayan, is 17 years old. Her GPA of 80% with accounting 78%, math 80% and English 83%. Neither parent attended school and with a family monthly income of \$125, it is amazing Saq has made it this far. All four children are in school. Her older brother will graduate next year. She writes: Her father can't afford high school, but since she was young girl, she knew it was necessary to better herself in order to help her family and community, because of the poverty, it is necessary to study. She wants a technical career to be a professional to have a future. She wants to help her parents and help her younger siblings have a future. She thinks she is worthy of a scholarship because of her poverty and she met the academic requirements. She likes school and learning and would like to continue. She would be proud to be in the Spirit program and continue her education. She also claims qualities of strength of effort and knowledge of how they live in her region. In English she wrote: My name is Saq. My family is poor.

She originally said she wanted to be a nurse. This is not unusual, because all they know is teaching or nursing as female work options. Since her first contact with Chahim, she now says she likes English and wants to work in the Shamuc Champey tourist area and a bilingual business manager. That is well thought out and a surprise to me.



Devora Pop Bolon

14 years old

8 in the family

Family Income \$127

Her share \$ 16 per month

GPA 82% 82 in 2017, 83 in 2016,

Devora also went to the cows and pigs school. Her recent GPAs are 82% and 83% with last year's math 82, but her recent math grade 69%. The reason given was the cows and not understanding the teacher.

She wrote: she wants to be a good student for Guatemala. Her father works very hard for her, but can not help her further to be a professional. She lives in a village where there is no clean water, phone service or roads. They walk an hour, then four hours to Coban.

She wants to be a professional of value and active in helping her family so they can live in security. She wants to learn things that will help her in her life and other places.

Her middle school emphasized caring for poultry and pigs raising plants and cooking. The academic part was the normal middle school course though.



Marta Beb Maaz

Age 17 ½

Family Income \$127, her share is \$18 per month.

GPA 81 in 2017 and 86 in 2016

Marta's father has been borrowing money to fund the two children in school now. Two younger ones will need funding soon. Neither parent has had education, so it is amazing that they value education so much.

She writes; she is practicing good virtues and qualities of her institution which is 1 ½ hours from home. It is difficult to travel because of traffic and dangers.

In the future, she wants to be part of society, better herself and help her family. She wants to be proactive, intelligent, have initiative, motivated to have the capacity to help her family and society. In Guatemala, we need Mayan professionals to continue the practice of our culture. We should be guides to a good road socially for the nation.

She learned basic characteristics and realize these are necessary personally and for her nation.

She want to be a successful person, creative, have initiative, transform with an excellent attitude and responsibility.