

February 1, 2006

Dear Friends of L4L

With the successful 2005 school year behind us at the Andrea Gonzales Elementary School in El Amatillo, Honduras, Lunches for Learning is excited about what we have planned in 2006.

In mid January, I was given the opportunity to represent Lunches for Learning Incorporated along with Ron Hicks and Dottie Gilbert (our translator!) on a trip to Honduras. Our goals during this visit were many but the highlights include delivery and installation of a computer that will be used to manage L4L activities, delivery of the nutritional supplements for the first half of the school year and site visits to the two new schools that L4L will be adding to the program in 2006.

After spending some time with Roxana, our “in-country” program Administrator, to assess the 2005 program and make plans for 2006, we headed out to visit the first of the two new schools that would be added to the lunch program for the 2006 school year. From El Amatillo, we drove a short distance down CA-1 (Central American Highway 1) and turned off onto a road going north. We drove less than a quarter of a mile to the school called Escuela Manual de Jesus Subriana in Santa Lucia. It was a bright blue, two-room school house in fairly good repair. In fact, even though the bathrooms were outhouses to you and me, they actually had running city water! But most of the 50 or so kids that attend this school are not so lucky at home. They come from the rural neighborhood further down the road and are the children of laborers or farmers who seldom make enough money to provide shelter, clothing and food for their family.



The principal gave us a tour of the school and then we loaded into the van to make our way to the second school. We traveled further down CA-1 and turned onto a dirt road. The terrain on this road quickly deteriorated. The travel was slow and deliberate in the van over a rugged and rocky road. We traveled this road for about 20 minutes until we reach a dried river bed. We were told that during the rainy season, the river grows significantly and the only way to cross what was now a bunch of dry rock was to cross on foot. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch had wiped out most of the bridges in the area. Additionally, the terrain from this point was way too mountainous for anything other than a dirt bike—or foot! The driver parked the van and we exited with Roxana and Johanna, (the principal of our second new school called Escuela “3 de Octubre” Sabana Redonda Goascoran, in Valle Province) and headed off for the 1 hour walk to the school. If Johanna could walk one hour in the morning and then 1 hour in the evening 5 days a week to reach her school, then so could we!





Just about an hour into the walk up the side of a mountain, we arrived at a plateau where we were greeted by a beautiful little school among some shade trees flanked by more mountains. Like the other school, the building was rough but in good shape and this school had its own kitchen. This school had three rooms that were used for the various grades. The kitchen area was nothing more than a cinderblock building with a cement platform of sorts in one corner that was the preparation and cooking surface.

Johanna expressed her gratitude for being selected for the Lunches for Learning program because she said that most of the kids that attend her school walk as far as she does and they come to school so tired and hungry, which makes learning very difficult. With our help, she was sure that the kids would improve in their physical health and learning ability.



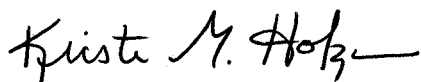
Again, we toured the facilities, snapped several pictures to remember our visit and began the long walk back to the van. We were sure that the trip back would be easier because the trip to the school was uphill all the way! Funny how a mind interprets things! To our surprise, much of the trip back was just as grueling with several uphill inclines and several steep, slippery downhill stretches. We made it back to the van one hour later, tired but encouraged, so we decided that we had accomplished our goals for the day and headed back to the motel to share a meal with the school principals and talk over details of the program.



As I reflect on my time in Honduras, I have mixed emotions. It was the adventure of a lifetime in many respects but it was also a big awakening. You can't see the poverty on the faces of so many kids and not be touched. You can't see the rough living conditions and not give pause for the abundance we have the opportunity to experience here in the United States. You can't see the hope in a school principal's eye at the prospect of relieving her students' hunger and not be encouraged. You can't walk the long trek a principal walks every day for the sake of her students and not be inspired.

I could go on and on with my personal reflections but instead, I will end with this. Thank you, faithful supporters of Lunches for Learning, for being the vehicle through which this program continues to grow and for giving your financial support so willingly. You have already made a difference in the children of the Andrea Gonzales Elementary School and now you will be touching the lives of many more children at the two new schools. May God continue to touch your heart for the sake of these kids and may you know the difference you have made.

With sincere thanks,



Kristi M. Holzimmer