

HEART TO HEART

The latest news from *Connecting Hearts Ministry*, a ministry of Chapel Hill Christian School

A Sponsor's Journey by Cheri Secrest, CHCS Parent/Alumna

In 2010, I nervously walked into the Amigos Church in Peronia, Guatemala, not knowing what to expect. The church was bustling with students and parents, all speaking a language I did not understand. The trip through Guatemala City had been a bit daunting and unfamiliar, and I couldn't help asking myself, "Did I make a mistake by coming to Guatemala?"

I anxiously searched the faces in the crowd, and then I spotted them – two of the most beautiful smiles I had ever seen! Fredy and José were watching from afar, not knowing how to approach us. I waved them over, and all my fears immediately disappeared as I received the biggest hugs I had ever gotten!

Our sponsorship journey began several years earlier when we read an article in the CHCS newsletter stating that four Connecting Hearts students needed sponsorships. My husband, Nate, and I had just made a small profit when we sold our home. We decided to make a one-time donation to help the boys. After we began receiving letters and photos from the boys and realizing the blessing of

having them in our lives, we HAD to continue our sponsorships!

Through our letters, we have been able to pray for one another. At one point, I had lost both my parents and Fredy had lost his precious grandmother. José was facing difficulties with his health and family. Marcos was doing well in school, but also had to help his family by working in the fields. We encouraged each other through these hard times as well as celebrated happy occasions, like Fredy's undergraduate degree and José's new niece!

During our first trip, my daughter, Maddie, and I gained an appreciation for how much we have been blessed after witnessing Fredy's single room apartment in which he shared a bed with his father and brother. Marcos slept in a hammock hanging from the ceiling while his poor parents slept on a wooden board in the same small shack. We watched as small children carried large loads of sticks up steep hills, and children worked over hot fires to make tortillas. Maddie is now 21 and the experience remains in her heart.

During our trip, I made a promise to Fredy that if he graduated from college, we would come back to Guatemala to attend his graduation. Fredy and José continued on to the university. They endured early morning commutes on dangerous buses, difficult classes, long workdays, endless study sessions, and extensive exams.

When Fredy fulfilled his dream last July to graduate from college with a master's degree,



Nate and Cheri at Fredy's college graduation

Nate and I returned to Guatemala to attend his graduation. We were like proud parents, edging out other attendees for the front row seats. We had been his sponsors since eighth grade. To watch him walk across the stage with a joyful look of accomplishment was an indescribable moment that only God could have orchestrated.

After graduation, we celebrated at the Connecting Hearts' house, and through tears, Fredy individually thanked each person attending. It was an unforgettable moment, and there was not a dry eye in the room.

Many people have supported Fredy through his journey, and he is very grateful for every single one. Most of all, he is thankful to God.

If you are a sponsor, you are making a great difference in your child's life. You may not be able to go to Guatemala (although I highly recommend it!), but just know that you are changing lives in ways you cannot comprehend. In turn, they will change your life forever as your hearts are connected!



Nate and Cheri sharing time with José Miguel and Fredy

Dear Friends... A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Sponsorship not only changes the lives of the students in Guatemala; it also changes the lives of our sponsors. There is a heart connection that takes place as letters and pictures are shared, prayers are lifted up, and for some, the moment they meet in person. This can only be the work of God. I am so thankful that I am able to witness these connections during our trips to Guatemala.

"We praise you, God, we praise you, for your Name is near; people tell of your wonderful deeds."
Psalm 75:1



In Christ, Kelly Foguth, CHM Director



My Trip to Guatemala by Ryan Foguth

I am an alumnus of Chapel Hill Christian School, so I heard much about Connecting Hearts Ministry over my years there. Since my mom started working as the director of the ministry, I wanted to go to Guatemala with her to see what it was all about.

I decided to run a basketball camp for the students at the Amigos School, since it is something I have a passion for. I know that soccer is the main sport in Guatemala, but I wanted to share my love for basketball with them. It was awesome to see how happy the students were to be taken out of class to play basketball. Even though I didn't speak the language, I was able to connect with the children at the school. There was one boy in particular that I had a special connection with. He always had a smile on his face. Basketball was his favorite sport, too. He even liked the same foods I liked. He wanted to be by my side every minute. His name is Angel. When I found out that he didn't have a sponsor, I felt led to start sponsoring him. This really impacted me while I was in Guatemala.

My life was also impacted in many other ways during my trip. While I was in La Tinta, we went to visit some of our sponsored students' homes. We would all agree that we have a lot here in the United States, but it is very different when you see it in person. We just don't understand the depth of what we have in comparison to the little that they have.

What impacted me most on my trip was the time spent with our group in La Tinta. Nataly Rivera, Carlos David Rivera, and Alvaro Cano joined us. They are older and have all been sponsored students in Connecting Hearts Ministry. Hernan, our driver, was also with us. I bonded with each of them, especially in the evenings when they shared their testimonies with me. It was amazing to hear their life stories and to see how God has used the ministry to touch their lives. They now have a heart to give back and to help the ministry. They take time off work and out of their daily lives to go to La Tinta and serve.

I am so blessed that I got to experience all this while I was in Guatemala. It was a great experience, and I look forward to returning to see all of my friends, especially my boy, Angel.



Ryan found a shady spot to rest in La Tinta, accompanied by some friends



Ryan with his new sponsored boy, Angel

CONNECTING HEARTS MINISTRY A MINISTRY OF CHAPEL HILL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



...From One Heart to Another

address: 1639 Killian Road, Akron, Ohio 44312

phone: 330-896-0852

email: chm@chapelhillchristianschool.org

website: connectingheartsm ministry.net

Praising...

♥ We celebrated Fredy Gudiel Reyes as he graduated in July with a master's degree in business. He is our first sponsored student to graduate with a master's.

♥ God has provided for Nataly Rivera to work for Connecting Hearts Ministry for a second year!

♥ Darwin, Mayra, and Cesar had a successful trip to La Tinta in the spring. They wanted to bless the teachers of the San Marcos School with a teacher workshop. Many fun and creative ideas were shared, as well as time set aside to worship and hear God's Word from Darwin. Each teacher was blessed and grateful for this opportunity.



Darwin, Mayra, and Cesar with the teachers from La Tinta

♥ We celebrated Ana Rivera's 75th birthday, and honored her faithful years of service with Connecting Hearts Ministry.



Danna Hall and Ana Rivera sharing 25 years of friendship

Praying...

♥ Please pray as we take a group of high school students from Peronia to serve in La Tinta in January, 2020. Pray that God would use this trip to work in their lives and give them a heart for others.