

Responsibilities No Teenager Should Bear

Soon after Mardoqueo graduated from Grade 10, the unthinkable happened. His dad was rushed to the hospital with an unexplained health issue, and never came home.

As the oldest son, Mardoqueo suddenly faced responsibilities that no teenager should bear. Instead of planning for his own future, he had to look for a job to be able to support his widowed mother and four younger siblings. In the end, he began working in the fields harvesting vegetables and cutting flowers. The 60 quetzales (about \$8) that Mardoqueo earned each day was his family's only income.

Mardoqueo dreamed of continuing his education so that he could find a better job. He even checked out various secondary schools in the municipality of Purulhá. But all the options were so expensive, and he didn't have a lot of money to set aside for studies.

Then, one of his former classmates told him about the brand new Vida Extension Program starting the following school year.

This distance learning program allows students to work during the day, and study evenings and weekends. Each Saturday, students attend a special devotional time and tutorials with their teachers, and use the computer labs to work on their studies. One of the program sites was even at Vida Mochán, the school where Mardoqueo had attended junior high!

Mardoqueo wasted no time in registering for the three-year accounting option, a program he knew would provide him with good job prospects to better support his family. He was thrilled to find a way to continue his studies, despite his changed responsibilities.

It hasn't been easy. From Monday to Friday, Mardoqueo leaves his house at 5 a.m. and returns at 6 p.m. On Saturdays, he attends the program on the Mochán campus. At night, he still has school work to do. But next month, he will officially be a high school graduate with a diploma in accounting. His father – who himself couldn't read and write – would have been so proud.



Soon after Mardoqueo's Grade 10 graduation, his world fell apart



Mardoqueo will be better able to support his family, thanks to the Vida Extension Program



The Vida Extension Program allows students like Mardoqueo to complete their junior high or senior high education while working.

Students attend the Vida Chijacorrar campus or Vida Mochán campus on Saturdays for devotionals, tutorials, and access to computer labs. They can also contact their teachers during the week for help with lessons. Impact partners with América Latino for the distance education component, while providing local teachers to support and disciple Vida Extension students. Senior high options include accounting, administration, and a targeted university entrance program.

A Place for Melissa

“The Vida School was where I wanted to be,” says Melissa. But she wasn’t sure there was a place for her.

Melissa completed her elementary years at the local public school. While looking for a place for her to continue her studies, Melissa’s family tried to register her at Vida Chijacorrall, but were told that the junior high classes were already full.



Melissa’s dad started looking for a different school, but, Melissa says, “In my heart, there was no desire to be in another place, so I didn’t give up. I constantly prayed to the Lord to make it possible for me to be at the Vida School.”

Melissa was so excited when they received the phone call saying that a spot had been found for her! God had answered her prayers, and Melissa started Grade 8 at Vida Chijacorrall School. Everything was different and new, and little by little Melissa learned to worship the Lord, sing new songs, and raise her hands to God. “In each devotional,” says Melissa, “I fell more in love with the precious presence of God.”

As Melissa graduated from Grade 10, she and her family faced more decisions. In Guatemala, students complete their high school education by specializing in a professional program. The senior high at Vida Chijacorrall offers a three-year teacher training program.

“I realized that I wanted to guide children to know the great love of God,” says Melissa, “and to help them find the talents that God has given them to praise His name, just as I had found the talent and ability to sing and worship God.”

So in 2018, she started the teacher training program at Vida Chijacorrall School. She learned how to excel at teaching, she studied academic subjects, and she learned more about God. She also developed her talents by serving on the worship team during the devotionals.

Melissa graduated as a teacher of intercultural early childhood education in 2020 – in the midst of the pandemic. Job prospects looked bleak with school buildings closed and unemployment rampant. But still, Melissa prayed to God for a job where she could serve Him. When she was called for an interview with Vida Schools, she was ecstatic!

Once the schools reopened, Melissa returned to Vida Chijacorrall – this time as a kindergarten teacher. “I want to guide each of my students to the feet of Christ,” says Melissa. “The school has been such a true refuge for me. God wants me to guide the children to find refuge in Him, hope for their future, and true peace and happiness.”

From completing her jr high education to teaching her own class of students, Melissa found her place at Vida Chijacorrall School

Secondary Education in Guatemala

In Guatemala, education beyond elementary school is not compulsory. Less than half of Guatemalan children begin junior high school, let alone complete it, and not even a quarter continue on to senior high.

In rural Indigenous areas, such as where Impact Ministries serves, those numbers are much lower. Secondary education is generally only available in major centers, monthly tuition can be high in public and private schools, and children may be pulled out of school because they need to contribute to the family income.

No wonder Grade 10 Graduation is such a significant milestone in Guatemala.



Impact Ministries provides junior high during the afternoon program at Agua de Vida Chijulhá, Vida Chijacorrall, Vida Mochán and Vida Purulhá, and a senior high teacher training program at Vida Chijacorrall.

Students can also complete junior high and high school through the Vida Extension Program.

Learn more at [impactminusa.org/schools](https://www.impactminusa.org/schools)



Dreaming Big Dreams

Without Vida Schools, Amarilis might never have started studying in the first place. The costs associated with going to school – even for “free” public education – are sometimes just too much, especially for a single-parent family in Guatemala. And education for girls often isn’t given priority in Indigenous families.

started dreaming big dreams. Amarilis felt that God was calling her to become a doctor. She studied hard through her primary years and through the pandemic lockdowns that defined the end of her elementary schooling.

Despite only having a second grade education herself, Amarilis’ mother supported her daughter’s dreams, and allowed Amarilis to continue studying past Grade 7. The few quetzales that her mother earned harvesting tomatoes and cilantro paid for transportation to and from the junior high program at Vida Chijacorral.

Imagine how excited Amarilis was to discover that the newest Vida School close to her home was going to start offering a junior high program! This year, Amarilis started Grade 9 just a 15 minute walk from her house.

Next year, Amarilis will be part of the first graduating class of the Agua de Vida Chijulhá Junior High program. She still has a long way to go to become a doctor – but she already has more education than so many rural Poqomchí girls. And it all began because there was a Vida School available for a little girl ready to start kindergarten.



Amarilis' mother is supporting her daughter's dreams and Amarilis is now attending jr high at Agua de Vida Chijulhá



But at six years old, Amarilis DID start kindergarten. It took her almost an hour to walk from her little village to Vida Chamché, but Amarilis was so happy to be in school. She was excited to receive her school uniform and shoes from her sponsor, and so thankful for the daily school meal. She learned that God has plans even for her life, and she



Will you continue to be there for children like Amarilis? You can support a class and follow their educational journey. You can sponsor a child. Or you can give a special gift to invest in education in Guatemala – and invest in the big dreams of children like Amarilis.

Yes, I want to invest in education in Guatemala!

Sponsor a child \$40/month x ___ child(ren) Support a class \$50/month x ___ class(es)

Invest in Education today \$ _____

Please make cheques payable to **Impact Ministries USA**.

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impactminusa.org/donate

News and Updates

We were excited to have Les Peters in the United States this year.

He spoke at the Global Impact Celebration in Dayton, Indiana earlier this month and visited with some friends of Impact in the area.



Impacting Guatemala through:

- schools
- churches
- medical & dental clinics
- orphan care
- sponsorship
- discipleship
- short-term missions

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"Secondary Education"



Baptisms are so exciting in Guatemala!

After a series of baptismal classes, a baptismal service is planned at the Rio de Vida Church – usually when the three congregations are meeting together, so that everyone can celebrate the young people and adults who are taking this step to publicly declare their faith!

Construction is booming at our schools in Guatemala!

The new kitchen and dining area at Vida Chamché has been dedicated and is serving students. The perimeter wall around Vida Nueva is finally going up along with an additional classroom. And, at Agua de Vida Chijulhá, the offices are under construction.



Thank you to everyone who was part of getting fluoride treatments, toothbrushes, vitamins, a fetal doppler, and dental equipment (including a portable dental exam chair, a new sterilizer, and a new x-ray head) to Guatemala. Some have arrived and some are still en route, but all will impact body and soul through the Impact Clinic.

So many people shared their skills in Guatemala this year – mechanics, first aid, translation, dentistry, sewing, medical, videography – the list goes on.

Thank you all! Want to share your skills in Guatemala in 2024? Check out impactminusa.org/serveinguatemala for current opportunities.

