



Our Year in Review

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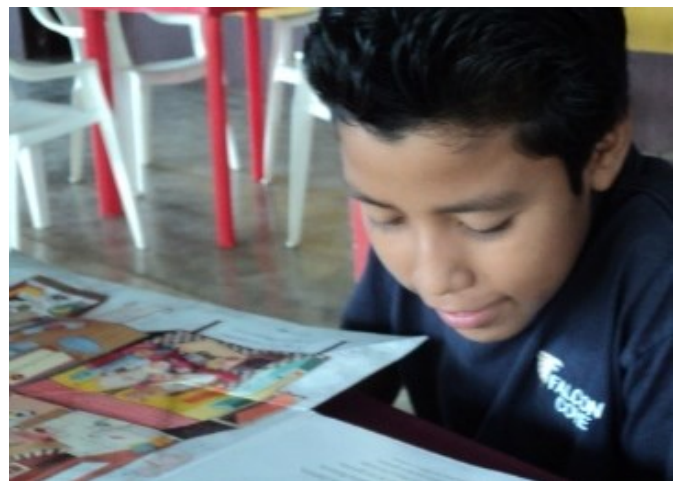
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Mayan child playing the marimba, Guatemala's national instrument

Books...Literacy...Opportunity

The years certainly fly by! In 2007, *From Books to Brilliance (FBTB)* initiated its efforts to promote literacy in areas of heart wrenching poverty by supplying the Nicaraguan village of Mulukukú with a thousand children's books, purchased in the capital city of Managua. Now, in 2013, we are privileged to work with an additional five communities located in both Nicaragua and Guatemala, as well as with two organizations in New Mexico. We at *FBTB*, are delighted with this steady expansion of our service. Hundreds more children now have access to age-appropriate and thought-provoking literature. In time, and with an emerging focus on reading skills, we believe that these villagers will be able to look beyond the



Reading books in Santo Tomás, Guatemala

constraints of poverty and redefine their future...from a desperate past to an optimistic future. That path is neither short nor well-lit, but we can see the possibilities.

Thankfully, there is also a growing awareness of our mission to create access to books in these forgotten communities, along with an

increasing interest in volunteering for *FBTB*. This year, for the second time, the *University of New Mexico's Student Organization of Latin American Studies (SOLAS)* invited us to share our story and experience. *Rotary eClub of the Southwest, USA* featured *FBTB* in another meeting and awarded us a second grant. Also, for the

Support *From Books to Brilliance* at
www.goodsearch.com.

Your online searches and purchases will raise money for village libraries at no cost to you!

Books...Literacy...Opportunity

fourth year in a row, we partnered with Mercedes Fruland of *Usborne Books & More* by selling books at the *Harvest Festival* in Corrales, New Mexico. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, our organization held a silent auction at the *Children's Theatre*, featuring folk art from Latin America. The outcome... we look forward to the energy and enthusiasm of additional volunteers for our trip to Central America this summer, and additional funds to support our mission. We appreciate each and every opportunity to illuminate the extreme need for books in these villages.

FBTB is truly an all-volunteer, grass-roots effort...interested people with common goals coming together to solve problems. We cannot underestimate the importance of our connections to the many individuals and organizations that we've met and collaborated with in the past six years. Today's world gives us the internet, an instantaneous way to communicate with people near and far. It does not, however, take the place of the meaningful, unique bond that is created between two people standing face to face, eye to eye, discussing and solving problems...the part that we, at *FBTB*, love the most!

Women of the ELCA at
All Saints Lutheran Church
We thank you for your support.



Book delivery to children at
Jun Toj in Rabinal, Guatemala

Guatemala

Teachers at the *Austrian Guatemalan Institute (IAG)* in Guatemala City facilitate our trips from beginning to end. Upon our arrival last summer, Sigfried Ganster and Christoph Oman chauffeured us throughout the busy metropolis in search of books written in Q'eqchi', K'iche' and Achi, the three Mayan languages spoken in the villages of El Estor, Santo Tomás, and in the mountain town of Rabinal, which is the location of

our most recent project. Guatemala has the lowest literacy rate in all of Latin America, in part due to the lack of resources printed in the native languages spoken by more than fifty percent of the population. However, now the *Academia de Lenguas Mayas* of Guatemala is publishing many books, primarily related to Mayan culture. Therefore, in addition to the hundreds of Spanish language books purchased and delivered last summer, children received books in their home language. One six-year-old boy proudly read a well-known Mayan legend out loud to us. Though we understood none of it, we were delighted with his enthusiasm. *FBTB's* goals mesh well with the decades-old *Amigos Program* at *IAG*, whose determined mission is to promote bilingual and bicultural literacy in Guatemala.

Learning to weave and to read in Rabinal



Books...Literacy...Opportunity

We recently received emails from several of the towns' leaders telling us of the positive impact these books are having on their communities. At Aj Awinel, the high school in El Estor, teenagers study from the math and science textbooks provided by *FBTB* last summer. One young lady is currently preparing to take the entrance exams for the nursing program offered in a nearby town. At Jun Toj, the Mayan elementary school in Rabinal, the principal established a reading corner in each classroom, where students enjoy the books daily. From the village of Santo Tomás, a bulky package arrived at our post office box in New Mexico stuffed with children's commentaries and drawings of their favorite books. These elementary students, attending the *Centro Educativo Austríaco Maxeño*, ask when we are returning. They look forward to demonstrating their improved literacy skills by reading to us...each and every child.

Nicaragua

Meet Indira, an incredibly tenacious woman from the small town of Andaime. Her work at the *Casa de la Mujer* connects her with several impoverished villages near Granada, in southern Nicaragua. With



High school students at Aj Awinel, El Estor, Guatemala

solicited funds from provinces in Spain and France, Indira's team has replaced hundreds of metal and cardboard shacks with cement-block housing, complete with standard flooring, running water and sewage systems. El Fortin and El Pantanal, the location of two of *FBTB's* village libraries, are on that list of lucky recipients. We have great trust in Indira's judgment with issues pertaining to our libraries. Last summer in El Pantanal, we learned that the problem of insufficient lighting remains unsolved. Indira requested that we move the little library to one of their soon-to-be-built structures, designed to be a multi-use community building. As planned, El Pantanal's *Biblioteca From Books to Brilliance* will exist independently, and not tied to the schedules and

inadequate conditions of the local elementary school.

The villages' enthusiasm for their libraries is clear. At El Fortín, Indira informs us that the project is working "perfectly." Teachers use the books to prepare for the week's lessons, and children come in regularly to study, read stories, and put

puzzles together with friends. María Teresa, *Biblioteca Paraíso del Niño's* manager, tells us that the children know the storybooks by heart. They've read them all multiple times. Most recently



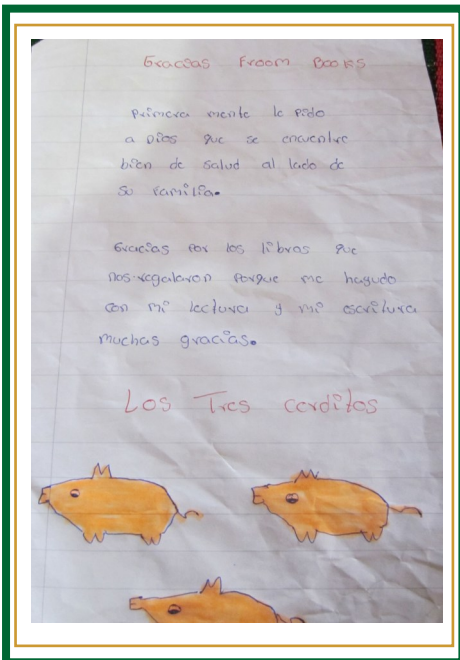
Children, books and FBTB book bags at El Pantanal, Nicaragua

Books...Literacy...Opportunity

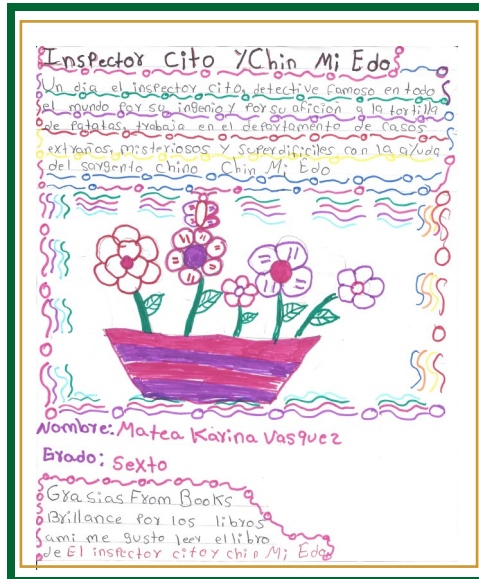
FBTB purchased specifically requested high school textbooks for students there. Some are now teenagers and consequently require higher level texts as they continue to frequent their village library.

USA

From Books to Brilliance has different objectives for the two literacy projects in New Mexico. Our goal here is to support family and childhood literacy, thereby helping children transition from their life at home to academic success at school. Located in the state's poorest county, *La Vida Felicidad* (formerly *Mosaic*) works with children with disabilities and their families. *FBTB's* donated



"Thank you for the books that you gave us because they have helped my reading and my writing."



Sixth grader Matea's artwork and comments about her favorite mystery book

books are a large part of their pre-school play program, helping youngsters build vocabulary skills. *Cuidando Los Niños*, also a not-for-profit organization, is an Albuquerque daycare program for children from six weeks of age to five years old. Their specialists "provide high quality early childhood development and therapeutic services to meet the unique needs of children experiencing homelessness." Mercedes Fruland, with *Usborne Books & More*, donates all profits from our yearly participation at the *Corrales Harvest Festival* to our organization. Children in these two programs now enjoy over 700 beautiful books. We owe many thanks to Mercedes for her expertise and tireless efforts. *FBTB* plans to continue these efforts to benefit our youth in New Mexico.

The Latin American villages that we serve are isolated, primarily without access to modern communication, transportation, or good education. Undoubtedly, residents question our motives and dedication, and wonder if or when we will return. Most do not expect help; they have rarely experienced it. By returning year after year, our relationship is growing stronger. They now look forward to our next visit. Their initial wariness is shifting to openness and trust. The people of these villages know that there is much work to do, but that a future of literacy is within their grasp.

At *FBTB* our objectives are straightforward...to provide access to books and thus, to literacy. Though we could talk about the worthy goals of international understanding and peace, we leave that to others, permitting our focus to remain simple. We want to thank all of you, our ardent supporters, for this gift of serving those in need. Your backing, both financial and spiritual, allows us to continue this mission and to expand it year by year. There is something quite powerful in caring about the future of children wherever they live. Thank you!

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www.frombookstobrilliance.org

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