



From Books to Brilliance

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Our Year in Review

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Strong Partnerships, Sustainable Projects

We warmly welcome
Kimberly Kesterke to our
Board of Directors.



Kimberly earned a Masters of Business Administration at the University of Georgia, Terry College of Business. A sales professional for over twelve years, Kimberly's expertise is in making underperforming sales territories profitable. Kim is a real estate investor, a community advocate and a mom. She loves to write. With her business experience and writing ability, she will assist our team in countless ways. Thank you, Kimberly!

It was clear from the beginning. To grow properly From Books to Brilliance (FBTB) would need the interest of many. In 2007, Emily, Maggie and Kim delivered our first cache of books to an outlying town of Nicaragua. Purchased in the capital city with a generous grant from the Dr. Seuss Foundation, we loaded a thousand precious children's books on top of an old yellow school bus. Alongside rode dozens of boxes of medical supplies, vital cargo donated by Galveston's First Presbyterian Church. Spanish-speakers all, we not only hoped to assist Dr. Janice Smith's medical delegation with the University of Texas, but to start a library as well. And so our journey began, with lots of experience in life, little in medical translation and none in library creation.

Interest in this literacy



Creating village libraries takes the support of many.
We thank you all!

mission continues to grow both at home and abroad. Facilitated by today's instant communication we hear from people worldwide, some asking for help and some offering support. Though our focus is the Americas, community leaders in Uganda and Bangladesh have contacted us hoping to create their own local libraries. This summer we planned to

meet with a publishing company in Nicaragua that offers to donate textbooks, and with a photojournalist in Guatemala who is willing to interview our readers. Rotarians in both countries anticipate a visit to their clubs. So as the world seems to get smaller every day, our world at FBTB is getting much bigger with an ever-increasing number of partnerships.

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Thank you for your belief in us and in our mission to create access to books and educational materials in under-served communities where few to no books exist. Now, with ten small libraries and a decade of experience, FBTB is well-established and fundamentally strong. Because of your continuing interest, citizens in these rural villages gather to read, study, play and plan for a better future in their own local library.

Unfortunately, this summer's plans have changed. In July we travel to Guatemala only. Plans to visit Nicaragua are on hold, due to two months of political unrest. Nevertheless, our six rural libraries continue to open and fill with children. With their cell phones, the library managers send us photos. For them the chaos of the big cities is distant. We hope and pray that Nicaragua returns quickly to the peaceful country we love so much.

Central America, Our Newest Projects

Biblioteca Paz y Vida is now open. You won't need directions. Just watch and listen for all the action... young readers coming and going, moms checking in on their kids, and from time to time the contagious and hilarious laughter of youth. You're now right in front of *Biblioteca Paz y Vida*. Meet Marbel, the little library's coordinator, who



First delivery, Paz y Vida, Nicaragua July 2017



Grand Opening for Paz y Vida Library, March 2018

introduces its small patrons to so many educational resources. She manages them all...the books, puzzles, maps, globes, pencils, silly-looking erasers, and the pint-sized tables and chairs, so perfect for Paz y Vida's enthusiastic learners.

"Reading is education, and education is a gift to humanity," says Indira Morales, partner and project manager for the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE). In March citizens gathered to celebrate that gift at *Biblioteca Paz y Vida*'s grand opening. In the spirit of "sisterhood" German ambassador, Ute Konig, congratulated the community. She spoke of the many individuals and organizations in Nicaragua, Germany and the United States that worked together to create this library.

Remarkable. Just a few years ago, all Paz y Vida citizens were homeless. Thanks to AMNLAE's vision and dedication, all now live in beautiful, small houses with standard flooring, running water and electricity. Children here no longer fetch water and wood every morning. They go to school, and to the library. They do homework and study. Many come just to read stories, color, or put puzzles together.

The Frankfurt Granada Association and the German Embassy funded the building construction. You, dear friends, supplied a plethora of books and educational materials. And GlobalGiving's platform allowed us reach out to the world for help. *Biblioteca Paz y Vida* is a truly global initiative.

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Visit *Instituto Kajib' No'j*, the site of our newest project in Momostenango, Guatemala. A few smiling teens will offer you a tour of their school. In the band room musicians practice their drums in preparation for the upcoming community parade. Melodies of Mayan forefathers float down the hall, played on the school's marimba. In the garden across the street, pupils harvest organic fruits and vegetables, and demonstrate clever systems of irrigation, water filtration and composting.



A thumbs-up from teacher at Kajib' No'j, Guatemala

A school library is now included in that tour. Sigfried Ganster and Karin Sibora, *Amigos* volunteers with the Austrian Guatemalan Institute (IAG) delivered the first cache of literature to Kajib' No'j's students. These hard-working teens already embrace the wisdom of their families and fellow citizens. Now, with access to some of the world's great literature, students are acquiring wisdom from the past as well.

In the *Popol Vuh* they read the Mayan story of creation, told by their legendary ancestors. *El Señor Presidente*, by Guatemala's Miguel Angel Asturias, describes life under a merciless dictator. Their world expands further when reading *Don Quijote de la Mancha* and the *Life of Pi*. According to Principal Pedro Eligio Ajxup, "the books are motivating students to set and achieve goals and dreams for their lives." Now included on the bookshelves donated by our Amigos partners, are Guatemalan textbooks for grade levels one through six.

At Home in the USA

FBTB partnered with James Monroe Middle School students to spearhead yet another schoolwide book drive. Tremendously successful, over three thousand children's books found homes in children's organizations and homeless shelters.



Enjoying world literature in Kajib' No'j's new library



Reading a student-created book at Biblioteca Mano Amiga, a library FBTB hopes to support. Balgue, Island of Ometepe, Nicaragua

In New Mexico, Spanish students at Sandia Prep authored and illustrated hand-made books for the third year. "The opportunity for language students to write books in the target language and have these books become part of a library in a Central American country speaks to today's relevance of global learning. It presents an authentic connection, purpose and outcome that students today seek as part of their education," says teacher Daniel de Leon. These unique gifts now delight our young readers. This project connects U.S. kids with Central American kids, the First World with the Third World, teachers with their students, and students with their learning.

A library is much more than a venue. It is a hope, a dream, and a future. It is power. From Books to Brilliance and our generous supporters work hard to invest all

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resources where these small libraries will thrive. It is the complementary hard work and persistence of the citizens that inspire students to take advantage of those resources. Their enthusiasm inspires us as well.

During our trip to Guatemala in July, we expect to grow our existing libraries' resources in Rabinal and Momostenango. Watch for upcoming news of the river-village of Seacacar, where its seventy Mayan families have enormous plans. "Without education we cannot save our home." They are already busy reforestation, reintroducing species, and saving the Rio Sauce Watershed. From all of us at FBTB thank you again for your support.

Please expect our annual newsletter in June. Check out our quarterly project reports at [GlobalGiving](#) as well.



Reading just for fun! Objective: Boys
Gracias, Rotary eClub of the SW USA
La Laguna, Nicaragua



Thank you, Delta Kappa Gamma
Educational Foundation!



Thank you to everyone!
Children's Paradise Library,
El Fortin, Nicaragua



Jerome Baca, reading with kids
Solidaridad, Nicaragua



Luke Baca, Junior at Sandia Prep,
studying Nicaraguan history
Balgue, Ometepe, Nicaragua