



The Gift of Presence



This month I am reminded of a simple but often forgotten truth: "The deepest human need is not to be fixed, but to know we are not alone."

Much of our lives are spent trying to solve problems, overcome obstacles, and trying to make difficult things go away. Yet some burdens cannot be removed quickly, and some questions take years to answer. In those moments, what often matters most is not a solution but a person — someone willing to stay, to listen, and to remind us that we do not have to carry life challenges by ourselves.

As you read this month's stories, I hope you will see that many of the most meaningful moments are not found in problems being solved, but in quiet acts of being present. A conversation. A shared meal. A ride to an appointment. An encouraging word. A relationship that remains steady when life is not.

We are deeply grateful to be part of a group that believes people matter, not because of what they can accomplish, but because they are worthy of being known, understood, and loved.

Thank you for being part of that story with us.

Eugene

Dream Center Updates

from Julio Galindo & Jemima Barrera

The Dignity of Work

May 1st is Labor Day in Guatemala, a national holiday dedicated to recognizing the contributions of workers and reflecting on the value and dignity of work.

For many people, Labor Day is a welcome day off—a chance to rest, spend time with family, and celebrate the work that sustains their communities. In La Pila, however, May 1st often looks much like any other day. Fathers head to the fields, mothers continue caring for their families, and work goes on. For many families, taking a day off simply is not an option.



Many children in our community still grow up believing that work is more valuable than education. Some help support their families, while others have never seen how education can open new opportunities. Work offers immediate rewards, but education can often feel distant or uncertain.

We believe every child deserves the opportunity to learn, develop their talents, and pursue a future with more choices. That is why education remains at the heart of our mission. Labor Day reminds us that although challenges remain, transformation is happening. Little by little, more young people are beginning to believe that their future can be different.

Celebrating Mothers



Mother's Day is one of the most meaningful celebrations of the year in Guatemala and was the highlight of May at our school. We gathered to honor the mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers who play a vital role in the lives of our students. Many of these women grew up facing poverty, neglect, or difficult circumstances, yet they continue to do the best they can for their children every day.

At GCO, we believe that supporting children also means supporting the people raising them. This month, we also held a special activity for pregnant women and provided food bags for their families and gifts for the babies. We know that caring for mothers is also caring for their children, both before and after they are born. We want our school to be a safe place not only for students, but for their families as well, because when we invest in mothers, we also invest in their children's future.

Our Mother's day celebration was filled with joy, food, and special moments shared between students and their mothers. Yet one of the most meaningful moments came afterward, when a mother felt safe enough to share that she was experiencing violence in her home.

Since then, we have begun walking alongside her and her daughter, offering support and encouragement through this difficult season. Moments like these remind us that sometimes a simple celebration opens the door to hope, healing, and a deeper opportunity to serve.

Celebrating Mothers



More than a school, a community

At GCO, we believe that lasting change happens through relationships. That is why our programs are not simply for the community—they are built with the community.

This month, students continued participating in our jewelry-making club, where they learn practical skills that can support future family entrepreneurship projects and create additional opportunities for income. Mothers volunteered their time to help prepare meals for the students at the Dream Center, serving in a tangible way and helping create a caring environment for the children. Our students also took part in a community cleanup project, helping care for the village they call home and demonstrating that they can be a positive influence in their community.

The purpose behind all of these activities is the same: to strengthen families, encourage responsibility, create opportunities, and build a community where everyone has something valuable to contribute. We do not want to simply serve the community; we want to serve alongside it. One of the greatest joys of our ministry is seeing parents, students, teachers, and neighbors working together toward a shared vision for a stronger future. GCO is more than a school—it is a community.



Walking alongside students in difficult seasons

One of the lessons we learn again and again is that education is never just about academics. Behind every student is a story, and sometimes those stories involve challenges that extend far beyond the classroom.



This month, we continued walking alongside Yesica as she navigates significant anxiety caused by the difficult circumstances she faces at home. As one of our graduating students, she has worked hard to reach this point, yet her journey has not been easy. In addition to her struggles with anxiety, Yesica faces constant criticism from members of her extended family who believe she should stop studying.

As a result, she often finds herself defending a dream that others do not always understand or support. We continue to encourage Yesica and walk alongside her because we believe her education matters. Sometimes the greatest obstacle a student faces is not the classroom itself, but the pressure to abandon it.

We also received difficult news regarding Juan Angel. Through medical evaluations, we discovered an irreversible dental condition that will likely cause him to lose several teeth in the future. While we cannot change the diagnosis, we can help his family understand the road ahead and access the care he will need.





Brenda's journey has involved a different set of challenges. Through ongoing follow-up and medical care, we discovered signs of insulin resistance. Because it was identified early, she is now able to receive the treatment and monitoring necessary to protect her long-term health.



Due to specialized care is often only available in the city, these students frequently travel hours for appointments, treatments, evaluations, and follow-up visits. There is always someone from our team accompanying them, advocating for them, and helping them navigate what can often feel overwhelming.

Sometimes accompaniment means sitting in a doctor's office. Sometimes it means helping a family understand a diagnosis. And sometimes it simply means taking a student out for an ice cream, going shopping, sharing a meal, making sushi together, watching a movie or giving them a day away from the pressures of their daily reality so they can return with renewed strength and hope.

This is what accompaniment looks like at GCO. We do not simply refer students to services and wish them well. We walk with them through some of life's most difficult moments and remind them that they do not have to face them alone.



The Impact of a Scholarship

One of the greatest joys of our work is seeing the long-term impact of education.

Years ago, Josué was one of the first students to receive a scholarship through GCO. Today, he works as the Natural Sciences teacher at the Dream Center, teaching students from the same community where he grew up.

His story reminds us why this work matters. The impact of education is not always immediate. Sometimes it takes years to see the fruit. The young student who once benefited from the support of others now spends his days helping students learn, ask questions, and discover new possibilities for their future.

For many of our students, Josué is more than a teacher. He is someone who understands their reality because he has lived it himself. He knows the challenges they face, and his presence in the classroom is a reminder that education can open doors that once seemed out of reach. Thank you for helping make stories like Josué's possible. His journey is a powerful reminder that when we invest in a child, the impact can extend far beyond one life and into future generations.





Dream Center Spotlight



Marco Miculax

This month, we would like to introduce Marco Miculax, a valued member of our team and another example of the long-term impact of educational opportunity.

Years ago, Marco was one of the students who received a scholarship through GCO. Today, he works with us at the Dream Center, where he is responsible for facility maintenance and helps oversee many of the logistical needs that keep our programs running smoothly.

Much of Marco's work happens behind the scenes. From maintaining classrooms and buildings to helping prepare spaces for activities and supporting day-to-day operations, his dedication helps create a safe and welcoming environment for students, staff, and visitors. We are grateful for Marco and the important role he plays in making the work of the Dream Center possible every day.

Looking ahead - walking together

As we look ahead to the coming months, we remain committed to walking alongside students and families as they pursue education, navigate challenges, and build a brighter future. From supporting students with medical and emotional needs, to preparing our graduating class for the next chapter of their lives, there is still much work to be done.

We are especially excited to continue investing in young people like Yesica, Brenda, Juan Angel, and many others whose stories are still being written. Every opportunity, every lesson, every meal, and every act of accompaniment is helping create new possibilities for the next generation.

If you would like to support this work during 2026 —whether by continuing or increasing your giving or by joining us for the first time—you can do so here: [Donate here](https://www.greatcommissionoutreach.org/donate)