

## ✦ A Legacy of Quiet Generosity ✦



This month's reflection reminds us of a quiet truth: "A life is measured not by what it gathers, but by what it quietly gives away."

This month, I find myself thinking about my mother, Wanjirah Grace Wanjiru. Long before illness slowly changed her world, she quietly became part of the GCO story. She traveled with us to Guatemala on several mission trips, faithfully supported the work each month, and chose to sponsor an entire family—not because anyone asked her to, but because that was simply who she was. She believed love was something to be lived, not merely spoken about.

Looking back, I realize that her greatest gift was never found in any single act of generosity. It was the steady pattern of a life that continued to give without seeking recognition in return. Those gifts live on in ways she never fully saw, in children who were cared for, families who found hope, and a community that is stronger because she quietly chose to invest in it.

As you read this month's stories, I hope you'll be reminded that the lives that shape us most are often the ones marked by quiet faithfulness. I am deeply grateful that my mother's story has become part of GCO's story, and thankful for each of you who continue to give of yourselves in the same spirit.

Eugene

# Dream Center Updates

from Julio Galindo & Jemima Barrera

## Beauty, Power and Uncertainty: Fuego Volcano

Life in Guatemala often means living very close to both the beauty and the power of nature. This month, the Fuego Volcano once again reminded us of that reality. Increased volcanic activity and eruptions captured our attention and reminded communities across the region how quickly an ordinary day can change.

For those who live near Fuego, an eruption is more than an impressive sight in the distance. Families pay attention to the sound of explosions, falling ash, changing conditions, and information from local authorities. Memories of previous eruptions are never too far away.

Our community in La Pila was able to continue with our regular activities, but moments like these remind us not to take ordinary days for granted. There will always be circumstances we cannot control. What we can control is how we respond to them: staying connected, caring for our neighbors, and continuing to build communities where people know they do not have to face uncertainty alone.



## Healthy Habits, Healthy Kids

Some of the most important lessons children learn are also some of the simplest. This month, our team visited La Pila Elementary School for a hygiene workshop focused on everyday habits like washing hands, brushing teeth, and keeping clean from head to toe... and everything in between.

What made the workshop especially meaningful was seeing our own students help lead the activities. The younger children had the opportunity to learn from older students from their own community who were serving, teaching, and setting a positive example.

Through activities and plenty of laughter, the children learned practical skills while our students practiced something just as important: using what they have learned to serve others.



## More than a classroom

Not every important moment at school happens behind a desk. Through team games and group activities, our students have opportunities to communicate, cooperate, solve problems, and learn how to win and lose together.

These moments are not only fun—they help students build relationships, practice teamwork, handle frustration, and experience a sense of belonging.

We want our students to learn math, science, language, and history, but also how to be part of a community. Sometimes that lesson happens with a pencil in your hand, and sometimes in the middle of a game, surrounded by friends and laughter.



## More than Teachers

Last month, we shared how we celebrated Teacher's Day at our school. But when we returned from our mid-year break, our teachers were surprised to discover that the celebration wasn't quite over yet! Our students welcomed them back with gifts they had prepared for Teacher's Day. It was completely unexpected, but what touched us most was not the gifts themselves—it was what some of our students shared with us. They spoke about feeling valued, cared for, and loved at school. Some described finding in their teachers the encouragement, attention, and sense of safety they had been longing for in other parts of their lives. Hearing those words reminded us that the relationships built in a classroom can sometimes become just as important as the lessons taught there.

Later this month, our teachers also had the opportunity to enjoy a field trip together. Away from lesson plans, schedules, and classroom responsibilities, they had time to explore, laugh, share a meal, and simply enjoy being together.



## When Life Takes Unexpected Turns

Not every story develops the way we hope it will. Working closely with young people means celebrating their accomplishments, but it also means walking alongside them through difficult decisions, unexpected changes, and sometimes profound loss.

This month, we were able to spend some time with Lesbia and Ricardo after years that they decided to leave school. Of course, this was not what we hoped for them. We believe deeply in the opportunities education can provide, but we are also learning that accompaniment means more than celebrating the choices we agree with. It means continuing to care, keeping relationships alive, and, whenever possible, leaving the door open.

This month also brought a much deeper loss. Mérida, a young woman connected to many of our students and families, died by suicide. Her death deeply affected our community, particularly the students who knew and loved her.

In moments like this, there are no easy words or quick answers. Sometimes our role is simply to be present—to listen, to give students space to grieve and ask difficult questions, and to remind them that they do not have to carry painful moments alone. We cannot control every decision or take away every loss. But we can continue showing up for one another, especially when life takes an unexpected turn.



## A New Beginning

Even in a month that reminded us how complicated and fragile life can be, new stories are still beginning. Some of you may remember Hugo, who left school and eventually found his way back. Now, his younger brother José was also at risk of leaving elementary school after struggling academically and being told that he could no longer continue at his elementary school.

Rather than watching José give up on his education, we decided to try something new. We invited him to come to the Dream Center everyday to give him another opportunity to learn. We believe that struggling does not mean a child cannot learn—sometimes we simply need to find a different way to teach.

We do not know where José's story will lead, but we are grateful for the opportunity to help him keep learning and discover what he is capable of.





# Dream Center Spotlight



## **Sandra Gómez** **Kitchen Staff**

Sandra Gómez is part of our kitchen staff, but her story with GCO is also a story of returning home. After losing her mother at a young age, Sandra moved to Patzún at just 13 years old to work. Years later, she returned to La Pila and eventually joined GCO, finding an opportunity to work while serving the community where she grew up.

After returning, Sandra faced another difficult season when she could no longer remain in her father's home. Through these changes, she has found in GCO more than a job—a place where she feels valued and where she can invest her life in something meaningful.

Today, Sandra prepares the meals that nourish our students every day. She reminds us that investing in a community also means creating opportunities for people to use their own lives and experiences to care for the next generation.

## **Looking ahead - walking together**

As we look ahead to September, one of the most exciting moments of our year is getting closer. Our students and team are preparing to welcome a group of volunteers who will join us for several days of serving, learning, and sharing life with our community.

Our third academic unit will also continue, bringing new opportunities for our students to learn, grow, and take on new challenges as we move closer to the final months of the school year. As always, we will keep creating spaces where students feel supported, teachers feel valued, and our community can grow stronger together. Thank you for walking alongside us and making these opportunities possible.

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