

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13

Christmas Greetings from El Refugio

This has been a year of growth at El Refugio, in more ways than one! Our staff has attended and hosted many seminars and conferences. The most significant of these was a series of classes held weekly at the Central American Theological Seminary here in Guatemala City and organized by a team which included our executive director, Pamela Leon. This seminar culminated in a three-day conference focusing on how the church can work with other ministries as well as government institutions to address problems of domestic violence and abuse of women. This was very well attended and we hope it has sparked interest on the part of church leadership to take more responsibility in combating these issues which are so prevalent in this culture, and even in the church.

Growth has also come about in the number of women coming to us seeking help and refuge. In the months of August and September alone, we turned away 57 women (not including children) because our doors were full! We continue to pray earnestly for a new facility in which we will be able to expand our capacity as well as the services we provide. We have looked at a number of options and our first choice is a facility with 18 bedrooms, which would be well-suited to our needs. Please join us in praying that either we would receive the funding to purchase the building, or that the current owners would consider a lease-to-own arrangement.

We have also had a growth in volunteers this year in the areas of counseling, discipleship, job skills training, and parenting classes.

Our microenterprises have expanded significantly as well; and we are encouraged that jewelry and aprons from our shelter are being sold in several locations around the US. Our increase in sales has allowed the women to put away some money in savings as they prepare to be independent, and has also generated some income to help offset our operating expenses.



More importantly, this year has seen spiritual, emotional, and personal growth in the women and children in our shelter. Ana has learned to forgive herself, and with that, has accepted forgiveness and new life in Christ. Kimberly has blossomed and thrived at the shelter, and is considering beginning a new business and putting her cooking classes to good use. Amanda has also accepted Christ, and we celebrated her 15th birthday (quinceaños) with all the typical Guatemalan festivities. Alba has been thrilled to get three meals a day, and to have someone say that she has value. She is hoping to go to nursing school and looks forward to what her future holds. MariaElena's family has been restored, after much counseling and prayer. She is sewing aprons from her home and bringing the finished product to the shelter, to help support her family. It is a joy to see the beautiful smile on her face and her family surrounding her.

All of this growth has kept us very busy, and after much prayer, the EHI board has decided to come under HOPE Bible Mission, a ministry which has been present in Guatemala for a long time, and has a similar vision to ours. Hope Bible Mission will partner with us in our mission and assist with administrative needs. This partnership has been effective for a while now, as you know, but we will officially be merging our website by January 1st, 2012. **From now on, to see updates about El Refugio, please visit www.weavinghopeministry.org.**

Thank you for being part of this ministry which is touching the lives of those who are hurting with the healing message of truth, love, forgiveness, and new life in Christ. We are filled with thanks to the Father as you help supply our needs & make this ministry possible.

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