



# Light of Esperanza 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

## PROGRAMMING INFORMATION:

During the 2015 year, Light of Esperanza continued to make a significant difference in the lives of the women and children of rural Honduras with whom we work. Light of Esperanza has increased its service to now include ten deeply impoverished rural villages in the State of Copan, located in the mountains of Western Honduras. The villages that Light of Esperanza is now working with include: El Bosque, Joyas Galanas, Limon, Agua Buena, Vega Redonda, Candelaria, Delicias, Balsamo, Los Naranjos, and Concepcion. All of these villages are afflicted with extreme rates of poverty and limited opportunity for the women and children to improve their chances of a quality life. The people from these villages now have access to utilize Light of Esperanza's programs and resources.

## I. EDUCATION PROGRAMS

### SCHOLARSHIPS

Now in its fourth year, Light of Esperanza's Scholarship program has become a very successful endeavor that addresses the need for financial support of promising students to continue their studies past the sixth grade, when free public education in Honduras ends. In 2015, Light of Esperanza sponsored seven youth to study – Nuri, who is in a vocational high school program, learning Business Administration, Delmer, Melvin, Yadira, and Angelica, who completed their final year of the "Colegio," 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> grade program, and Sarahi and Emerita, who began their first year of the "Colegio" program.

All of these youth had received awards and top grades in their Preparatory grade schools (1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grade). They applied to Light of Esperanza's Scholarship program, with the knowledge that without financial support they would be unable to afford the price of continued education in Honduras. Light of Esperanza's scholarship youth have the immense responsibility to maintain excellent grades, while at the same time working full time with their families during the week. All seven of Light of Esperanza's Scholarship youth passed all of their classes in 2015 with superb grades, demonstrating their commitment to taking advantage of this opportunity to study.

For the coming 2016 year, Light of Esperanza has worked to fine-tune our Scholarship program. Due to the reality that females in Honduras have less opportunity to study, and that Light of Esperanza's mission is to focus on improving the quality of life for women and children, Light of Esperanza will now give preference to female applicants who come from deeply impoverished families. Light of Esperanza is dedicated to opening the doors of education to these young girls who have all of the potential to reach beyond the social limitations and expectations imposed on their lives when giving the chance to do so.

Additionally, Light of Esperanza will be able to offer more Scholarships in 2016 due to a change in Honduras's educational structure. Previously, a major cost of Light of Esperanza's Scholarship program was dedicated towards transporting the youth from their rural village to the closest large town, Dulce Nombre de Copan, where the "Colegio" school is based. Not only was this expensive, but also dangerous for the youth to travel by themselves by bus, as the reality of security on the village roads is not very safe. The Honduran government has now placed the "Colegio" 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade program in the village Preparatory schools, allowing our youth to study in the village they live in, or at a nearby village. This change will offer a safer and less expensive opportunity for our Scholarship youth to study in 2016.

Light of Esperanza made the fundraising goal of providing ten scholarships in 2016. With the reduced cost of the "Colegio" scholarships, as well as with steady donations, Light of Esperanza will be offering eleven scholarships in 2016. Five of the scholarships (Yadira, Delmer, Roxana, Yareli and Nuri) will go to youth who are studying at the vocational high school program in the town of Santa Rosa de Copan, six of the scholarships (Ingrid, Yoselyn, Sarahi, Emerita, Evelyn and Marlen) will be awarded to youth who are studying in the village "Colegio" 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade programs. The scholarship youth receive all necessary school supplies, uniforms, shoes, backpacks, copies of school materials, and all other necessary equipment to have a successful year at school.

## **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

For five consecutive years, Light of Esperanza has delivered over \$500 of donated school supplies to the youth in the village schools of rural Copan, Honduras. These supplies include notebooks, pens, pencils, crayons, calculators, rules, and glue. For most of the youth, this is their primary opportunity to acquire school supplies. Light of Esperanza's school supply drive in the United States provides them with the tools to accomplish their academic dreams and goals.

## **COMPUTER CENTERS AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

Light of Esperanza's five Computer Centers continue to provide the students at the schools in the villages of Vega Redonda, El Bosque, Joyas Galanas, Limon, and Agua Buena with their principle access to learning about technology. While they are still lacking Internet access, due to the cost, students are able to familiarize themselves with basic computation courses led by the school teachers.

Additionally, Light of Esperanza purchased a photocopy/scanner machine for the school in El Bosque this year. This was a special request made by the school administration, after explaining their difficulty in providing their students with reading materials and activities due to a very limited budget, and due to their distance from the nearest town with a photocopy machines.

## **CELEBRATION OF YOUTH**

For the seventh year, Light of Esperanza has provided the opportunity for over 1,000 youth from the ten villages it works with to enjoy a day full of fun and celebration through its annual "Celebration of Youth" festival. These celebrations offer the majority of these youth their only chance during the year to take a break from the harsh reality in which they live – to smile, receive gifts, play games, and to have a good time with their community. Light of Esperanza brought thousands of toys, piñatas, sweets, and drinks to the village youth this past December. Most of the youth, after returning from a long day working in the coffee fields, rejoiced at the opportunity to celebrate with Light of Esperanza.

## **II. COOPERATIVE BUSINESS PROJECTS**

### **YOUTH CORN COOPERATIVE PROJECT: 2013 - 2015**

This year witnessed the third, and final, year of Light of Esperanza's Youth Corn Cooperative business project. Guided by Light of Esperanza's volunteers, the five teenage youth involved in this project learned an incredible amount in how to manage and operate a business. They carried out successful and profitable harvests, despite many challenges, especially in regards to the irregular weather patterns that limited their production capacity. All of the youth finished the project stating that they felt confident that they had obtained the necessary skills to lead a similar endeavor by themselves in the future. One of the youth, Rufino, was especially motivated to continue working on a new business project. He decided to save all of his earnings and, with the help of Light of Esperanza, will begin a private business raising and selling pigs. The other four youth decided to take their earnings for personal use, two of whom will be investing their money in helping to pay for their school costs, and the other two who plan on using their earnings to help pay to relocate themselves to the large city, San Pedro Sula, hoping to find a steady job that pays better than working as day laborers in rural Honduras. Without doubt, this project demonstrated the resilience of the five youth who were involved, a shining example of how hard work and dedication can lead to helping themselves and their families get out of the deep poverty they live in.

### **PIG COOPERATIVE PROJECT: 2015 – 2017**

Light of Esperanza started two new Cooperative Business projects in 2015. The first – the Pig Cooperative project – is a project in collaboration with five women in the village of Agua Buena, Copan. The participants have received training from Light of Esperanza's volunteers in how to successfully raise the pigs, cultivating them for future sale. A pregnant pig was purchased for this project, and gave birth to ten piglets. Unfortunately, one of the piglets died within the first week, leaving a total of nine. Within five months, the Cooperative had already sold six of the nine piglets, with plans to keep a minimum of two pigs in order to increase the supply for breeding purposes and a future expansion of their business. The women of this Cooperative are saving the earnings as they progress, with the intent to eventually, after the third, and final, year of this project, start their own private business endeavor. All of the participants are very hopeful for this Pig Cooperative project, as it has served as one of the most successful cooperative project models for a previous Light of Esperanza group.

### **FISH COOPERATIVE PROJECT: 2015 – 2017**

Light of Esperanza's second cooperative business project that was instigated in 2015 – the Fish Cooperative Project - is a collaboration with the New York-based foundation, Jewish Helping Hands. Five women from the village of El Bosque, Copan, are working to raise hundreds of Tilapia fry in the fish pond that was rented for this project. While the fry usually mature and are ready for sale within a timeframe of six months, due to abnormally cold weather this year, the Fish Cooperative decided that the fish had not grown to a sufficient size after six months. They decided to wait to hold their first harvest until April of 2016, so that they can sell the fish for Semana Santa in Honduras (Easter week), a time in which traditionally everyone eats fish. While this means fewer harvests than expected this year, they predict a greater return in revenue due to a higher quality fish and due to the demand during the holiday season. The women are very positive and seem to be working excellently as a group, taking turns feeding the fish, cleaning the pond, and ensuring that their investment is safe.

### **III. WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE**

#### **DENTAL SUPPLIES**

Light of Esperanza continued to provide rural youth in Honduras with access to dental care supplies, delivering hundreds of dollars in donated toothbrushes, dental floss, and toothpaste in 2015. For the vast majority of youth in rural Honduras, this is their only access to receive dental supplies.

Volunteers for Light of Esperanza provide classes to the youth who receive these donations on how to properly use the supplies and care for their teeth.

#### **“PRIDE IN MY VILLAGE”**

Light of Esperanza also continued its “Pride in My Village” pilot project in the village of Vega Redonda for the second year. Light of Esperanza organizes the community members of the village to clean up the multitude of garbage littered throughout the village and to take it to the nearest garbage dump. While Light of Esperanza coordinates this effort every three months, impressively, a number of women leaders from Vega Redonda have taken this project upon their own shoulders, organizing more frequent cleanings of the village.

### **IV. VOLUNTEERS**

Light of Esperanza continues to operate both in the United States and in Honduras 100% volunteer-based. Volunteers are in charge of managing both Boards of Directors – in the U.S. and in Honduras, the fundraising activities, the administration, implementing, supervising, and advising projects, and all other aspects of the organization. In 2015, Light of Esperanza U.S. Directors, Angela Madrid Lara and Shmuel Rubinstein, traveled to Honduras to manage ongoing projects, as well as to plan for the coming year.

### **V. REGISTERING LIGHT OF ESPERANZA AS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IN HONDURAS**

While Light of Esperanza is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the United States, Light of Esperanza continues to patiently wait for the Honduran government to progress in the application for registering the organization as a non-profit based in Honduras. Due to changing requirements, and new laws, Light of Esperanza has had to wait for this process to be completed. Light of Esperanza has hired legal representation in Honduras to support our efforts in legalizing the organization as a non-profit. This goal will allow Light of Esperanza greater access to international support in our efforts to work with the impoverished women and children in rural Honduras. It is expected that Light of Esperanza will be granted its non-profit status in Honduras in 2016.

### **VI. FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2015**

In total, Light of Esperanza raised \$8,214 in revenue for the 2015 fiscal year. Light of Esperanza's total expenses for the 2015 fiscal year were \$7,904. Of the total expenses in 2015:

90% was spent on programs (\$7,080), 4% on fundraising (\$342), and 6% (\$482) on administration.

Additionally, Light of Esperanza received a contribution from Angela Madrid Lara and Shmuel Rubinstein of \$6,365 in operational costs during the 2015 fiscal year.