

# **LIGHT OF ESPERANZA 2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

## **PROGRAM SUMMARY:**

In 2019, Light of Esperanza celebrated ten years of service in Honduras. Beginning with humble origins, funded and organized by its founders, and directors, Angela Madrid Lara and Shmuel Rubinstein, Light of Esperanza has expanded from organizing a children's holiday celebration, to now sponsoring scholarships and implementing self-sustaining business programs to address the poverty faced by the women and children in rural Honduras. During the past year, Light of Esperanza continued to be actively involved in the positive transformation in the lives of the women and children of rural Honduras. Light of Esperanza's cornerstone educational scholarship program was accompanied by community-based initiatives, such as the "Food for the Youth" school program, as well as other self-sufficient entrepreneurial programs, all aimed at creating solutions to address the massive state of poverty that afflicts the lives of so many people in this part of the world.

Light of Esperanza continues to bring its resources and programming to the thousands of people who live in ten deeply impoverished rural villages within the State of Copan. The villages of El Bosque, Joyas Galanas, Limon, Agua Buena, Vega Redonda, Candelaria, Delicias, Balsamo, Los Naranjos, and Concepcion all have benefited from Light of Esperanza's initiatives over the past year.

As with previous years, Light of Esperanza continues to operate both in Honduras and in the U.S. as a 100% volunteer run and organized non-profit organization.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:**

Focusing on educational solutions as one of the key paths out of the deep poverty that many young Hondurans find themselves in, has been a priority for Light of Esperanza's programming over the past ten years. Because free public education ends after the sixth grade, many promising youth from rural Honduras have limited options to continue their studies. This is especially true for female students, as they endure not only the financial barriers to continue their education, but also gender-based discrimination that does not encourage, or, in some cases, even permit, them to pursue their educational aspirations.

Through Light of Esperanza's Scholarship program, youth receive a scholarship that provides them with all of the necessary supplies and resources to support their educational goals. This includes tuition, uniforms, books, backpacks, school supplies, and transportation from their village to the school throughout the year.

In 2019, Light of Esperanza sponsored the following youth with educational scholarships:

**1. Emerita Sanchez, from the village of Limon, Copan**

In 2019, Emerita completed the second year of her three years of high school in the town of Santa Rosa, Copan with superb grades. Despite the challenges presented in maintaining both her academic and family responsibilities, Emerita has had great success. For the past two years, Emerita has participated in Light of Esperanza's "Youth Leadership" initiative. Through this initiative, Emerita was provided with the resources and guidance from Light of Esperanza to start a personal business. This project is intended not only to cultivate her leadership skills, but also to help her to generate money for herself. Part of the partnership that this Leadership initiative ensures is that Emerita is responsible for funding the scholarship of another youth during the school year. For the past two years, Emerita has successfully funded the scholarship of a youth to study in school.

**2. Jose Damion, from the village of Limon, Copan.**

Jose is studying in the tenth grade at the high school in Santa Rosa. Jose has demonstrated an excellent dedication to his studies, receiving praise for his teachers along with great grades in school.

**3. Jacoba Paz Reyes, from the village of Vega Redonda, Copan**

Jacoba started her second year of the vocational high school in the town of Santa Rosa, Copan. She is focusing on Business Administration. Unfortunately, Jacoba had to pause her studies due to family responsibilities. We hope that she will be able to return to her studies in 2020.

**4. Milegna, from the village of Candelaria**

Milegna had an excellent year in school. She finished her first year of high school in Santa Rosa. She is interested in studying finances and business for a future career. Her top score in school was in Psychology, in which she received an average grade of 90%

**5. Kendy, from the village of Candelaria**

Kendy finished her first year of middle school (7<sup>th</sup> grade) with a great success. She is starting to imagine her future career in medicine, as she would really like to become a nurse. In her free time, Kendy likes to paint. She also likes to plant flowers and work with her family's garden.

**6. Sayda, from the village of Candelaria**

During the past year, Sayda completed her first year of middle school (7<sup>th</sup> grade) and did a great job. She is excited to arrive to school every day, having the opportunity to learn from her teachers and play with her friends. She envisions a possible future career as a teacher, and hopes to explore this opportunity.

**7. Gloria, from the village of Candelaria**

Gloria finished the 7<sup>th</sup> grade with excellent grades this year. She really enjoys science, math, and English. She was able to maintain a 90% average in her English class, and was very proud of this result. Gloria is from a very large family of ten people. She hopes that her studies will help her get a good job in the future so that she can help her family out as much as possible.

**8. Karen, from the village of Candelaria**

Karen finished her second year of middle school (8<sup>th</sup> grade) this year. She worked really hard to maintain her grades and said that she really enjoys the opportunity to learn. She is looking forward to completing middle school in 2020 so that she will be able to continue her studies into high school the following year.

**9. Paola, from the village of Dulce Nombre**

Paola finished her first year of middle school (7<sup>th</sup> grade) this year. She did a great job and is looking forward to beginning the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 2020. She really enjoys learning about science topics, especially because she can use that knowledge to better understand the garden at her home and how to work with the animals, insects, and land.

**10. Evelin, from the village of Dulce Nombre**

Evelin had a great first year in middle school (7<sup>th</sup> grade). She has been working really hard to make sure that she passes all of her classes, and feels proud of her accomplishments. She lives with a large family, in which her father is the only one who works. Evelin wants to ensure a bright future for her family, and understands that by working hard in school, she will be able to help them out with a good career.

### **SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

Another example of Light of Esperanza's commitment to the educational needs of the children of rural Honduras is through the donation of school supplies. For the past nine years, Light of Esperanza to 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

### **YOUTH LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**

For the past three years, Light of Esperanza has worked to cultivate the leadership skills among some of the exceptional youth from the village communities we work with. The idea of this initiative is to provide the resources, funding, and training necessary for these youth to create their own businesses, generating needed revenue for themselves and their families, and, at the same time, create strong community bonds by requiring part of their earnings to be dedicated towards funding the scholarship of another youth. After the completion of two years participating in this program, the youth will have a thriving business that will become independent of the organization, completely under the control and ownership of the youth with no financial obligations to Light of Esperanza.

Our first participant in this initiative, Delmer Mancía, from the village of Vega Redonda, successfully funded the scholarship of a youth for the past three years through a pig business that he ran and operated. Delmer's business continues to be a success, and has helped to fund his current studies at a training school to become a police officer. Delmer's pig business is now completely independent of Light of Esperanza.

In 2018, Light of Esperanza expanded this Leadership initiative to include a new participant, Emerita, from the village of Limon. Emerita has successfully funded the scholarship of a youth for the past two years, and has one more year left to fulfill in 2020 as part of her partnership with Light of Esperanza.

Light of Esperanza hopes to continue to expand this successful program, as we have seen the incredible benefit it offers both to the participating youth, the youth who receives the new scholarship, and the strengthened sentiment of community connection and support that develops as a result.

### **“FOOD FOR THE YOUTH” VILLAGE SCHOOL PROJECT**

In 2018, Light of Esperanza created a new program, the “Food for the Youth” project. This initiative was created due to a concern for the health of the youth in the communities that our organization works with. Many youth, due to the extreme poverty that they live in, have little, if any, food to eat in their homes. They attend school with severe hunger, and this affects their ability to concentrate and advance in their studies. After meeting with community leaders, Light of Esperanza decided to begin a self-sustaining program with the Parents Association of the village school of Delicias, Copan. This project, a pig business, was created in order to generate funds to purchase food for the school children’s breakfasts and lunches at school. The project in Delicias has been an outright success. The Parents Association has been diligent in their management and operation of this business, saving the funds from the sold pigs to purchase food for the students, and, at the same time, ensuring that there was a sufficient amount of money to reinvest and continue this business.

In 2019, Light of Esperanza decided to expand this project to the school in the village of Los Naranjos, Copan. In the beginning of this project, there was a lot of success. The families from the Parents Association managed the birth and sale of the pigs through this business, purchasing and preparing food for the students to eat at the school, and reinvested the necessary funds to continue this business. Unfortunately, due to interpersonal conflicts, accusations of mismanagement of responsibilities, and the migration of some of the key participants of this project out of Honduras, Light of Esperanza decided to close this project at the end of 2019. There were multiple efforts to negotiate and adapt this project based on the needs and circumstances of the participants. Nonetheless, it became clear to Light of Esperanza that the project was in jeopardy of failing, and that it was necessary to save the remnants of the business as much as possible so as to not have a complete loss of the investment. Light of Esperanza has temporarily relocated the pig and the resources with a family in the village of Los Naranjos that has committed for the coming year to be responsible for the business, funding an educational scholarship in 2020. Light of Esperanza has learned a lot from the challenges that this project presented over the past year. We are currently restructuring the contract that is signed by the parents so that the expectations and transparency is easier for the participants to understand. We hope to create a new “Food for the Youth” school initiative with a different village in 2020.

### **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 2019. 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.

### **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.

### **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. In 2018, Light of Esperanza acquired new legal counsel to support our organization in this effort. It was expected that in 2019 Light of Esperanza would be granted its status as a non-profit organization in Honduras. Unfortunately, due to the political instability in Honduras, this process has been delayed, and is expected to be completed in 2020.

### **FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 2019**

In total, Light of Esperanza raised \$10,374 in revenue for the 2019 fiscal year. Light of Esperanza's total expenses for the 2019 fiscal year were \$8,543. Additionally, Light of Esperanza received a contribution from Directors Angela Madrid Lara and Shmuel Rubinstein of \$5,634 in operational costs during the 2019 fiscal year.