

A'KALA Family Foundation ~ San Lucas, Guatemala

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A'KALA Family Foundation

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Welcome to our very first A'KALA newsletter!

We are so excited to share our ministry with you! We have so much to celebrate and to thank God for! Thank you for being part of this ministry with us!

First of all, who or what is A'KALA? A'KALA is a group of people from throughout the United States committed to caring for the people of the San Lucas, Toliman, Guatemala local area. We are a Christian group doing the work of Jesus! Our foundation is based on the Gospel of Saint Mark where it states, "Jesus embraced them, blessed them, and put His hands on the them!" All referring to children.

The word A'KALA is from the local Mayan, Kaqchikel language spoken in the San Lucas area. It translates into the word 'children'. We combine the Mayan language with the holy scriptures of Jesus and celebrate the children, celebrating the fact that we are all children of our loving God.

Our primary focus in A'KALA is to care for children and families who are in need. We offer them fresh fruits, vegetables, chicken, rice, beans, and corn to eat. We also supply them with items for washing their bodies and clothes. We also try to assist them with housing when funds are available.

We sustain a sponsorship program for people who want to 'adopt' a child to provide them monthly with food baskets, tuition for education, and medical, spiritual, and financial support. We currently have 7 children who are being sponsored, and have over 40 other children in need of a sponsoring. Our hope is that sponsors will develop a life long relationship with their children and enjoy their triumphs in life.

A'KALA is committed to the education of the children, no matter of their ability to learn. We have recently opened our first Education Center in the village of Xejuyu. Here, children who have physical limitations such as spina bifida, vision limitations, orthopedic issues, etc, are learning how to read and write. Their bodies may be limited but their zeal for life and learning are excellent! We will open our second Education Center in the near future.

We respond to the heart felt needs of the people and try to meet their individual, as well as communal needs in San Lucas. In January we purchased a pump for the local fire fighters in San Lucas. Now instead of putting out fires using buckets, they have a pump that will move 2,000 gallons of water in 5 minutes. This will enhance their efforts to save the homes and buildings of the residents of San Lucas. We also donated fire fighter helmets, coats, and pants to the San Lucas fire fighters.

Thank you for taking time to read this information. Please consider being an active part of A'KALA! Join us and experience the love and beauty of San Lucas on one of our upcoming trips.

Yours in Christ,

Father Brian Oestreich





Julie Cink & Father Brian

Co-founders Julie Cink and Father Brian Oestreich~

We met in the early 1980's working on TEC (Teens Encounter Christ) Church retreats. Like many of our friends we developed a strong faith and trust in Christ and the Church. We experienced many great opportunities while working on these retreats and celebrated our faith with many great people. After college we traveled separate journeys and then God let our paths meet again a few years ago.

In the spring of 2019, God asked us to do something special for the children of San Lucas. To begin a Foundation to take care of them! Our foundation for this ministry is based on Saint Mark's Gospel 10:16, "Then He embraced them and blessed them, placing His hands on the them." We, like Jesus, have to embrace and bless the children and take care of them!

For the past 20 years, I have been traveling to San Lucas to assist in the ministry spearheaded by Father Greg Schaffer. In that time, Father Greg and I worked on many incredible projects together. It is in that same spirit that now, Julie and I have established the A'KALA Family Foundation.

All of this leads us here today, inviting you to share this ministry with the children of San Lucas!

Julie Cink.



For the past 10 years I have been the CFO of a large metro school district in Minnesota responsible for a budget of over \$150M. I grew up on a farm in Iowa with eight brothers and sisters. I moved to Minnesota when I attended college at MSU Mankato on a basketball scholarship.

I fell in love with the people of San Lucas on my first mission trip in 2017, sponsoring a child on that trip. I've been there 5 times and feel called to serve the people there as Fr Greg Schaffer did until his death in 2012. There are so many women with children that need our help after their husbands left them because they could not find work to support their families. Through this foundation I want to give them hope for a better future so they can thrive, not just survive.



Cody Schyma-

Occupation- I work in Law Enforcement as a Patrol Deputy for Sherburne County, MN. I work in law enforcement to make a difference. I enjoy the work I do, and no day is the same!

Personal- I am from Monticello, MN originally and now live in Big Lake, MN with my girlfriend, and our three dogs.

San Lucas Specific- The first time I went to San Lucas was in 2018. I have been there two times total as of right now, with more trips to come. I have built friendships that will last a lifetime in San Lucas and am excited to keep building those friendships and making more.

My name is Mallory Raymond!

I work in Healthcare administration for Fairview, specifically working with Medicare claims. I hail from Eagan, MN originally and now live in my own house in Richfield with my dog Parker! I first went to San Lucas in 2017, and have now been there 6 times total (and counting!). I am fluent in Spanish, so it is wonderful to be able to connect with the people in their own language. I am extremely excited to be a part of something so unique and personal for a place that I love.



Mallory and Meghan

Meghan Stordahl

Occupation: I am a student at The College of Saint Scholastica in Duluth, MN. I will graduate in May with a degree in Psychology.

Personal: I am originally from Litchfield, MN. I have lived in Duluth, MN for the past three years and am happy to call it my home. I will never get tired of seeing and hearing the large ships coming through the Harbor and hiking the many beautiful trails Duluth has.

San Lucas: I have traveled to San Lucas ten times since the age of 10. I leave a little piece of my heart there each time I go. From the beauty of the mountains to the pure love, faith, and happiness of the Mayan people, I am beyond grateful and blessed to be a part of an organization providing love and support to such an amazing place.

Sydney Witt

Occupation- I have recently graduated from St. Cloud State University with my bachelor's degree in Accounting and a minor in Global Business. I currently work at Schlenner Wenner & Co. in St. Cloud, MN where I audit not-for-profit and government entities. I enjoy working with not-for-profits and getting to help in any way I can!

Personal- I am originally from Madison, MN and now reside in St. Cloud, MN. I spend my free time quilting and enjoying time with family and friends.

San Lucas Specific—I first visited San Lucas in 2016 on a mission trip with my mom and some of my siblings. Guatemala has had a piece of my heart since that trip. I have been back once since and am excited to return again soon! I am very happy to be able to use my talents to help out the people of Guatemala and show others in my community about the mission we have to help the Guatemalan people.

Foundation Board of Directors

Fr. Brian Oestreich ~ President ~ boestreich@akalaff.org ~ ph: 507-829-6667

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Cody Schyma ~ cschyma@akalaff.org



My name is Sandra Teresa Lec Ajcot. I was born on October 16th, 1972 in San Lucas Tolimán, Sololá, Guatemala. I have 5 children: Sucely, Jacob, Barbara, Camila, and Chárlene. My mother's name is Encarnación Ajcot.

During the conflict (Guatemalan civil war) my father Genaro was assassinated. I was only 7 years old when he died - someone who lost his life fighting so that the people could have a piece of land. He was the secretary of the Parish of San Lucas. Because of the circumstances, my mother (who also worked for the parish since she was 12 years old) saw fit to raise my two brothers and me in the parish, and when we were older we actually worked for the parish, and that's where the desire to help my people grew in me, just like my father did and my mother still does.

Since I was a girl, I have loved playing sports, especially in track and field where I won a few medals - but there was also born in me a desire to study social work, so that I could influence and help others.

I am a very friendly person, my philosophy is that if I even help just one person to have hope, then I will not have lived my life in vain. For me helping others in need is not just a necessity, but also is a joy, what we do for others.

My inspiration for proposing and beginning this project was that we can continue watering the seed that Father Greg planted, which is what Father Brian is doing now - people that know the needs of my town.

How can I help A'KALA?

You can sponsor a child for \$40.00 a month. This will ensure that they are fed well, get to go to school, and receive the support of the A'KALA Foundation team.

Monthly, quarterly, or yearly gifts to help us buy food for the families who come to us in their worst times. If you sponsor a child, that money is going directly to benefit that child in some way. None of the money you send us for sponsorship is used for administrative fees. If your company offers matching grants. Register for them. Every donation is treasured and appreciated. Please contact us for further information on ways you can help. Thank you!



Father John Goggin is still serving the people of San Lucas for well over 50 years. Father John worked daily with Father Greg Schaffer helping build the mission parish, and establishing the religious education programs of the people of the San Lucas area. Please pray for Father John and all the missionaries of the world!



Fire Department with donated helmets, coats and pants from Minnesota



HISTORICAL REVIEW OF FATHER GREG AND CHONA HELPING FAMILIES WITH MINIMAL RESOURCES

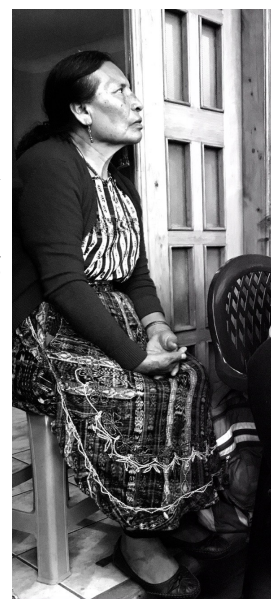
In the year 1990, during the armed conflict, the need began to help the orphaned children and widowed women, because they were abandoned.

It started with 10 families that they gave corn, beans, oatmeal, and a little bit of money every month to the mothers so that they could help pay for the children's school. They also helped support the elderly, giving bread, coffee, rice, and corn until Father Greg became ill and he passed away. After he died, there were almost 3 years that we were unable to help the 30 families that had received this help from the parish.

They started again to help, this time through people collaborating with Chona to give the families things at Christmas, Holy Week, etc. Two years after the death of Father Greg, Father Brian saw the need to continue cultivating that seed that Father Greg had sown and all of the activities that he had worked with Father Greg on.

These days the lives of many children have improved, with the help that they are receiving currently. We still see that need for continuing to help because there are a lot of abandoned children, working at such a young age to help their mothers to be able to sustain their family, and for that reason they don't attend school. Every day there is the same need, because of the factors that are affecting the country and the poverty that primarily affect the vulnerable and disenfranchised people.

With these actions that such good-hearted people are bringing to pass, they are giving hope to the people that suffer, so that they receive care, peace, and love that God blesses upon those who share the love to the defenseless.





Hello to our sponsors of A'KALA families!

First of all, we want to thank you and ask God to bless you for being a sponsor for a family in Guatemala. Thanks for your patience as we try to figure all of this out! Here is a little update on what is going on right now both with A'KALA and what is happening in Guatemala during the Coronavirus.

We received exciting news right as the Coronavirus hit **we are an official 501c3 non-profit!** Our 501c3 number is 84-3968240. It was a lot of work and we are so excited that we are "official"! That means anything you have donated to A'KALA since November of 2019 is tax-deductible. We want to send a shout-out to Andrea Hedtke, our lawyer from Dorsey & Whitney in Minneapolis, who did this work pro-bono for the organization. She is amazing and we thank God she offered to help us. We couldn't have done it without her!

As you know, life is a little different these days both for us and those in Guatemala. We had our first "zoom" meeting with the A'KALA board members. We had a lot of discussion on what we do with the funds we are receiving from sponsors as well as other donations. Here is what we have come up with. We'd like your feedback if you have other ideas!

When you donate \$40.00/month which is approximately Q300. Of that Q300

Q100 is going directly to your sponsor child/family for their needs

Q100 worth of food/soap/TP etc. is provided every month.

Q100 goes into a savings account for your individual family for other needs. These needs may be for uniforms, school supplies, music lessons, medicine or medical needs etc. Every situation is different for the families and we want to make sure we are meeting their individual needs.

None of the money you send us for sponsorship is used for administrative fees. We are utilizing general donations for this. We feel it is important that if you sponsor a child, that money is going directly to benefit that child in some way.

We also had a zoom meeting with Sandra and Chona from Guatemala. Things are pretty dire there right now. There is a curfew every day and no one can work. Your sponsorship is meeting a critical need right now! We are sending money there to get food and soap to about 50 families this week in addition to your sponsor families. Sandra talked a lot about families needing soap to wash their hands. They don't have hand sanitizer so families are using rubbing alcohol because they don't have soap/water. We will continue to monitor the situation there and do as much as we can to help these families.

Sandra said that all of the families received the letters that you sent to your sponsor children and she has received some back from the families. Expect to see letters soon from your families in Guatemala. I know some of you are anxious to hear from your sponsor children.

We are hoping to get more sponsors and donors for A'KALA Family Foundation. The needs in San Lucas are so great due to the quarantine. The clinics and hospitals are all shut down unless they are private, so it is a very scary time for them with no where to go for medical needs. I have asked Sandra to remind every sponsor family to keep you in their prayers, as I am sure you are praying for your sponsor families as well.

Our tentative trip to San Lucas this summer is scheduled for July 27 to August 2. We are waiting to see how everything works out, both here and in Guatemala. Our 2021 tentative schedule is January 29 to February 5, 2021, and July 26 to August 2, 2021.

We also pray for all of you every day and we want to personally thank you for sponsoring children in Guatemala. We know that your hearts were touched by the people of San Lucas as much as our hearts were. Thank you for being so generous.

May God Bless You!

Julie Cink and Fr. Brian Oestreich