



Rotary eClub of the Southwest, USA

From Books to Brilliance



A Partnership for Literacy



Hello Fellow eClubbers:

December 2017

There is nothing *mini* about Rotary eClub of the Southwest's **Min-eGrant program**. Imagine the impact these **Min-eGrants** have on villages where many families survive on only a dollar a day. In Guatemala Aj Awinel teens now study science, accounting and music with textbooks available in their own library. In Santo Tomás la Unión elementary students enjoy storybooks, and write to us about their favorites. In Rabinal children read Mayan legends in their home language of Achi, and Guatemalan folklore in Spanish. No, *mini* will not do. **At From Books to Brilliance we call them Max-eGrants.**

With your continuous support, hundreds more children are now experiencing the power of RECSWUSA's Min-eGrant program. Come. Let me introduce you to two schools, your beneficiaries, Kajib' No'j and San Pablo.

From all of us at FBTB...Thank you, RECSWUSA, for your trust and support.



Debbie
Gonzales



Isa
Tafoya

Maggie
Covill



Luke
Baca

Instituto Kajib' No'j

Momostenango

Guatemala



Visit Instituto Kajib' No'j and **undoubtedly a few smiling teens will offer you a guided tour of their school.** We recommend that you take it! In the band room aspiring musicians practice their drums and wind instruments in preparation for the upcoming community parade. Melodies of Mayan forefathers float down the hall, played on the school's marimba. In the garden across the street, pupils harvest organic fruits and vegetables. The tour continues, boasting clever systems of irrigation, water filtration and composting.

Thank you, Rotary eClub of the Southwest, USA! **Soon a school library will be included in that tour.** In July From Books to Brilliance volunteers delivered the first cache of literature to Kajib' No'j's students. These hard-working, industrious teens already embrace the wisdom of their families, teachers and fellow citizens. **Now, with access to the world's great literature, students are acquiring wisdom from the past as well.**

In the Popol Vuh they read the Mayan story of creation, told by their own legendary ancestors. El Señor Presidente, by Guatemala's Nobel Prize-winning Miguel Angel Asturias, describes life under a merciless dictator. Their world expands further when reading Don Quijote de la Mancha, Alice in Wonderland and the Life of Pi, to name just a few. According to principal Pedro Eligio Ajxup, **"the books are motivating students to set and achieve goals and dreams for their lives."** Kajib' No'j's school board and faculty sent a letter of thanks, listing a dozen ways in which the books increase student learning and critical thinking skills.



The creation of *Biblioteca Kajib' No'j* is just beginning and **there is much to do, but From Books to Brilliance does not work alone.** We have strong partners, educators at the Austrian Guatemalan Institute (IAG) in Guatemala City. In fact, **IAG founded Kajib' No'j over twenty years ago** to provide education to Momostenango's Mayan children. Our partners are committed. They will provide needed bookshelves and furniture, and prepare the space that will accommodate hundreds, hopefully thousands of books for all Kajib' No'j's students, ages five to sixteen.

From Books to Brilliance is committed as well. Through the books and resources your generous support provides, these talented **children are able to expand and pursue their educational goals.** Kajib' No'j sends their heartfelt appreciation.



Escuela San Pablo La Laguna Nicaragua



From Books to Brilliance's library project at San Pablo Elementary has been challenging. "The parents really want a library," Indira Morales told us, Projects Coordinator for the Association of Nicaraguan Women Luisa A. Espinoza (AMNLAE) and long-time FBTB partner. "They hope you will come to visit."

Navigating the dirt road to La Laguna was slow, but luckily the tropical rains had not yet begun that July of 2015. Our four-wheel drive only stopped to give right-of-way to ranchers on horseback, accompanied by very young cowboys, as they drove their cattle to graze. Located well outside the city of Granada, **we arrived in the village of La Laguna with no problem.**

Unfortunately, due to an emergency in town, students left early that day. The school was closed. Determined to give Debbie, Luke and me a short tour, Indira found a gentleman to unlock the gate. He proudly pointed out a small, freshly painted blue and white structure. Carefully painted in gold letters over the door was the word "Biblioteca." **Clearly this little school had a parent organization with very big ideas. In Biblioteca San Pablo their children would read. Literacy would be theirs. Now they just needed the books.**



In 2016 you, RECSWUSA, entrusted us with another Min-eGrant that FBTB donors matched. That thousand dollars **provided children's literature, textbooks, dictionaries, games, puzzles, coloring books and crayons, rulers, and much more.** However, with no modern systems of communication, **we received no information about the library until our return in July.**

Creating villages libraries requires great partnerships. Indira Morales and AMNLAE epitomize such an alliance in Nicaragua. However, sometimes **life's circumstances get in the way...**a devastating illness, tropical rains with flooding that make the roads impossible to navigate, and the theft of a thumb-drive with San Pablo photos.

Nevertheless the story of Biblioteca San Pablo continues. During our most recent trip to Nicaragua, we discovered that the students are reading the books you donated. **San Pablo's faculty is thrilled with the library and emphasized that these resources facilitate both learning and teaching at the school.** And there is more. In a recent visit to Biblioteca San Pablo, a member of the Frankfurt Granada Association exclaimed, **"It is impressive to see that here there is an organization like From Books to Brilliance interested in creating community libraries. In very few countries have we seen this."** Renovation of this little library is now underway, funded by the Frankfurt Granada Association.

Your trust and support for our small nonprofit has done more than you can imagine. From Books to Brilliance has taken on a life of its own. **A member of Rotary Managua recently invited us to present to their club.** Also an owner of a publishing company, he will give textbooks to our Nicaraguan projects. **In Guatemala, a Colorado nonprofit is working with 70 Mayan families to reforest their land,** and to grow organic cacao for chocolate. Thirty middle school students in the village need textbooks. **With Min-eGrants the possibilities are endless!**

Fellow members of RECSWUSA, we thank you from our hearts.

