



# FOCUSING ON THE IXCÁN

EYE CARE AND EYE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE IXCÁN REGION OF GUATEMALA

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## A RISING TIDE *by Scott Pike*

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” --Nelson Mandela**

A couple of years ago my wife and I had the pleasure of attending a talent show at our grandson, Felix’s, primary school. What a kick!

Some sang, some danced, skits were performed and regardless of the level of talent, everyone came away a winner. Every one of the 20 individual or group acts received the same enthusiastic and encouraging response from the crowd of friends and family.

This reminded me of the saying that, “a rising tide raises all boats.” All the participants got the same lift, regardless of their talent.



*Felix’s dance move*



*Guatemalan children perform*

While sitting in the audience in this typical grade school gym/cafeteria/ auditorium I couldn’t help but compare this to the schools and children Enfoque Ixcán visits in Guatemala. Excited children full of energy, some

unable to contain it and eager to please the audience. Brave children ready to stand in front of a crowd and perform, to do their best. These qualities are the same for children everywhere.

But, the surroundings were quite different. In Utah, we sat in a large, modern and comfortable room with a fine sound system and lighting. In Guatemala we might have been outside with dogs wandering about, mosquitos and other “no see ums” looking for a meal, a squeaking sound system, and the heat and humidity dulling our attention.

The word “access” kept repeating in my mind. The children in Ixcán don’t have access to so many things we take for granted, things like adequate nutrition and clothing, clean water and health care. The children in Ixcán are 4-6 hours from the nearest eye doctor with only public transportation to get them there. Most families can’t afford the trip.

The grade school class, of our grandson Felix, danced for their part in the show and they were good, believe me! We were very proud of him, just as parents in Ixcán are proud of their children and grandchildren. But, their boats sit a little lower in the water. They need more tide than the encouragement a friendly audience will give. They have some basic unmet needs.

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## Contact Us

ENFOQUE IXCÁN  
5784 SE Lexington Dr  
Hillsboro, OR 97123  
503.277.9711  
Enfoqueixcan@aol.com

Visit us on the web at  
[www.enfoqueixcan.org](http://www.enfoqueixcan.org)

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*A Rising Tide .....Cont'd from page 1*

We can't raise their boats all at once. It's a process. It's said that 80% of what our children learn passes through their visual systems. One thing we can do is make it easier for them to learn by providing eye exams, eye health education, glasses and other professional eye care. Education is a key in raising the standard of living in Ixcán.

This is one of the goals of Enfoque Ixcán and it isn't expensive. A small donation of \$75 can provide 5 children with prescription eye glasses to help them see better, learn more efficiently and live more comfortable and productive lives. Our local eye health promoters know how to do basic eye exams and have eye glasses on hand. Enfoque Ixcán is making eye care accessible for these beautiful and talented children. **Please consider a donation today!**

**A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS**

*by Scott Pike*

Many people contribute to the successful running of an organization such as Enfoque Ixcán. First in my mind are the donors and the board of directors. However, there are lots of other folks who should receive their share of the

credit who, behind the scenes, help to assure the organization runs smoothly, and efficiently. Here are a few of these important contributors.



**Bruce Hengel** has been in the optical business for close to 50 years. He has been making generic glasses for us, at cost, for the last 13 years. That represents over 1600 pairs of glasses. Bruce and his wife Jackie, also an optician, have supplied EI with hundreds of glasses frames. Over the years, Bruce has helpfully offered sound advice on optical related issues which have come up. He and Jackie have played an important role in our success in bringing affordable eye care to Ixcán, Guatemala.

**Edgar Zeceña**, his dad and brother, have safely driven us the 10 hour trip to and from the Ixcán for nearly 20 years. I have made around 30 round trips to Ixcán with Edgar. His safe driving, wise judgement and dependability take the worry out of our travels in Guatemala. At various times we have pushed and pulled his van out of mud holes in the road and witnessed several flats being changed.



**Franklin Aldana** was a front desk employee at our hotel for several years. Franklin knows how to get things done and has always been willing to help out our cause. One year when we needed a letter approval from the Ministry of Health, I had no clue, with my limited Spanish, how to even start that process. When he got off work, Franklin walked with me to the Ministry of Health office. We spent the next hour and a half working our way to the proper official. Franklin firmly stated our case and the letter was provided. We have maintained our friendship for 20 years and I know I can call on Franklin to navigate the nuances of life in Guatemala. Franklin is like a brother to me.

**Dr. Noel Brown** works for the Ministry of Health at the hospital in Ixcán. It's very important to have someone who lives and works in Ixcán as a friend, "brother", and advisor. Noel fills that role. If we have questions regarding who to contact for an issue or need trusted advice, Noel is always ready to give us a hand. He's Guatemalan, but grew up in California, so when my brain is worn out from working in Spanish, Noel is like an oasis of relaxation.



## DONOR VOICES

I'm so proud of the donors who have contributed to the success of Enfoque Ixcán over the last 23 years. Because of our supportive, caring donors we have been able to provide over 630 cataract surgeries and 9,000+ eye glasses. It is very humbling to know that we have been trusted as a charity of choice among all the many non-profits doing good work in our country.

It's interesting to hear why people make gifts of their hard earned money. Here are some examples from our donor base:

*"We received our stimulus check and don't need it, so we are passing it along to good causes like yours. Thank you for all the wonderful work Enfoque Ixcán has done all these years and hopefully for a long time into the future."* **Linda & Bev—Indiana**

"I would offer multiple reasons why we believe Enfoque Ixcán is a very worthy and important organization to support. First, good eyesight is essential for people of all ages, and E.I. has made a significant contribution



*Scott examines a patient*

providing good vision through eye exams, glasses, eye health education and access to surgical care for the Guatemalan people they serve. E.I. has a sustainable model of training local eye health promoters to continue providing eye care on an ongoing basis. I really appreciate how Dr. Pike and E.I. enlist optometrists and optometry students to travel to Ixcán to provide eye care in person and the vision for what can be accomplished with our continued involvement. Finally, I know I can trust that the donations we make will be used wisely to help the people who are suffering with vision problems in the Ixcán region. Thank you Dr. Pike and E.I. for the really important service you are providing."

**Kevin & Shelley--Montana**

*"I met Dr. Scott Pike in the mid-1990s as I served as an interpreter for a delegation of community members from Needham, MA to Santa María Tzejá. I immediately connected with the issues he was aiming to address, having personally experienced poor eyesight from the age of seven. I'd always had the privilege of being able to access eye care, including the glasses I needed to see the world clearly and that enabled me to be able to focus in school.*

*More deeply, however, I connected with the ways in which Scott was committed to creating a sustainable, community-based effort to address eye care. He never entered the community as 'the savior' but as a connector, as a person with access to resources and experience that he shared with community members so that they could build their own skills and resources and create an eye health promoter program. Scott has never wavered in his commitment to partner in building a program that involves ongoing consultation, collaboration, and participation. I've been an annual and then monthly contributor to Enfoque Ixcán since its founding.*

*The day you bear witness to a person getting fitted for glasses, choosing those glasses, putting them on for the first time, and expressing their awe and joy because they can finally see with clarity, is a day that convinces you that you must always support Enfoque Ixcán. I follow Scott's lead and won't waver in my commitment to supporting this genuine organization."* **Deborah—South Carolina**



*New glasses*

I continue to be impressed with the efforts of you and others on behalf of Enfoque Ixcán, and I am happy to support good people doing good work. **Linda--Pennsylvania**



ENFOQUE  
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5784 SE LEXINGTON DR

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### CHARITABLE BEQUESTS

To ensure the sustainability of our work for the years ahead, Enfoque Ixcán has started a planned giving campaign. Would you consider putting us in you will for the long term survivability of our mission?



It's easy. Here's all you need from us to make it happen:

**Name:** Enfoque Ixcán

**Tax ID#:** 01-0844437

**THANK**

**Address:** 5784 SE Lexington Dr. Hillsboro, OR 97123

**YOU!!**

If you'd like to talk about it, **Call Scott** at: 503-277-9711

### CLINIC UPDATE

The Enfoque Ixcán board met and requested a few minor changes to the clinic architectural plans. The contract has been reviewed in the U.S. and is now being reviewed by our Guatemalan attorney and working team representative. Once it has been approved, the appropriate signatures will be affixed and work to build the clinic can begin, barring COVID or weather restrictions.



*New front porch design with roof*