



FOCUSING ON IXCÁN

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

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DREAMS DO COME TRUE

by Scott Pike

This story about Rudy starts when he was only 6 months old in 1989. Rudy was born in Ixcán, Guatemala, with a cleft lip and palette. A charitable organization found him and arranged to send him to a family in the U.S. where he was to have surgery. The family took him in and treated him as their own child during his several months stay. At this time, the doctors also found that he had a heart mummer and congenital cataracts.

After recovering from the lip and palette surgeries, Rudy was sent home to Guatemala. When he was a little older he returned to the family in the U.S. to have cataract surgeries. They removed his cataracts, but didn't give him implants. Instead he was given glasses.

When Rudy started school, his mother mailed the U.S. family indicating that Rudy wasn't doing well in school because he couldn't see. They arranged for him to have another trip to the U.S. for eye surgeries to give him lens implants. After 6 months in the U.S. waiting for the surgeries to be arranged, the host family was told Rudy would be sent home to have the implant surgery done in Guatemala.

By now, the U.S. family was growing fond of Rudy. However, they were told not to attempt contacting him. When they persisted in trying to contact him over several years the referring agency put them off with lies about how he was killed in a mudslide, he moved, travel to the area where he lived was too dangerous.

They didn't give up and finally after 25 years of fruitless searching, Rebecca, a family member, made contact via Facebook. Rudy was still living in Ixcán with his parents. He had never received the implant surgeries and his glasses from 1996 had long ago broken. Somehow he was able to see well enough to work on farms, earning about \$6.50 a day. With this, he was supporting his parents.

Rebecca, searched the internet and found Enfoque Ixcán. She contacted me to see if there might be any way to help Rudy improve his eyesight. That was in early April of this year. Here's what Rebecca said, "Rudy was only with us for a short time over 9 years, but he sure left an empty place when he went home."

Our eye health promoters in Ixcán contacted Rudy. The next week Rudy had an eye exam at our office, got some glasses that gave him a partial but much improved vision correction. Additionally, an appointment was made for him to go to the partner clinic where we send patients for eye surgeries.

On April 28th Rudy and our eye health promoter, Carlos, went to the surgery clinic for Rudy's implant. Rudy said, "I thought this would only be possible in my dreams. This opportunity has lifted my spirits."

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Rudy with trial lens; note the right eye lens thickness.

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Before the surgery Rudy could only see well enough to count fingers at 8 feet. Unfortunately, an implant only made some improvement (20/200) in the vision in his left eye. However, his pre-surgery visual acuity with a major correction (very thick lens) in glasses for his right eye is 20/20! The predicted outcome for the surgery scheduled in July for Rudy's right eye should allow him 20/20 vision. A dream come true for Rudy.

When you support Enfoque Ixcán this is the important work you are a part of, making dreams come true.



Rudy after left eye surgery



We are proud of what we've been able to do for Rudy, but much of the credit for this success must go to Rebecca and her family for not giving up. Rebecca said it best, *"Now after 25 years, we are trying to be his advocate and do what we can to give him back his opportunity to have/make a better life for him and his family like they were promised 32 years ago, when a scared mama and papa allowed strangers to take care of their child in hopes of an opportunity for success, greatness and change that would help their family for generations to come."*

That time has finally come for Rudy.

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND ENFOQUE IXCÁN

by Scott Pike

Hang on folks while I make the connection. You may have read or seen on the news that Vice President Harris was in Guatemala in June hoping to find some answers about how to keep Guatemalans from going north and crossing our southern border. Political leaders have been trying to find a solution to this problem for many, many years.

Enfoque Ixcán has been doing its part to solve this problem for nearly 25 years.

Each year the U.S. pumps millions of dollars south into Guatemala. But, Guatemala is plagued by political corruption, military corruption, gang and mafia influences. It is a system which is controlled by some very rich people who know how to work all those forces to keep the money flowing and benefitting themselves, keeping the old system intact so nothing changes much.

Enfoque Ixcán on the other hand, without thinking about foreign policy, has been giving the poor in a rural and remote part of Guatemala, the Ixcán, reasons and means to stay home. Most of the people coming north to the U.S. do so because they live in extreme poverty and have no chance to improve their lives under the conditions in Guatemala.

Our 3 eye health promoters are changing that, one baby step at a time. They provide eye care where no other eye care is accessible. They are allowing students to have improved vision and comfort so that they can see to succeed in school, graduate and find a job that pays more than the average of about \$8 a day. With education, some have become attorneys, doctors, accountants, and teachers. **Proper eye care makes learning more efficient. Enfoque Ixcán does that.**



Carlos provides a patient exam

Our eye health promoters dispense glasses at prices the people can afford. This allows many adults to hold leadership positions in their communities well beyond the time when adults need simple reading glasses for near work. They become leadership role models for their children. This sets the stage for slow, but positive, community development.

Foreign Policy....Continued from page 2

Over the years funding from YOU, our donors, has allowed over 850 people to have sight restoring eye surgeries. This has enhanced family bonds and productive lives, which is a good reason to stay home with one's loved ones.

Unlike the U.S. government we have had these positive outcomes without spending millions of dollars. We do it with simple gifts, \$25, \$50, \$100, whatever our donors can afford. (Don't let me imply that we won't accept a gift of \$1,000,000)! We use these funds without corruption. The money goes straight to our program objectives.

CLINIC PROGRESS

by Joene Pike

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Hooray! Our dream is becoming a reality and the finished product is getting closer every day. It's been a year and a half since we've been able to travel to our office in Ixcán. After many Zoom meetings of the board with Manuel Beletzuy, the architect, the original design and now the final cosmetic enhancement details of floor tiles, interior and exterior paint, etc. have been confirmed. Despite Covid delays the construction of the Enfoque Ixcán (EI) eye health clinic is progressing nicely. The current plan, barring Covid restrictions, is that Scott, Dwight (EI treasurer) and Ali (board member and translator) will travel to Ixcán, August 5th through the 16th to celebrate the opening of our new clinic. We have new equipment to install, inventories of glasses, eye drops, and sunglasses to deliver, and training for our eye health promoters.



Almost completed!

Unfortunately, this won't be the usual trip to see patients because the Amigos Eye Care students at Pacific University have yet to be cleared for international travel. Due to Covid, the celebration will be small, but so very important to the population of Ixcán. A few dignitaries, like the mayor and his council, the director of the local ministry of health, education ministry, local doctors, local journalists and the wonderful people of the Catholic Church who have allowed EI to operate the "clinic" in their compound will be invited to attend. The new building is not only an impressive accomplishment but shows that EI is definitely committed long-term to the people of Ixcán. So much of this wonderful achievement was only made possible by YOU, our incredibly generous donors. You deserve the kudos for making this dream a reality. This trip will set the stage for the next Chapter in eye care in Ixcán, Guatemala. EI thanks you as do the many, many people that have been given the precious gift of better sight and stable ongoing eye health care.



Window treatment



New flooring and window



Exterior painting has begun!



**Don't forget to go to AmazonSmile.com, select Enfoque Ixcán, so a percentage of each of your purchases supports EI's efforts. **

