



# FOCUSING ON IXCÁN

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

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## CROSSED EYES

by Scott Pike

What little Guatemalan boy doesn't like to play futbol (soccer)? It seems like they all do. Eight-year-old Mariano is no exception. One day while he was working hard to score a goal for his team, Mariano fell and hit his head, hard. He got up and tried to continue to play, but something was wrong. He wasn't seeing right.

At home, his parents were alarmed that his right eye was turned in and not working with his left eye. They knew of Enfoque Ixcán so they brought him in to have this eye problem checked out. His vision was good with either eye, each eye was able to move as it should, his neurological reflexes were normal, but when both eyes were open together, the right one turned in noticeably.



*Before surgery*

Since the injury was recent and everything else was normal, it was decided to wait a few days more to see if the eye turn might self-correct. After a couple of weeks with no improvement, we thought it best to send him to Visualiza, the eye clinic in Guatemala City, for their evaluation.

This condition, called strabismus, usually presents itself early in life, often at birth. In the first few years of life before the eyes have fully developed, strabismus will often respond to a correction with glasses and vision therapy.

In Ixcán, Guatemala, where professional eye care is not accessible, we see people with strabismus later in life, in adults or young adults. At that point people will have reorganized their visual system and learned to function without binocular, or two-eyed, vision. Eye surgery can make their eyes cosmetically straight, but it won't make them binocular or give them normal depth perception.

Mariano had already learned to use his eyes binocularly, so eye surgery was the best choice to straighten his eyes. The results were very successful. At the grand opening of our new clinic, Mariano's father, Santiago, came to share his family's gratitude.

"Enfoque Ixcán recommended we take our son to Visualiza, in Guatemala City. My wife originally didn't want to go to the surgery and see our son in a hospital bed, but on the day of the surgery we had a dilemma. I received a call from work that I needed to be elsewhere. The confidence and trust I got from the clinic gave me peace of mind that everything would be fine.

"I finally convinced my wife to go to the surgery and she found it wasn't a bad experience, especially because the results were so successful." Today Mariano is binocular again. Living the normal life of a 9 year old.

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*After surgery*

*CROSSED EYES ... Continued from page 1*

Quality of life is usually associated with the lives of the elderly, but it's important for all ages. People can live very successfully with crossed eyes, but it can affect their quality of life. It can be a cosmetic burden as well as creating some visual perceptual problems. Fortunately, Mariano was able to have his vision problem corrected. Santiago finished by saying how **"...grateful my wife and I are for all the people who donate to keep Enfoque Ixcán here for us."**

## SURPRISE

by Scott Pike

February, 2017—The lady behind the counter at our airline gate in L.A. tells us our connecting flight to Guatemala has been cancelled because the volcano near the Guatemalan airport has erupted and the ash makes it unsafe to fly. We spent 24 long hours at the L.A. airport.



Nearly every one of my 44 trips to Ixcán, Guatemala has included a surprise or two, like the one above. Once my luggage went to New York City instead of Guatemala City. On another trip while sitting at breakfast in the tiny café at our little hotel in downtown Guatemala City, I spotted a familiar face 2 tables away. Being out of place, I didn't recognize her at first, but she and I belong to the same church in Portland, OR. What are the odds?

Our trip this August, 2021, had its own surprises. Enfoque Ixcán treasurer, Dwight, and I had some concerns about the overland trip from Guatemala City to Ixcán, where we were going to take part in the opening of our new eye clinic. We were leery of public transportation, as covid cases were high in Guatemala, we couldn't afford to hire a private driver and I'm not gutsy enough to rent a car and drive in Guatemala.



Manuel

**Surprise #1**—Hearing our dilemma, our clinic architect, Manuel, offered to drive us there. This was no small offer since Guatemala City is 8-9 hours from Ixcán. Not only that, but he lives halfway between the two and had a 4 hour drive just to pick us up. This borders on heroic!



Noel

On our return trip to the city, a doctor friend, Noel, offered to drive us halfway back to the City, where we boarded a greyhound-like bus and we finished the trip. My parents used to say, "It's good to have friends in high places." My version is, "It's good to have many friends in many places." Special thanks to our friends Manuel and Noel.

**Surprise #2**---Guatemalans are especially good at demonstrating against government policies. During these times they are protesting the corruption of their president. One of the popular methods of protesting is to blockade highways. Blockades happen all over the country and are announced on social media the day before.

On the day we left for Ixcán with Manuel, the highway was blocked about 70 miles out of the City and wasn't going to open until 5 pm. We waited until mid-afternoon to start, but still had 20 miles of bumper to bumper traffic, and it was nearly dark by the time the road cleared. Next, we read on social media that the road north to Ixcán was going to be blocked the next day. That's when we had planned to finish the trip to Ixcán.

Plan B, we'll have to drive through the night. We had a delicious dinner at friends of Manuel around 10 pm, then moved on, arriving in Ixcán at 3:30 am. Our room was ready, as were we, for some long overdue sleep.

**Surprise #3**---We had 2 days to prepare the new clinic for the grand opening. Some new equipment had to be set up, a little painting to finish the outside trim and decorating, lining up treats and scheduling the program. With the help of our eye health promoters, Pedro, Felipe, Carlos and Roxana, and 2 of their wives, we got it done.

The clinic looked better than I had imagined. Manuel had done an outstanding job with the design and construction. The 6 year wait to arrive at this point was worth it.

**SURPRISE ....Continued from page 2**

(Check out the photos. You can see them in color on our website, [www.enfoqueixcan.org](http://www.enfoqueixcan.org))

About 20 invited guests came to the opening. Carlos, Pedro, Felipe and I each said a few words of welcome. Then the surprise came. Our guests wanted to speak, as well. It was a proud and humbling few minutes as 6 of our guests told of Enfoque Ixcán's importance in the community.

The public health director thanked us for providing eye care, a service they didn't have.



**Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting by Scott and Pedro**

**ENFOQUE IXCÁN**  
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Our friend from the local Ministry of Education office thanked us for examining school children in many of the outlying villages. Two former elected officials in the local government told how they persuaded the mayor to give us the land we built the clinic on, and how important our service is for community development. Others told personal stories of how we had improved the quality of their lives with corrective eye care.

Dwight and I also noted the pride and care our eye health promoters showed for the new office and equipment. This transition to our own clinic was bringing a new level of professionalism to their attitude, something our patients will feel, as well.

And you, our friends and donors, can take pride with us, for it was only with your support that this improved level of eye care came to be. **The "thank you" we received extend to all of you.**

**A SPECIAL AWARD**

Rachel Osmundson, president of the Pacific University Amigos Eyecare student organization, presented a special Award to Scott. Below are her comments and Scott's response...



Dr. Pike, It is my honor to announce that you are the recipient of the **2021 Volk Amigos Doctor of the Year Award!** We are grateful for your dedication to service to this profession and those in communities that need it most. Your repeated trips to Guatemala, your passion for helping others help themselves, and your desire to change lives is inspiring. Over your years, bringing students to Guatemala, you have touched many lives of current and future doctors. You may not be aware of your impact you've made over these many years, but it is great and Pacific is incredibly honored to have you a part of our team.

Scott's response:



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

I have great admiration for Amigos Eye Care and their history of providing eye care to the less fortunate of the world for over 40 years. It is a distinct honor to receive this award. I share this honor with our eye care workers in Ixcán, Guatemala, the Enfoque Ixcán board of directors, our gracious donors and the 186 volunteers who have traveled with me to Ixcán. This volunteer list includes 113 Amigos and 21 of them have made at least one return trip.

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### **ANNUAL ENFOQUE IXCÁN QUETZAL RUN**

For the past 4 years friends have organized a local fun run to raise funds for Enfoque Ixcán. Although the originator of the event has moved out of the area, our board member and fellow optometrist Jessica Lynch, took it upon herself to continue the tradition. This year on a cool autumn day, the event started in a local park near Pacific University where 24+ friends of Enfoque Ixcán ran or walked a 5K and 11 people contributed to the cause, without participating in the event. raising \$1800+. Thank you to all who contributed to this fun event and a special thanks to Jessica for making it happen!



### **A REMINDER: CHARITABLE BEQUESTS**

Please consider ensuring the sustainability of our work for the years ahead. Putting us in your will for El's the long term survivability would be a true blessing for our organization and those it serves.

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

**Tax ID#:** 01-0844437

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

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

Or talk to your attorney or investment planner **TODAY!**



**THANK  
YOU!**