

Second Edition, January 2011

Miracles & Milestones

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2010 Key Accomplishments

- 520 children fed nutritious meals and snacks each school day
- All sixth graders from each partner school graduated
- 120 mothers trained on nutritional and hygienic food preparation
- Reduced school-drop out by at least 97% at each partner school
- Year-round pilot program—including nutrition, health and hygiene and supplementary enrichment activities—implemented in Chutinamit

Second Annual “Encuentro:” a time for Reflecting and Planning

In November, Mil Milagros founder and President, Margaret Blood, Vice-chair and Treasurer Carolyn Lyons, and intern Alyxe Lett traveled to Guatemala to meet with all four of our partner schools—Chutinamit, Chichimuch, Proyecto Semilla and El Mesias—as well as our program staff, José Aguilar, Fredy Ujpan and Ana Vivar.

The highlight of the trip was the two-day “Encuentro,” the annual conference in which Mil Milagros teachers, parents, and student leaders from each school gathered to reflect on the past year’s achievements in nutrition, health, hygiene and education.

The first day, the group reflected on the year’s achievements, lessons learned and challenges. Professor Mauricio of Chutinamit said the greatest achievement for him was “seeing most of my former students attend middle school. Without the help of Mil Milagros, that wouldn’t have been possible.”

The second day, the teachers attended a workshop on how to identify and work with students with learning disabilities. Meanwhile,

the mothers shared with one another their personal experiences with the Mil Milagros program. A mother from Chichimuch commented on how being in a group of other mothers “was a great opportunity for us to share our ideas and experiences, to learn from one another, and to build solidarity.” And working together, the children created colorful balloon-shaped posters highlighting their dreams and desires for the coming year.

During the last session of the conference, the entire group discussed their ideas for ensuring the sustainability of Mil Milagros. These include:

- micro-enterprise and small productive projects for the mothers
- school gardens
- trainings and workshops on small business management and administration
- alliances with other local institutions.



Student leaders from El Mesias work hard during the “Encuentro.”

“When I grow up I want to be a doctor so that I can help my community. Thanks to Mil Milagros, I can achieve my dream.”

—Student from Chichimuch



Teachers and mothers from Proyecto Semilla working together at the Encuentro.



Chutinamit students performing a traditional Mayan dance called a “son.”



Spotlight: Ana Vivar, Nutrition and Cooking Instructor

MM: When did you start working with Mil Milagros?

I was invited by the Proyecto Semilla School to help strengthen their programming by getting the

mothers more involved in the school. We did lots of activities, such as baking classes and painting with the mothers and their children. It was during my time there that I met Margaret, who was a volunteer at Semilla.

MM: Why did you decide to work with Mil Milagros? When Margaret told me about Mil Milagros, I was interested. When we sat down to talk, the major issue that came up was the need for the children to get a more balanced diet and for families to learn about nutritional foods and how to prepare them. I had already learned on my own about good nutrition and diet so I thought that I was a good fit for what Mil Milagros needed.

MM: Describe a typical work day for you. A big part of my job includes running nutrition and hygiene workshops with

the mothers at each school. This involves coming up with creative ways of explaining and demonstrating healthy and hygienic food preparation as well as teaching the health content (vitamins, minerals, etc) of different local foods. I must make sure all the materials and supplies are ready. I try hard to make the work fun too!

MM: What do you like the best about your job? I love arriving at the schools and seeing the children's smiles. I also love being able to share ideas and experiences with the mothers and see them put into practice what they've learned.

MM: What do you hope Mil Milagros can do in the future? This model should be replicated in other schools and even other countries and the mothers should be in charge of training other women in other communities. The 120 mothers we've already trained can now be the multipliers of the knowledge and skills they've learned.

"What gives me the most pride is seeing the mothers put into practice what I've taught them."
 —Ana Vivar

A Sample Mil Milagros school meal

"Chaomein"
(chow mein noodles)

- Noodles
- Carrots
- Guisquil (a type of gourd)
- Green pepper
- Onion
- Celery
- Chicken (if available)
- Tomatoes
- Salt
- Soy sauce
- Oil

While the noodles boil, the vegetables and chicken are washed and diced finely. Then they are fried in the oil and mixed with salt and soy sauce. When the noodles are done, all is mixed together and served hot with tortillas or tostadas.

Margaret Blood Awarded Honorary Guatemalan Citizenship

Mil Milagros Founder and President, Margaret Blood, was recognized by the Guatemalan Association of Massachusetts (GAMA) for her "outstanding and exemplary" work for the Guatemalan community at Boston City Hall's "Republic of Guatemala Day" celebration on September 12, 2010. Every year GAMA awards a distinguished Guatemalan citizen for his or her commitment toward improving the lives of Guatemalans living in the U.S. or abroad. Margaret was nominated for the award by Mil Milagros Board member and Guatemalan Juan Gil. "She has done more for the children of Guatemala than many Guatemalans themselves," said Gil. "Out of six other candidates for the award, Margaret was chosen for her work championing the rights of Guatemalan children and improving their health and educational outcomes. The significance of this award is that Margaret was made an honorary citizen of Guatemala for a day."



Chichimuch students enjoy a school meal together.

Update on Chutinamit

In May 2010, Tropical Storm Agatha and the subsequent heavy rainfall severely affected the village of Chutinamit, forcing its inhabitants to relocate after the government declared the land inhabitable. The community's residents have been living in a tent city on the edge of San Andrés Semetabaj about 4km from the original location of their village. Mil Milagros extended emergency assistance to the families and raised enough money to rent out two classrooms in a local school so that classes could resume. Mil Milagros also funded a stove and the community built a small kitchen in one of the temporary shelters so that the mothers could continue to cook for the children and the community.

Despite the fact that the community was uprooted, Mil Milagros was able to implement a pilot year-round feeding, health and hygiene program for the children, including the babies and toddlers. During the "summer vacation" months of November and December, we retained the children's teacher three days per week to provide the children with enrichment activities. One of the enrichment activities this year was a bread-making class.



Chutinamit students roll out bread dough during their first bakery class.



Mothers from Chutinamit pose with their new stove.

"We are encouraging the children to begin looking at careers (like baking) and to become self-sufficient artisans," said Mil Milagros Program Coordinator José Aguilar.

We are hopeful that the community will soon secure the resources necessary to purchase new land on which to begin reconstruction efforts.

Mil Milagros will continue to partner with the community to address all the children's nutrition, health, hygiene and education needs year-round. We are especially grateful to Dr. Peter Rohloff and Wuqu' Kawoq for partnering with us to provide the children with on-going health care.

Our Goals for 2011 and Beyond

- Expand to other schools and serve 1,000 children by 2012. A partnership with a fifth school—Xecotoj—will be launched in February 2011, serving 100 new children.
- Expand to a year-round feeding program (from 9 to 12 months) in each school/community.
- Develop partnerships to ensure medical and dental visits to every school on a regular basis.
- Develop and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system of the program's impact on the children's nutrition, health and educational outcomes.
- Improve teaching and learning.
- Develop long-term plans for sustainability and community ownership.

Drink coffee? Support Mil Milagros.

Cafecito Milagro (Spanish for "little coffee miracle") is the brainchild of three mothers with children from Guatemala—Mil Milagros Board Member Jill Takacs, Julie Bushway and Maura King Scully.



Cafecito Milagro is great coffee. Not only is it organic, fair trade Guatemalan coffee, but 100% of the proceeds support Mil Milagros. Proceeds from each \$10 bag of Cafecito Milagro coffee feed four children for a day. Cafecito Milagro comes in two varieties: mild/mellow (regular and decaf) as well as wild/bold. Both varieties can be ordered ground or as whole bean. Shipping is a flat \$5.

Cafecito Milagro is now available online at www.cafecitomilagro.com.

Boston (Volunteer) Staff:

Margaret Blood
Founder & President
 Carolyn Lyons
Vice-President & Treasurer
 Alyxe Lett
Intern

Guatemala Staff:

Jose Aguilar
Program Coordinator
 Ana Vivar
Nutrition & Cooking Instructor
 Fredy Ujpan
Administrative Coordinator



Students and teachers from El Mesias perform an original song called "Mil Milagros" during the Cultural Night at the Encuentro.

Guatemala has the 4th highest child malnutrition rate in the world and the highest in Latin America. In some Mayan communities the malnutrition rate exceeds 70%. At Mil Milagros our mission is to improve the health, well-being and educational outcomes of children in Guatemala. We partner with schools, families and communities to provide the children with nourishing meals, health and hygiene care, and educational materials. By feeding the children, we are working to ensure that they finish sixth grade. Today only 30% of children in Guatemala complete primary school. Since its creation, Mil Milagros has reduced the drop-out rate in its partner schools by 97%.

Mil Milagros Board of Directors	
Margaret Blood <i>Founder & President</i>	Rafael Klotz, Esq.
Carolyn Lyons <i>Vice-President & Treasurer</i>	Rob Meyer, M.D.
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2010 sixth grade graduating class at Proyecto Semilla.



**Make an immediate impact on a child's life.
 Donate today!**

Mil Milagros provides over 500 children with nutritious hot meals and snacks, health and hygiene care, books and school supplies. Just \$1.20 per child per day can create a thousand miracles for an entire community.

To donate:
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