



Construction begins on the water catchment boxes for the Chunimá Sector Bajo project.

Reflection on Our Mission *By Dr. Andrea J. Stapleton, President*

One of the most remarkable aspects of the mission of Global Partners: Running Waters is our commitment to building relationships. As a ministry affiliated with the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), we embrace the SSND ministry ideals, which regularly guide the reflection and work of our Board of Directors.

One of these ministry ideals calls us to "promote unity that is evidenced by inclusivity, internationality, interculturality, and community." This ideal is at the heart of everything we do. Although our partners work together to construct clean water systems for communities in Guatemala, the foundation of that work is not infrastructure—it is relationship.

Our relationships begin with those closest to us and extend across borders through our global partnerships. What many people may not realize is that every water system is led by our Guatemalan partner, Jorge Castro, who serves with ASUVI, a nonprofit organization dedicated to community development in Guatemala. Jorge works alongside each community throughout the entire process—from listening to local needs and organizing the project to planning and constructing the water system. The community members who participate in this work are not simply recipients of a project; they become valued partners and cherished members of the Global Partners community.

These relationships extend beyond the water systems themselves. Over the years, we have developed enduring partnerships with schools in Guatemala that we visit on every trip. We bring donated supplies and educational materials, but we receive just as much in return. School leaders, teachers, and students welcome us with extraordinary hospitality, sharing their stories, their hopes, and the remarkable work taking place in their schools. They invite us into the richness of Guatemalan culture through symbols, traditional dress, music, dance, food, and other intercultural experiences that deepen our understanding of one another.

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Those who travel to Guatemala with us often return home transformed. Many begin the journey expecting to make a difference in the lives of others, only to discover that they themselves have been profoundly changed. Through conversations, shared celebrations, and authentic intercultural exchange, they gain new perspectives, form lasting friendships, and come to appreciate the resilience, generosity, and wisdom of our partners.

In recent years, important conversations have emerged about the unintended consequences of charitable work. Some have rightly questioned whether certain models of service can perpetuate unequal power dynamics between those with greater economic privilege and those with fewer resources. These concerns remind us why relationships must remain at the center of our mission. Our work is not about helping others from a position of superiority; it is about standing alongside one another in humble solidarity. We work in partnership, recognizing that every person has gifts to offer and that genuine transformation occurs through mutual respect, shared learning, and authentic accompaniment. The clean water systems we help build are important, but the relationships we cultivate are the true source of lasting change.

Guatemala Trip - March 11-22, 2027

Thursday, March 11	Arrivals and transfers to HOTEL ROYAL PALACE, Guatemala City, Plaza, market, Cathedral
Friday, March 12	City tour, Relief map, Av. Simeon Canas, Cemetery 19 Calle 2-43
Saturday, March 13	Leave for San Lucas, Iximche Mayan Ruins, Tecpan, Restaurant Pedregal. HOTEL TOLIMAN (San Lucas) Juan Ana coffee prod.
Sunday, March 14	Santiago Atitlan - cross lake by boat. Meet Diego Ajtujal, Toribio a Reforestation, Chati HOTEL TOLIMAN
Monday, March 15	Leave for Santa Cruz. Lunch with Bety, Villma tortilla making, Visit institute in Chinique, visit with Roberto in Chinique, Stay at BARBARA FORD PEACE CENTER
Tuesday, March 16	Water project - lunch with Community, Gumakaaj/Qumarkaj Keeper of Timer. BARBARA FORD PEACE CENTER
Wednesday, March 17	La Puerta School Jose Luis Ixchop, Water project - Lunch with Community. Leave for Chichicastenango. HOTEL SANTO TOMAS
Thursday, March 18	Church and market free morning in Chichicastenango, Girl's school with Anunciata and Sister Ericka. HOTEL SANTO TOMAS
Friday, March 19	Leave for Antigua, Tecun Uman. Lunch, Walk to Cerro de la Cruz, Plaza, Jade Museum and Market free evening, HOTEL POSADA SAN VICENTE
Saturday March 20	Macadamia Farm Valhalla, Mañanas Mayas (women weavers & Maya culture) HOTEL POSADA SAN VICENTE
Sunday, March 21	Palm Sunday processions and carpet making Cena de despedida Don Rodrigo, HOTEL POSADA SAN VICENTE
Monday, March 22	Return to States

Contact Perry Nigh (profepp13@gmail.com / 414-391-6219) with any questions or to secure your spot!

Thoughts on Human Connection and Relationship Building

By Sue Stanton, '26 Guatemala Trip

When I told people I was travelling to Guatemala knowing one person in the group and having “studied” Spanish intermittently throughout my life, the responses were entertaining. Yet, because the trip centered around cultural learning and clean water, I knew that care, intrigue and compassion would embody the travelers and that the grace of God and/or the Universe would guide us on this adventure.

Interestingly, some of my most meaningful memories within the group grew from time together in the van. The obvious things come to mind like the bonding that comes with watching our skilled driver navigate mountain “roads” patterned with potholes and rocks as we unintentionally synchronized inhales to make the van skinnier on the narrow paths. Yet, what my head and heart really remember are the meaningful conversations and consequently, friendships that developed as we got to know one another during the many hours in the 12-passenger van. It was in those times that I listened to people talk about the complexities of feeding school children, the challenges that K-12 educators face today, the powerful and essential work of creating opportunities and spaces for people to evolve into the citizens our nation needs, the adventures of starting a business with a parent, and navigating life-threatening health conditions. I listened to someone who noticed the ways that practices and infrastructures differ from home and struggled to make sense of it. Through stories shared, I was reminded about how unfriendly and cruel Wisconsin’s white culture and communities can be toward people who are not white. I engaged in some powerful cultural and historical learning about Native life within reservations and states in the US. I was inspired by the life journeys of many. The opportunity to learn from and with people who openly and deeply cared for one another was a blessing.

That blessing extended into our interactions with the people of Guatemala. Some of those were with inquisitive school children who curiously examined us and then asked, “Don’t you wear skirts?” They were used to seeing women and girls in their communities wearing traditional Mayan skirts and our female travelers mostly wore pants. Music provided another connection as students at another school joyfully and nervously provided us with an impromptu marimba concert...incredible! To experience the passion and commitment of one person’s reforestation efforts on land he discovered to have familial roots was quite moving. In a visit to the Barbara Ford Peace Center, we listened to a staff person present a very polished PowerPoint about their work. Her whole affect changed as she offered a heartfelt response to a question about the complexities and realities of empowering women, an act of resistance to colonial ways. That question created space for meaningful dialogue about empowerment, peace, and resistance that crosses cultural and national boundaries.

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2026 Trip Reflection

By Kate Cerpich, '26 Guatemala Trip

My trip to Guatemala with Global Partners Running Waters was beautiful in more ways than I could’ve expected. Learning about a new culture, meeting incredible people, and seeing the beauty in a completely different way of life was something I’ll never forget. All of it left such a lasting impact on me.

No matter where we come from or how different our lives may look, there was such an instant sense of connection, kindness, and understanding. It reminded me that people are far more alike than we sometimes think, and that genuine human connection exists everywhere if you’re open to it.

Being able to see the direct impact that something as simple as access to running water can make in people’s everyday lives was incredibly moving, and it reminded me how meaningful it is to be part of creating real change, even in small ways.

During a visit to some Mayan ruins, I sat and observed some Mayan elders doing ceremonies. One of those included a pregnant woman and her partner who were being blessed by the elders incorporating specific herbs in the fire pits. Then, some of our group who are Native Americans went forth to introduce themselves to the Mayan elders, to share goodwill and ask permission to be on the land. On this trip, I learned about this beautiful tradition. It was so powerful to watch this connection of Indigenous peoples to see respect modeled in this way and to see sparks of real joy, connectedness and empowerment. After this traditional exchange of words, introductions and gifts happened, it was quite funny to watch everyone pull out their phones and start exchanging WhatsApp contact information! I was watching a unifying of cultures across boundaries and eras!

While my limited Spanish skills meant that I missed many words throughout the trip, I feel blessed to have had so many small moments of human connection, understanding and learning throughout this Guatemalan adventure. The power of observation, shared smiles, really seeing the warmth in someone's eyes, finding ways to show gratitude and intrigue and being open to new experiences were so helpful to building meaningful connections. Those moments have touched my head and heart in ways that will remain with me.



How Can You Help?

Interested in serving on our Board or a committee?

Board members meet once a month, serve on a committee, and volunteer about five hours per month—helping us direct more of our funds to our mission. Committee members support a specific area of GPRW's work without attending board meetings. Current committees include Finance, Development, Communications, World Water Day, and Trips.

We are deeply grateful for all our board members and volunteers, past and present, who continue to be ambassadors for our work and champions for equitable water access and education worldwide.

Our mission is to build relationships through collaboration on water, food, health, and education projects in Latin America.

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