



OCIMA

Overseas and Continental Independent Mercy Association

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www.ocimaya.org

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November 2023

Dear Friends of O.C.I.M.A.,

Thanksgiving is the time of year when we acknowledge you and thank you for your generous support. OCIMA's work in Guatemala and Ecuador would not be possible without you. We would also like to thank Bob Brzustewicz, who recently retired from his role as vice-president. Bob has a knack for identifying a need and solving it. We will miss Bob's quiet strength, but know that his heart will always be with OCIMA. Thank you, everyone, for all you have done for OCIMA!

During 2023, severe weather has driven the needs in both Guatemala and Ecuador.

In Ecuador, we supported the completion of safe water systems for peasant families in the provinces of Cotopaxi and Bolívar. Cotopaxi is the province that experienced extensive damage in early 2022 due to the overflow of the Quindigua River as a result of heavy rains. In addition, about 25% of our support in Ecuador directly helped children in vulnerable situations in need of special medical care.

In Guatemala, the Nutritional Center in Morales has been responsible for feeding 87 families while monitoring children with moderate to severe malnutrition, and providing medical interventions when feasible. Delivering food and seeing to the children is challenging because some roads are washed out due to heavy rains. The weather is also wreaking havoc with the Center itself. The roof is leaking and in need of replacement, which in turn, has caused damage to the nursery and kitchen. We recently met one young girl, Ingrid, who was staying at the Center while she recuperated from her last surgery. At 4 years old, she is ravaged with poor health and looks like she is only 4 months old. Ingrid's mother is extremely grateful for the medical interventions that were made possible through your donations.



Ingrid at 4 Years of Age



The Clinic in Santa Elena continues to service 70 to 80 patients each day, 24/7, and an additional 70 to 75 patients when the neurologist makes her regular monthly visit. On staff, there are four doctors – two in general medicine, one in pediatrics and one in gynecology. Every Saturday, patients also have access to an eye doctor, an

orthodontist and a nutritionist. No one is turned away for lack of funds. Here too the weather is wreaking havoc and additional repairs are needed due to roof damage and cracked walls – “a project for 2024” we are told.

At the orphanage (Casa Hogar) in Santa Elena, 23 Mayan girls between the ages of 4 and 14 have been cared for this year. The number of girls who are there at any given time fluctuates because the courts place the children back with their families or with relatives as soon as possible believing a family setting is the best environment for the children. While they are at the Casa Hogar, they are loved and cared for. Each child – often arriving with only the clothes on their backs – receives new clothing, personal care items and their own bed linens when they arrive at the Casa Hogar. This year, there were also four migrant children who were placed at the Casa Hogar, each for only 24 to 72 hours, until the government was able to return them to family in their own country. The orphanage boasts a new swing set, trampoline and bicycles for the children to enjoy; also a new stove for cooking meals.



Cooling Off!



Our students in front of the chapel in Santa Rosa with Sisters visiting from Italy

At the school in Santa Rosa where OCIMA provides scholarships, housing and food, the year started with 17 girls. Life in the countryside for their families is precarious, wages are very low, the harvests must be sold to survive and harvests are not plentiful. Between corruption, violence, abandonment and family disintegration, children suffer. And so, the Sisters work with the girls to strengthen their spirits, to let them know they are loved and valued as women, and to be grateful to God for the good things in their lives, including all the people who care about them and their future.

Although there is much hardship, our program is a solid step toward building our students’ self-esteem and providing employment opportunities in teaching, computers and tourism.

All this to say that our good work continues despite great obstacles.

As noted, we will be releasing an updated website toward the end of this year. Check it out at www.ocimaya.org. (This is the old website address, but it will direct you to the new website once it is released.)

Last year, we mentioned a special request made by the Nutritional Center – to build a new facility that would accommodate an updated nutritional center, a home for the sisters, and most notably, a home for young girls who have been abandoned or are the object of sexual, physical or psychological abuse. The city had granted a piece of land for the facility, which was contingent on construction starting by the end of 2023. But we have recently learned the property is not likely to revert to the city because officials recognize the critical need for these services. We are still working with the Sisters to obtain a business plan and to get questions answered and will share information as it becomes available on our new website.

We want to thank all of you for all that you have done through OCIMA over the years. Literally the thousands who are being helped with your donations to OCIMA are very mindful of your generosity.

We sincerely hope that you will continue to be generous with your help as you have been in the past.

Larry Gatt
OCIMA Board of Directors &
& President

Marie C. Curreri
OCIMA Board of Directors &
Treasurer

Susan M. Hug
OCIMA Board of Directors

FINANCIAL REPORT — 2022

FUNDS AVAILABLE:

Donations:	\$ 114,597	¹
Raffle Proceeds:	23,873	^{2,3}
2022 Endowment Fund Distribution:	8,623	
Carryover from 2021:	29	
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE:	<u>\$ 147,122</u>	

PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:

1. GSFEP (Ecuador)	\$ 17,000
2. School in Chapas, Santa Rosa	37,800
3. Nutritional Center in Morales	34,000
4. Clinic and Orphanage Santa Elena	51,000
TOTAL PROJECT DISBURSEMENTS:	<u>\$ 139,800</u>

EXPENSES:

1. P.O. box, postage & printing, envelopes, bank & license fees	\$ 1,440
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$ 1,440 ⁴
TOTAL EXPENSES & DISBURSEMENTS:	<u>\$ 141,240</u>

CARRYFORWARD TO 2023:

\$ 5,882

¹ Excludes \$17,923 in donations made during 2022 raffle (i.e., no ticket purchases).

² Includes \$17,923 in donations made during 2022 raffle, ticket sales of \$8,950, reduced by \$3,000 cash prize.

³ Note that ticket sales and donations during the raffle are higher than the amounts originally reported in the St. Irenaeus Church Bulletin (where the raffle was held), which was published prior to the final accounting for the raffle.

⁴ Total expenses were 1.02% of total funds available for 2022. In 2021, total expenses were 0.64% of total funds available.