

# Acción

Friends of Accion  
c/o Covenant Presbyterian Church  
1000 E Morehead St.  
Charlotte, NC 28204

## A Slice of the Action

November 2012  
Issue 9



*People to people.  
Person to person.  
Relationships, not just programs.*

---

## On the Ground in Mexico

*Oscar R. Dorantes, Acción Director (Merida, Yucatan, Mexico)*

---

Dear friends,

The Yucatan Peninsula continues to enjoy the peaceful Mayan way of life. We at Acción Ministries remain committed to our mission of promoting education and sharing the Gospel with the Mayan people. Investing in youth, enabling them to get an education will



**Left:** VIM residents take a musical break from their studies and chores. **Right:** CEM residents check out the renovations

students at VIM which is a blessing for this growing program, but also a challenge for our directors, Isaac and Juanita Ricardez because of limited space. Our new dining hall is under construction. Thanks to generous donors and a work team from First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC, the foundation, floor, and walls have been built for a new



kitchen and bathrooms. Construction for the main dining area has not yet begun. We have continued gaining the confidence of the Maya living in the vicinity of the VIM. Our philosophy is to empower the youths so they

help ensure the future and safety of this part of Mexico. We believe that we are not only contributing to their educational formation and physical needs but also to their spiritual development. Your donations continue to provide hope for a generation of Mayan Mexicans.

*Mayan Children's Village (Villa Infantil Maya—VIM):* Currently, we have 33

can better themselves and their communities.

*Merida Student House (Casa Estudiantil Merida—CEM):* We have finally connected VIM with CEM. We have 6 students that have finished high school at the Ignacio Zaragoza School (where VIM is located) and are currently living at CEM and attending

*Your donations continue to provide hope for a generation of Mayan Mexicans.*

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Acción's master masons take a break from helping the First Presbyterian Church (Charlotte, NC) work team construct VIM's new dining hall.*

*(Continued from page 2)*

classes at the Merida Technological Institute. We have a total of 18 students at CEM, and all of them are pursuing higher education.

Thanks to our generous donors, we have done some improvements, such as additions to the restrooms, new quarters for the resident director, and new windows and doors.

**Work Teams:** We had a great group of work teams during 2012. We were able to finish one of the biggest church roofs that we have ever had in the city of Pisté, Yucatán. Furthermore with the aid of many churches we were able to continue to "equip the saints" in different communities around the Yucatán. At the church in Tixpehual we built the roof and floors. At the church in Xcan, we helped to finish the roof and floor of the educational building. At the church of Molas we helped by building the walls and floor of the educational building. Finally at VIM workteams built a vegetable garden and finished laying the tile in the girls dorm, plus the walls and the foundation for the new kitchen and dining hall in VIM.

**Staff.** Roger continues working as the Assistant Director for Acción Ministries and the maintenance supervisor for a private Presbyterian school. I continue serving as the Director of Acción and a pastor of a church (Confraternidad Church) in the city of Merida. A new staff member, Omar Martinez, served as CEM director over the summer, but has since left to follow a presbytery call to plant churches in the Yucatán. Nico Alvarez, our former office assistant and work team staffer has stepped into the role of CEM director, and Oveth Hernandez (former CEM Director) will serve as a part-time assistant and communications coordinator for Accion.

We would like to appeal once more to your generosity with regard to the installations and equipment for VIM and CEM. (See page 9 for more information on giving to Accion.)

Finally... we would like to thank you for your attention and understanding. May the Good Lord continue to bless you, and may His Light shine upon you.

### **Trip planned for March 2-9, 2013**

Would you like to see the work of Acción Ministries up close? A trip from Charlotte, NC is going to the Yucatan - staying and working at VIM March 2-9. We would love to have anyone who is interested join us for the week. For more information, please contact

Martha Eubank:  
[meubank@bellsouth.net](mailto:meubank@bellsouth.net)  
Or 704-334-5258.

---

## Success Builds at Acción's Homes for Students

*Rich Neidinger, Friends of Accion President (Charlotte, NC)*

---

Six years ago, three boys from the remote village of San Juan de Dios started junior high school, thanks to the Mayan Children's Village (in Spanish "Villa Infantil Maya" or "VIM") that had just opened. This fall, Moises, Jose and Joel, enrolled in college! Moises and Joel now live in the Merida Student House (CEM) and study engineering, while Joel is in a dentistry program in Cancun. San Juan de Dios had no schools beyond elementary school, but at VIM they completed all three years of junior high, all three years of high school, and passed Mexico's rigorous university admissions test.

These boys have led the way in the growth and remarkable success of VIM students. They have seen VIM grow from 9 students in its first year to 33 students this fall, including 12 young women. Like these boys, the new students (and many on the waiting list) are eager to cooperate in community, and work hard in school in order to take advantage of this educational opportunity. Last spring, all six of the high school seniors at VIM, plus the two VIM staff children, graduated and passed the university exam!

In Merida, three students housed at the Merida Student House (in Spanish "Casa Estudiantil Merida," or "CEM") graduated with university degrees in software engineering, tourism, and business administration, respectively, while another completed a certification year beyond the university degree. As they go on to contribute as Christian lead-

ers in their communities, eight new students are starting at CEM, including six from VIM.

CEM is growing with 18 residents this fall and a new resident director, Omar Martinez. This young pastor is making sure the young are keeping the now completely renovated facilities clean and neat, scheduling painting



*Nico delivers two weeks worth of groceries to VIM*

projects and regular facility maintenance. Omar leads Bible studies for these dedicated students. We owe a debt of gratitude and mountain of best wishes to the outgoing resident director Oveth Hernandez, who will continue serving Acción in a different staff role, and is getting married this fall! God bless him and his marriage.

God is using Acción and all its supporters to really change the lives of all of these young men and women. Thank you for making this

*(Continued from page 4)*

possible! Please, help us continue to be able to support the growth and success of these programs. Groups are helping to build a badly needed kitchen and dining hall for VIM. We continue to dream of providing such opportunity for even more students, but first we must secure enough funds to provide for our current 33 VIM and 18 CEM students.



*Girls work on homework at VIM*

Each student requires about \$140 per month or \$1,500 per year to supply the food, shelter, and staff in the VIM and CEM facilities. Please, consider helping as you can and talk with your church and/or friends about sponsoring a student. Please, pray for these students and God's work in the Yucatan. Join us in praising God for the success at VIM and CEM!

## A Generous Spirit

*Abby Gwaltney, U.S. Work Team Coordinator for Acción Ministries*

In June 2012, a group of high school students and adults travelled from First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC to Mexico for an unforgettable Work Team experience.



*Moises (far left) with other 2012 VIM high school graduates and First Presbyterian Church work team members.*

For a week, the team stayed and worked at the Mayan Children's Village, building walls for a new dining hall. They came away with a new appreciation for this special place, and the hard-working students who live there. A group of American high school seniors was especially touched by the story of high school senior, Moises Chel Ek. Moises is from a small village and if not for Acción Ministries his education probably would have ended after elementary school. Instead, six years ago he came to VIM.

Today, Moises has moved from VIM to CEM and is currently at university studying Civil Engineering, thanks in part to these high school seniors banded who together and made a commitment to support Moises with a scholarship of \$140/month. These young people not only provided valuable resources to help Moises, but they also provided a valuable example of service and sacrifice to the underclassmen on their work team.

---

## Garden of Hope

*Louise Ripple, former Friends of Accion Board Member (Charlotte, NC)*

---

Four work teams from Charlotte visited La Villa Infantil Maya (The Mayan Children's Village, abbreviated "VIM") this past spring to install kitchen gardens and to get to know the students there. One small team of 4 women came for four days and hauled rock for the garden borders and planted seedlings. A larger group of 10 team members came sponsored by Covenant Presbyterian Church to complete the gardens. A couple of other smaller teams came as well. However, building the gardens was the secondary work. The primary work was to get to know the students and Isaac and Juanita Ricardez who are the director and his wife, and their family and staff. Here are some quotes from team members and students at VIM about their experiences together this past spring:



*Students at VIM work with American team members to build raised bed vegetable gardens of cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, radishes, and other crops.*

"My trip to Mexico with Covenant was life altering. Words cannot describe what it was like to work with children so singularly focused on their education. Although they did not have a lot materially, they individually and collectively had an abundance of love and compassion. I will always remember my trip with Covenant, and the fellowship with the people of the Yucatan."

"Our March trip to VIM was an extremely meaningful and rewarding experience. The latter is not an adjective I would normally use for my Mexico Mission trips, of which there have been over two dozen; however, this was a very different oppor-

tunity for me. After working for over a decade to begin VIM, from helping Oscar Sr. write his first proposal for funding and the ground breaking trip, I was given the privilege of seeing VIM "in action." The students and program managers, Isaac and Juanita, could not be more appreciative of their experiences at VIM. All are gaining so much in their life and faith journeys, and it would be impossible to adequately express the impact this program has had on the lives of so many of our

*(Continued on page 7)*



VIM students attend a "cultural fair" at their school.

friends in the Yucatan. To work to begin a program and then see its success is such a gift, and we are all blessed that God guided us to work with Him in creating VIM. The program has further provided life-changing experiences for the youth programs that have completed Mission trips at VIM. As a result of their summer 2012

trip, the seniors from First Presbyterian Charlotte youth group pledged to pay for four years of college expenses for one of the graduating seniors at VIM. This very talented young man has been given the gift of a high school education through VIM, and now will receive a much deserved college education. Praise God for opening these doors!"

"One of my greatest memories of VIM is the laughter and bonding that happened when the children were painting their self-portraits. Quiet children came out of their shells, the more outgoing kids good naturedly ribbed the other kids and the natural artists were humble. They were so proud of their paintings and it was a joy to experience!"

"My purpose of my first trip to the Yucatan was to cut the original road into VIM. That

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Voices from "la Villa"

**All of the students sent letters to the team members. Here are a few of them:**

*"I am very grateful for you and for being with us in VIM and also for your time to be with us. I am very grateful to God and you. You are a person of great heart and may God bless you and your family. Thank you very much for being involved at VIM. Thank you very much for your church. Blessings..."*

*"Hello, my name is Wendy and I am from Cancun. Because first of all I thank you and your church for all the help that VIM receives. Thank*

*you for coming to visit and for caring for us. We are very fortunate to receive this support. Thank you for allowing us to continue our studies. I say goodbye and I ask you to please send my greetings and thanks to all the brothers in the United States. Blessings to all..."*

*"Hello!!!! Thank you for your visit and support of this institution. I am very grateful to all who give us support but mainly to our God who sustains us each day with his mighty hand and who loves us. But now I want to thank you and the churches that support us. God Bless."*

(Continued from page 7)

was 12 years ago in 2000. I have been back many times but never when VIM was occupied. We have been dreaming of the day when VIM was filled with happy children laughing, playing, eating, and studying. It was fulfilling to see so many grateful students furthering their education by living at VIM."

*They demonstrated joy, love, and appreciation for everything in their lives.*

"This was my first trip to the school. I was so impressed with the students. They live quite simply (by our standards) but seem truly appreciative of what they are being given through the program. There is a sense of camaraderie and fun combined with work."

"The happiness of the children surprised me a lot. They are well cared for at VIM and that is and will make a huge difference in their lives."

"I was very surprised at the eagerness and excitement of the children to be involved with the construction and planting of the gardens. I was also surprised at how much fun the children had painting their self-portraits -- especially the boys. I was absolutely impressed and surprised at the happiness that is in that "home". The children are led, loved and cared for by a dedicated and amazing couple. The children also have a lot of self-discipline - they get their selves up every morning, get dressed, do their chores, do their homework and help each other with homework and no one nags them. "

"I hope that VIM will continue to grow and reach the goal that was set in the original plan and that a maximum number of children are able to participate in this program."

"I will remember that 30 teenagers lived, studied, and worked together without





*(Continued from page 8)*

cliques, bullying, or argument. They demonstrated joy, love, and appreciation for everything in their lives. I will remember the beauty of the landscape and the size of the sky with the numerous stars and planets visible. I will remember the gourmet meals that our [resident chef] prepared on 2 gas burners floating between metal poles. I will remember visiting Tres Reyes and meeting Harley's father, mother, aunt, and brothers, tour-

ing the village, and being impressed with the hope, faith, and love that was present."

"I pray that Friends of Accion will be able to interest more people to contribute to such a worthwhile cause so that we can increase the number of young people that can benefit from being able to live at VIM and attend school in near-by Ignacio Zaragosa. I pray that more churches will agree to send mission teams to either expand VIM or to work in the small villages in the area that need on-going help."

### **Acción's Current Needs**

Your donation or "alternative Christmas gift" for a loved one will support Acción's operating costs, ensuring that our students at the Mayan Children's Village (Villa Infantil Maya—VIM) and the Merida Student House (Casa Estudiantil Merida—CEM) to provide them with meals and housing in a supportive Christian environment as they attend school from these homes away from home.

- \$10** purified water for a week at VIM or CEM
- \$20** tortillas for a week at CEM
- \$30** propane gas for a month of cooking meals at VIM or CEM
- \$35** weekly room and board for one student at VIM or CEM
- \$140** monthly room and board for one student at VIM or CEM
- \$1,500** one year of room and board for a student at VIM or CEM
- \$4,000** a used Volkswagon van for VIM to help relieve some of the transportation burden on Acción's current vehicles.

#### **Frequent**

**Flyer** helps offset the travel costs of Roger and Oscar visiting U.S. churches

**Miles**

### **To Make a "Gift" Donation...**

Send your check to Friends of Accion (the address on the back of this newsletter) and send Abby an email ([abby.gwaltney@gmail.com](mailto:abby.gwaltney@gmail.com)). She will mail or email you an acknowledgement that you can give to the gift recipient.

---

## A Van for VIM

*Louise Ripple and Abby Gwaltney*

---

As we enter into a season of giving, please remember Acción. Gifts of all shapes, sizes, and purposes are always welcome. Also, we have one “special request” item from Oscar and Roger. VIM needs another vehicle to transport students to and from school.

Louise Ripple witnessed this first hand during her time volunteering at VIM this year. She writes: “The current van looks wonderful inside and out. It’s perfect for the number of students needed to be taken on one of the 10 trips a day back and forth to and from

school each day. But the engine is not beautiful! Three or four times while I was visiting VIM for six weeks, the van needed to be fixed. Isaac and Marcos borrowed a truck to take the children to school on the days the van wasn’t working and they all piled up in the bed of the truck. But it is so much safer for the students and easier on their school uniforms for them to ride in a van.” Another used van will cost about \$4,000. If this is a need that speaks to your heart and you’d like to help, please let us know.



*Left: Current VIM van, undergoing a repair. Right: The students' alternate transportation when the van breaks down.*

---

## Work Teams Serve Creatively

*Abby Gwaltney, U.S. Work Team Coordinator for Acción Ministries (Springfield, VA)*

---

We had a very productive and innovative work team program in 2012. Volunteers from 6 churches worked side by side with their Mayan brothers and sisters to construct homes and churches, and do community out-

reach through vacation Bible schools. We have fabulous and creative volunteers with unique skills! Some teams offer an “eyeglasses” ministry to villages they visit.

*(Continued on page 11)*



*VIM Director, Isaac, operates the repaired water purification system.*

students at VIM so they can have a tidy and secure place to store their belongings.

We love our work team volunteers! Contact Abby Gwaltney and let us know how you would like to serve.



*Doug Rhodes (right) from Vienna Presbyterian Church assesses a man's vision in Tixpehual to see if he can benefit from the used eyeglasses they brought.*

We had a team come to build a vegetable garden for VIM, which continues to produce fresh food. Also, we had a team that repaired the water purification system at VIM, which is running smoothly!

In 2013 we anticipate even more teams, including one that will build lockers for the

Team	Hometown	# People	Village	Project
First Lutheran Church	Fargo, ND	28	X-Pom, Yucatan	Finished the church roof and helped build a small parsonage.
Covenant Presbyterian Church (special team)	Charlotte, NC	9	Mayan Children's Village (VIM), Yucatan	Designed and built a garden for VIM.
Northminster Presbyterian Church	Tucson, AZ	30	Piste, Yucatan	Built a roof for part of a large church building.
Northminster Presbyterian Church (special team)	Tucson, AZ	6	Mayan Children's Village (VIM), Yucatan	Repaired the water purification system.
Covenant Presbyterian Church (Youth)	Charlotte, NC	28	Xcan, Yucatan	Built a roof and floor of a church.
First Presbyterian Church	Charlotte, NC	49	Mayan Children's Village (VIM), Yucatan	Built the walls for a new dining hall at VIM.
Vienna Presbyterian Church	Vienna, VA	22	Tixpehual, Yucatan	Built a large concrete floor and a small roof for a church.
Gettysburg Presbyterian Church	Gettysburg, PA	18	Molas, Yucatan	Built walls and floors for a church's classrooms and restrooms.

---

## Dave Coster: A Legacy of Service

*Abby Gwaltney, U.S. Work Team Coordinator for Acción Ministries*

---

In September 2012, Dave Coster passed away after a life devoted to Christ and Acción Ministries. With his wife, Linda, Dave organized the first "Missonal Tour of the Yucatan" in 1991 with the hope of getting people interested in supporting Oscar (Sr.) and Thelma Dorantes' work with the Mayan people of Mexico. In 1994, Dave started handling the summer work teams as Acción's first U.S. Work Team Coordinator. His link between team leaders in the U.S. and Oscar Sr. in Mexico played a big part in the success

of the work team program. He led the work team program until 2006 with dedication, enthusiasm, meticulous record-keeping, and an effortless ability as "cultural translator" between Americans and Mexicans.



*Left to right: Thelma and Oscar Dorantes, Linda and Dave Coster*

My husband and I got to know Dave in 2002 when we were in Merida volunteering with Acción at the same time for about a month. He and Linda showed us around, took us under their wing, and have been like family to us. Their enthusiasm and service for Acción were infectious. Following their example we have remained volunteers with Acción ever since.

We at Acción Ministries thank Dave and Linda for their faithful service over three decades. Dave will be missed, but his

spirit will live on in the work of Acción Ministries. We are thankful for the hope we have in Jesus Christ that this is not goodbye, but merely "see you later, Dave."

Donations to support Acción Ministries may be sent to...

**Friends of Accion**

c/o Covenant Presbyterian Church

1000 E Morehead St.

Charlotte, NC 28204

FriendsofAccion@carolina.rr.com

**[www.friendsofaccion.org](http://www.friendsofaccion.org)**

Friends of Accion, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.  
Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.