

# A slice of the Action

education transformation Yucatan Mexico  
adventure disaster relief scholars  
mission homes for youth family Mayan  
Christ in action partnerships new beginnings  
compassion travel love opportunity



## Letter from the Director

- Oscar R. Dorantes

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace. It is our prayer that you may continue to enjoy the grace of our Lord. Another year is just about to begin and, as every year, it comes with new hopes and challenges. As we continue to partner in doing ministry in the Yucatan Peninsula, here are some updates on the programs you support through your prayers and your gifts.

We continue to bring hope to the Mayan communities by not only providing food and lodging, but also Christian and academic education. This year at Mayan Children's Village, we are housing 31 children. Our goal for them has been the same from the beginning: to help them finish high school and receive their diploma.

As we work to empower future generations, we are also ministering to the needs of

college students through Merida Student House (Casa Estudiantil Merida--CEM). Here we continue to build the future of

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The Dorantes and Wright families reconnect. From left to right: Bonnie, Dave, and Melissa Wright; Oscar, Patty, Maya and Andre Dorantes

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Newsletter ISSUE 11, Fall 2014

Friends of Accion, Inc. is a U.S. 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, which supports the work of Acción Ministries in Mexico. Your contributions are tax deductible; please give generously.

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

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México as they continue to graduate with degrees in civil engineering, mechanical engineering and tourism, among many others. Our goal is to facilitate a college-level education for students from villages who come to study in the city of Merida.

All our efforts are concentrated on the needs of the Mayan people and the communities from which every CEM or VIM student comes. Accion Ministries also continues to run a summer program. During the summer months, we host teams from churches in North Carolina, North Dakota, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Georgia who come to build churches in remote Mayan villages.

As we do each year, we would like to thank you in the name of Jesus Christ for your continued partnership with the work of Accion Ministries. What we do for our students and their families would not be possible without your support. ☩

## Alternative Giving

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) receive 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

**\$140** One month of room and board for one student at VIM or CEM

**\$750** New tires for one truck

**\$1,700** One year of room and board for one student at VIM or CEM

**Frequent Flyer Miles** Help offset the travel costs of Roger and Oscar visiting U.S. churches



Tax-deductable contributions should be sent to:

**Friends of Accion, Inc.**

% Covenant Presbyterian Church  
1000 E. Morehead St.  
Charlotte, NC 28204

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

## Accion Ministries: by the numbers

- Leigh Hutchinson, Friends of Acción Board Treasurer

I have been the treasurer for Friends of Accion for almost one year now. In that time I have been impressed by many numbers:

- 7 work teams sent to the Yucatan in 2014 to build homes, churches, and be the hands and feet of Jesus
- 31 young people at VIM attending middle and high school,
- 13 of them supported by BECAS scholarships
- 13 young men at CEM working on degrees in civil, electric and environmental engineering; education, business administration, and more;



them. If you have given to Friends of Accion in the past, would you consider increasing your donation, making a special gift to help buy a new truck, or committing to sponsor a child with a BECAS scholarship? If you have not given individually in the past, would you help us now? Do you have a friend who is a member of a church looking for a special mission opportunity? If so, please tell them about Accion Ministries. Do you have any new ideas about how we can better spread the word about this incredible example of God’s work in action?



*Dependable vehicles are essential to Accion’s operations.*

- over 65 churches and individuals who are regular and generous donors
- 99% of our income is spent directly on our missions

But we can do so much more! The truck that is used to haul supplies for work teams has travelled almost 200,000 miles and costs thousands of precious dollars each year in repairs. We have room to house 50 students at VIM but do not have the funds to support



No donation is too small and the recipients of your generosity are so appreciative of the love and support provided their fellow Christians. We have opened a brokerage account and can now accept gifts of stock. You can donate online at [www.friendsofaccion.org](http://www.friendsofaccion.org) or by mail with the enclosed envelope (see instructions on page 2). ☩



## 2014 Work Teams

**T**hank you short-term missionaries for another year of Work Team impact in the Yucatan! We had 9 teams with 182 volunteers visit Mexico to serve the

*Seeing VIM in action was the most impactful experience that I've had.*

- Martha Eubank, First Pres. Church (Charlotte)

Mayan people with Acción Ministries:

- 19 people from First Lutheran Church in Fargo, ND built walls for family homes in Tinucuh, Yucatan.
- 5 people from Charlotte, NC helped build the new dining hall at VIM.
- 12 people from St. Luke's Presbyterian Church in Dunwoody, GA helped roof homes for needy families in the Merida outskirts.
- 33 people from Northminster Presbyterian Church in Tucson, AZ built a new roof and floor for the church in San Lorenzo Chiquila, Yucatan.
- 18 youth and adults from Covenant Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC built homes for families in Tinucuh, Yucatan.

*"My life is rich in so many ways and I have nothing to complain about. I need to remember that."*

- Jeff Black, Westminister Pres. Church



- 15 people from Westminister Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, NC built homes for families in Tinucuh, Yucatan.
- 26 people from Vienna Presbyterian Church in Vienna, VA roofed the annex and kitchen of a church in Kila, Campeche.
- 37 people from First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC roofed the new kitchen facility at the Mayan Children's Village.
- 17 people from Gettysburg Presbyterian Church in Gettysburg, PA built a roof and floor for a church annex in Holca, Yucatan and ran an eyeglasses ministry for villagers.



## A Fresh-eyed Look at VIM

- Katie McDowell  
First Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC


I first decided to go on the Mexico trip because of overwhelmingly positive feedback from previous youth and advisors. Much of the praise I heard, however, was nonspecific, like "It was amazing!" or "I loved it!". In fact, the majority of details consisted of having to deal with various types of unwanted critters in the sleeping quarters. What I have come to realize in retrospect is that the physical and spiritual journeys that each one of us experienced that week are difficult to articulate.

We live in a society far more fast-paced and modern than our neighbors in the Mayan Children's Village (Villa Infantil Maya--VIM). The drawbacks to our lifestyle are that we often expect instant gratification, determine success from material wealth, seek convenience over hard work, and find little time for soul searching. At VIM, God showed me a place that carries out an incredibly moving mission with relatively few resources. The host family and employees at Acción Ministries all radiated joy and patience despite

a project that to us seemed to be taking an excruciatingly long time.

Throughout the week, the aspects of VIM that seemed like inconveniences became bearable and in some cases even beneficial. The lack of phone service made participation in work, recreation, and small group activities engaging. The hammocks and cold showers became welcome after exhausting days on site.

Perhaps where I saw God the most that week was in the eyes of the people, twinkling as brightly as the starry skies there, untarnished by city lights. The Mayans never complained about the heat or grew frustrated with my classroom-level Spanish, but instead took genuine interest in me and were grateful for the fun and fellowship offered each day at Vacation Bible School.

This mission trip reminded me that love, on the most basic and fundamental level, is far more impressive than worldly progress. 



The team from First Presbyterian Church (Charlotte, NC) sitting atop the new kitchen facility at VIM that they helped construct.

## Spotlight: Board Member, John Baxter

Member and Mission Trip Volunteer,  
Covenant Presbyterian Church (Charlotte, NC)

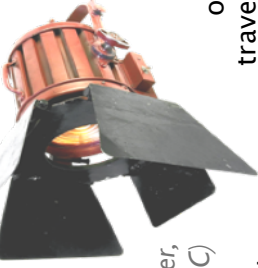
**A**s I end my term on the Accion Board in December, I thought I would share why I go on mission trips—especially those connected with Accion—and why I have served on the Accion board.

Ultimately, it is about relationships—with members of our congregation; with the whole Accion team and the people they serve; and most importantly, with God.

My mission journey started a little over 50 years ago, as I was finishing college, with that great secular mission: The Peace Corps. I went to Chile to improve lives and save the world from communism. I am not sure how much lasting value we had, but I took away several things from this experience, including learning Spanish and it gave me a strong introduction to another culture and poverty.

Fast-forward 34 years... Several folks at Covenant Presbyterian Church asked me to go on an Accion mission trip to the Yucatan in 2001. I thought: "How rough could it be? Ultimately, it might do a little good." So it began—being introduced to friends at Accion and church, and growing spiritual strength through devotions. Two years later, I returned with a team that worked on the foundations of Mayan Children's Village (VIM). Little did I realize that the dream of VIM to provide education opportunities for Mayan children would really come true, with more than fifteen young men and women graduating from high school over the last couple of years.

**So why am I still doing this?** In many cases we are making a difference by planting seeds



of hope. It goes back to the importance of relationships. I have gotten to know hundreds of people at Covenant over the years. At every worship service I see others with whom I have travelled. The core Yucatan relationships that continue to have an impact on me are with Accion's Oscar, Sr., Oscar, Jr., Roger, Ovethe, Kipo, as well local pastors and church members.



Kipo (left), from Acción in deep discussion with John, the author.

To this day, I treasure the time spent with Kipo learning about Mayan legends, or the evening spent with two Mexican pastors discussing PCUSA, its Spanish pronunciation, and the homosexuality issue in the church (all discussed while speaking Spanish!). I even have unexpectedly ran into into Miguel, an elder in the Piste church, while my wife Carol and I visited Chichen Itza a few years ago.

To conclude, I would like to share some of the Oscar Romero Prayer, written by a Catholic Bishop, which helps me put this mission stuff in perspective:

*"We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well."*

**This is what I believe we are doing through Accion Ministries and the Friends of Accion.**



## Building homes and friendships

- Meredith Barkley, Westminster  
Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC



Meredith, hard at work.

**F**ifteen of us from Westminster found meaning and companionship this summer in a tiny jungle clearing in the heart of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

We spent a week in Tinuncah, helping a mason crew roof a small cinderblock church and four cinderblock homes. We also conducted vacation Bible school each day for 30-40 children.

The villagers of this isolated outpost, unaccustomed to strangers, seemed skeptical at first. But by week's end they had warmed to us. The children embraced the Christian programs and crafts as well as the soccer balls and other sports equipment we brought.

They expressed gratitude during closing ceremonies. "Brothers, thank you for thinking of us, for all the work we saw you do," said Leonardo Ek Chi. We helped roof his house, which he would soon move into with wife, Nielsy, expecting their first child. They would be moving out of Leonardo's parents' 400 square foot hut nearby, which they shared with 5 other adults and 3 children.

"I'm so grateful to you because God, through you, helped us all week in making new homes," said Miriam Pech Martin, who oversees 11 evangelical congregations in the area, including the one we helped roof. "Please don't forget us. Keep praying."

## Spotlight: Reyna Angélica Student,

**I** am Reyna Angélica Cauich Moo. I'm from the town of San Juan de Dios in Quintana Roo state. Every week I travel from my house to go to the Mayan Children's Village (Villa Infantil Maya--VIM) to stay there for the week. I like this style of life, being with my friends and classmates at VIM, participating in all of the activities that there are there. Lately I've been doing great. Very early I get myself ready to go to high school, and in the afternoon I return to VIM and divide my time between cleaning, lunch, and free time.

In the Mayan Children's Village, my life is a great experience. I am with my friends and the Directors. We do team-building activities which are different from my home. In short, these years lived here show me that in life we have to dream and that there are people like those who sponsor us that help us fulfill our dreams to achieve, finish school, and continue on.

