



La Casita



Centro de Aprendizaje de San Antonio Palopó
¡La educación hace el cambio!

Innovative Communities.org

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Report from San Antonio

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September is upon us, and we continue to be enchanted by the positive energy at La Casita in San Antonio Palopó!

One of our key programs at **La Casita** is our scholarship program. Education in Guatemala is free to the end of Grade 6. However, some families struggle to support their children to go further in school. Each year, we consider new applications to the scholarship program, which range from middle school to high school and university.

La Casita Programs & Classes

Learning Centre

- Library
- Tutorial Time
- Computer Literacy
- Entrepreneurial classes
- Parent Consultation
- English Classes
- Special Events
- Vacation School

Ancianas

- Lunch
- Social time

Scholarship Students

- Financial aid
- Computer and Library research
- Volunteer time

New Scholarship Student

Ayda applied for a scholarship this year. In her application for a scholarship, she said "she has the goal of being a veterinarian, to provide good treatment of animals, to specialize in contributing to medicine and good health, to avoid the mistreatment of animals, and to work in harmony with the environment."

Ayda is a very smart, diligent, friendly, 12 year old girl. Her father passed away 13 months ago, and she lives with her mother and older brother, both of whom work but make only enough for the family's basic needs. Ayda finished Grade 6 with good grades. She recognizes that studying is important and wants to continue her studies, socialize more and obtain new knowledge. She is doing well in her middle school studies.



English & Technology Classes

In addition to extra classes in English and technology, our scholarship students have the opportunity to join with other students sponsored by the NGO FORMA, administered by our fabulous local leaders Candelaria and Gregorio. This exposure to a wider group of enthusiastic learners really expands their horizons.

Scholarship Students volunteer at La Casita

Each scholarship student volunteers time at **La Casita**, to give back. Several of them teach the younger children, others volunteer in the garden or with meals and activities for the elderly widows who attend twice weekly lunch sessions.

Community Outreach

One of the very innovative programs initiated by Ana Olivia (our Community Outreach Coordinator) is a year-long series of workshops for women in the community. Many are illiterate and not convinced of the value of education. The monthly sessions, focusing on nutrition, health and various activities aimed at increasing self-esteem, have resulted in increased support of their children in the scholarship program.



First Reunion

The first reunion of past and present scholarship students was held just last July. What a success!

Gregorio facilitated a session on finance, banking and credit card use that was much appreciated. Many people are quite fearful of the banks and hide the little money they have in their homes.

During the afternoon the graduates talked about how grateful they were, how **La Casita** had supported them, and what a huge difference having that support made in their lives and how they view their future potential.

Some comments from the session:

- *'Grasp opportunities that are presented to you',
- *'Education opens minds',
- *'Educated young people positively influence their parents and the community',
- *'We will help each other'.

Many of the graduates have stayed in the community. Alex has become an auto mechanic, and has opened his own car repair shop. Leonardo initiated a successful fish farm in San Antonio Palopo. Our coordinator, Ana Olivia, began as a scholarship student and now has a degree in social work and very capably works with the teachers at **La Casita**.

Melina is thinking about starting a CoOp. Froilan would like to start solar panel projects in the town. Antonio is teaching the evening computer classes at La Casita and has decided to open a pharmacy in nearby San Lucas.

Orientation for Public School Teachers

About 80 children, referred by the two elementary schools, attend remedial classes in the mornings and afternoons at **La Casita**. The increased attendance relates partly to two very successful outreach sessions held with the local teachers. Candelaria and Gregorio facilitated an Orientation Meeting with the local teachers informing them about all of the different programs and resources available at **La Casita**. They were particularly impressed by the peaceful green gardens outside, the quality of our teacher's methods, and the warmth and charm of the learning centre's space.

Thank You!

A heartfelt thank you to all of you who have made this possible!!

