

SANDBERG: Sisters resident decided to see for herself

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We gave out 100 little bags of juice and bread... The fresh new dump on the hillside was scattered with people but you did not see them until they moved and then you realized how many people were hidden among the debris.

"The women wore big aprons with many pockets for filling and some had babies on their backs. I saw one woman slit a bag open and black ooze gushed out. Most were looking for plastic to sell for recycling. You have to hand it to these people, they are not standing on the streets begging, they are actually working for what little they get."

Since these people have no money, they cannot pay the fees for their children to attend school; so, Sandberg says, "the very poor in these countries never have an opportunity to better themselves or have a future other than working at whatever their parents do to survive. Is it any wonder why we have so many people from these countries trying to get into the United States?"

Several years ago, Sofia Gabriela Munoz Roche, or Gaby, as she is affectionately known, came onto the scene. When Gaby happened to visit the dump, a little girl silently approached her, reached out and grasped her hand. The girl wasn't begging and didn't even say anything; it was just a silent personal greeting. Gaby accepted that greeting and, when she came to understand the plight of these children, she resolved to do something about it. That same child she met that day would be among the first of hundreds she would subsequently send to school through the Faith Seeds program.

Today, Gaby is the founder and director of the Faith Seeds program in Guatemala, which reports that Guatemala has the highest illiteracy rate in Central America. On average, children in Guatemala attend school for only four years. For every 10 Guatemalan children who even enter the school system — and not all do — only four will graduate from elementary school and only one will complete middle school. Yet, in spite of those odds, two of the Faith Seeds members of Gaby's current staff are among the students that the organization has helped graduate from high school. One of those students will be starting college next month — a previously unthinkable achievement for a child of the dump.

Two others are currently in medical school and another has become a teacher.

Sandberg feels very strongly about helping these children and making people aware of their plight so more can be helped.

"I visited Gaby's facility for eight days," she said. "I got to know those precious children. I visited the dump and helped the staff pass out bread and juice to those working there. I helped cook and serve food to the children. I also went with the staff to visit several of the homes during their routine visits."

Not everyone can visit Central American dumps to witness and help children

and families as Sandberg has done, but there are still ways to help. The Sisters Community Church and individual church members are already helping, and Sandberg hopes that even more people will find it in their hearts to assist, as well. In that regard, Sandberg hopes that people will contact her so she can tell them how they, too, can help.

For more information about this mission program, contact Susan Sandberg at 541-549-9419 or email her at sassysue@bendbroadband.com. Additional information and a touching video can also be viewed at <https://faithseedsguatemala.org>.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Poor Guatemalan families scavenge garbage for a living at a city dump.



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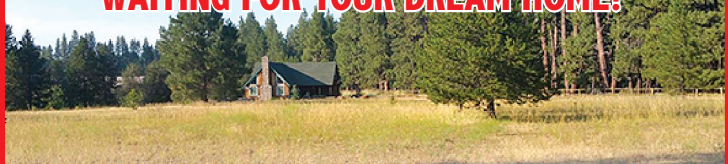
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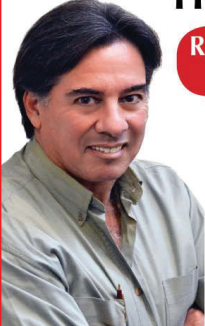
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