

## Happy New Year!

I just got home from our first mission trip since the pandemic began! Our last one was a day trip in January 2020 to Tijuana. Since then we have had to postpone every trip we've scheduled. We finally completed our playground build in Arandas, Mexico, which we began planning in 2018.

Here is a photo of the Dream Team that helped make it happen! This amazing group of many ministries and churches came together to bless the part of Mexico called the Circle of Silence, where less than 1% of the population has a relationship with Jesus.

We arrived on Monday, December 27th and began work on the first playground, located on the land Donald and Becky Kamese of Vida Impact Missions are using for a Bible Training School. They have a vision to train local pastors to plant churches in rural, unreached areas. Their pilot program is starting this month with twenty students.



On Tuesday and Wednesday the team worked hard on the playground. The ground was very hard and the digging was difficult for the 50+ footing holes needed, so we hired locals to help us with the work. Part of our team also helped with a few handyman projects around the ranch. On Wednesday evening we hosted an outreach with the local blueberry field workers who live adjacent to the property. We fed them hot dogs, face painted the kids, hosted an eyeglass clinic, and shared the Gospel.



Team member Eli Cisneros is a gifted evangelistic missionary whose faith and courage were evident as she shared about Jesus. She prayed with over ten people to receive Christ and two of them came to church on Sunday!

After finishing the first playground in only two days, we drove to Pastor Rolando's church, Premier Amor, on Thursday. We began work on the second playground in their grassy courtyard and were relieved to find the ground much softer and the digging much easier. On Thursday night we held an event at their church for the community with face painting, family photos, balloons, and gospel sharing. Pastor Rolando took part in our Christmas Hope Project as well, and we gave out grocery gift bags to needy families.

Patrick Phanthanusorn from Transforming Trips, who co-led the trip with COC, hosted two Kids Story trainings during the week. Kids Story trains local leaders to share the Bible with children in story format. I got to hear Deb Proctor recount the story of Jesus walking on water with such enthusiasm and drama!

On Friday we finished the second playground at Premier Amor and headed back to the ranch to celebrate New Year's Eve with tamales, a bonfire, and fellowship. On Saturday morning we spent some time at the first playground praying, sharing, and heard a final devotional from Pastor Donald. We dedicated the playground to the Lord and opened it up for the kids to play on.

We then said goodbye to our dear friends from Agape Church in Mezcales. They made the eight hour drive to be with us, and we couldn't have been successful without them! I can't wait until we serve at their church in June 2022 on our Sayulita mission trip.

This mission trip was probably one of my most memorable trips to date. Seeing a dream that started with Donald and Becky wanting a playground for their community finally come to fruition after years of fundraising and recruiting volunteers was a faith adventure. It reminds me of the Israelites crossing into the Promised Land when Joshua had them stack twelve stones to remember where they came from. This journey has been like that, one to look back on and see the faithfulness of God. He loves the people who live in the Circle of Silence and have never heard about His love for them. I pray that our efforts have helped to open new doors for ministry there.

For those who helped fund the trip, prayed for us and took part, THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart. You have made a difference!

Sincerely,

**Carol DeGraff**, Executive Director



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## 2021 CHRISTMAS HOPE PROJECT REPORT – GROWING & GIVING MORE!

This year we saw the project expand into seven more nations. I call it the "G Effect": Groceries and the Gospel Given to the poor. The project was started by G Reyes in 2008. The vision was simple: give the gift of a meal to needy families who wouldn't be able to celebrate Christmas otherwise. That first year, ten families in the Philippines were provided for.

*Now, thirteen years later, over 2,500 families were fed in fifteen nations through twenty-eight local church locations! Nations included are Brazil, Vietnam, Mexico, Philippines, Venezuela, Cuba, Panama, United States, Cambodia, Laos, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Thailand, Columbia, and Paraguay.*

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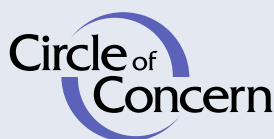
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