



Berta Paleaz with Teacher Sulim Granados
Escuela Oficial Rural Mixta Aldea La Puerta Chinique, Guatemala
January 1, 2020

For many years The Institute's Project Coordinator Berta Paleaz had a dream of collecting school supplies for a school in her country of origin "Guatemala". Every year before the holidays, The Stone Soup Leadership Institute creates a community service project. One year, we had a warm clothing drive for the recent U.S. refugees from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The next year, we had a warm clothing drive for new Border Wall families from Guatemala.

One day in October at our weekly Stone Soup meeting, we brainstormed ideas for this year's project. Berta shared her dream with the young people. "They were so excited!" Berta said. "They started sharing their ideas -- "Well, if their school is on a mountain top," thought Izzy, "and the children have to climb dirt roads that get muddy, they really need backpacks!" Everyone loved that idea! So that very day we began developing our plan to collect backpacks with school supplies for children in this Guatemalan school. That week, Berta's cousin in Guatemala drove up to the mountain village called La Puerta. He spoke to the teacher, and shared our plan. She was so kind to share some information and take photos of her students and the school. With the photos she sent we created a flier, and sent it out to lots of people asking for them to join us in helping these children. After many weeks, we collected 75 backpacks and school supplies. We shipped them to Guatemala to arrive for the new school year.

On December 28, Berta traveled to her homeland for the holidays. She presented the Mac Book Pro laptop computer that the Institute donated to the school's teacher Sulim Granados. "She was so grateful," Berta said. "She couldn't believe she received her very first computer!" She is especially happy for her students to receive these backpacks with educational supplies when they return to school in February. "I travel to Guatemala every year," says Berta, "so I've experienced the need of so many people that live on the outskirts of the city or up on the mountains of Guatemala." She added, "I can't describe the happiness in a child who has almost nothing, to receive this. I feel so happy thanks to the help of many people I am making my dream and the dream of many children to come true. I thank everyone that worked on this project. The children at La Puerta School will be happy and grateful for your support.

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