

Trip Report – Rachel Easley

January 22 – February 5, 2019

Participants: Rachel Easley, Brittany Belkiewitz, Tim Kuhn

### **TUESDAY, JAN. 22:**

Uneventful travel day—started the morning with a 7:10 am flight out of Detroit, layover in Atlanta, layover in Guatemala City, and made it to Flores by 6 pm. Though we were certainly over the posted 35 lb limit for TAG baggage, and they also checked our carry-ons, they didn't ask for any sort of payment or fees. Either they just let the weight overages slide, or they charged our credit cards without asking... we'll see when we check the statements, I suppose.

Mayra picked us up at the Flores airport, and we made a quick stop at the MaxiDispensa to restock the hostel kitchen.

Brittany and I took Bedroom #2 (closer to the dining room), and Tim begrudgingly accepted Bedroom #1 (he wanted to sleep in the bunk room with his tools, but I convinced him to at least try spending a night in the nicer room to see if he liked it).

We hooked up the Clean Water for the World filter to get clean water (it works great!), but we first had to track down an extension cord to connect it to the power supply around the corner of the building. One of Tim's tasks is going to be putting an outlet right next to the water filter so that extension cords are no longer needed.

### **WEDNESDAY JAN. 23:**

Our translator, Edwin, arrived at 8 am. We agreed on a price of Q.200 per day for his services, and he asked that tomorrow (Thursday), he receive some payment so that he would have money to cover his transportation costs from San Benito. I relayed this to Mayra, who agreed (it seems that this is standard); she will write a check for Q.400 for him on Thursday, to cover his services from today and tomorrow, and give him money for transportation for the future. He was willing to help however needed, whether with translation or manual labor, so he will be helping Tim around the property when we don't need him for translation. His first task was to go with Tim to refill the propane tank for the kitchen stove. Tim drove the microbus.

We held a 10:30 am staff meeting with Mayra, Seiner, and Elder (Brittany and Edwin attended to translate). I conducted the meeting mostly in Spanish, with a little help from my translators. We started with an opening prayer (by Seiner), and a short devotion (Philippians 1:3-11): I impressed upon the staff that, like Paul to the Philippians, we (myself, Dr. Anne, the board, etc.) have so much love for them and all the hard work that they are doing, and we want to support them and encourage them however we can. I talked about the importance of good communication, and suggested a weekly check-in email from me to the staff—they suggested that using WhatsApp would be more reliable, so when I get back to the U.S. I will make a “group” on WhatsApp with the staff members to use for weekly check-ins.

We also went over job descriptions for Seiner and Elder; they agreed to pursue everything listed, though were concerned about it being a lot to try to handle alone (I assured them that we understood that it was a lot, and would work to find help for each of them). Seiner suggested a friend of his from university to interview as a teacher candidate—she is a social worker and a teacher (I believe that this is the friend he has suggested in the past, but we hadn't followed up on her because Seiner wasn't sure that she was a Christian. At this point, however, I'm wondering if we should go ahead and give her a chance.) I told him that we would definitely be willing to interview her once Dr. Anne came.

I also told Elder that we had money in the budget to hire a "per day" worker to help him in the fields. I said that because it was a "per day" worker who would only be hired on a temporary basis, Dr. Anne does not need to interview the person. Elder may choose someone who he believes is responsible and a good worker, and Elder would be in charge of that person. The staff said that the going rate for "per day" agricultural work is Q.100/day, which would fit with what's available in our budget.

Everyone agreed that getting reliable internet is a top priority. I had planned to go to Ismael and Orfe's house at some point during this trip to retrieve the wifi radio, but Mayra told me that Ismael had called earlier this month and asked Elder to come and get it from his house, so the wifi radio is already in our possession back at the clinic. Apparently Ismael and Orfe have moved back to San Benito and no longer have their house in Santa Ana. Seiner has volunteered to have the wifi radio installed at his house, to relay internet to the clinic, but there are several tall trees in between his house and the clinic that would probably impede the signal. Mayra suggested possibly putting the radio at the house of one of the students who lives in the neighborhood nearby, as it is much closer and has a clear line of sight, but I am uncomfortable with that idea. Another idea (initially suggested to me by Dave Mallory) is to ask a business if we could station the wifi radio at their store, in exchange for a small monthly payment to the business. I will ask Mayra about this.

I presented the 2019 program budget to the staff (without U.S.-related expenses and without anyone's salaries); everyone seemed agreeable to the amounts listed. Seiner asked about providing uniforms for the students: does every student get them, and what color/design of uniforms did we prefer? I said that, in my opinion, it would be better for every student to get them, but I would ultimately leave that decision up to him; he agreed that every student would get a uniform. I told him that as far as the colors/designs of uniforms go, we would leave that totally up to him.

I confirmed with Elder that he was able to build stoves. He asked about whether or not the families pay for stoves. He knew that in the past the families had been responsible for building the base themselves, or paying for the base, with the option of cleaning at the clinic to "pay" for the base; but apparently last year it was unclear (at least to Elder) how payment was working. I confirmed that we wanted to stick with the same system (families provide the base or pay for it to be constructed; families who cannot pay can work at the clinic to "pay off" the base).

In the afternoon, we (accompanied by Mayra) attempted to go to the bank to exchange our U.S. cash into Guatemalan cash (for personal use). The BanRural in

Santa Ana was not exchanging cash and referred us to the BanRural in Santa Elena. The BanRural in Santa Elena was only exchanging with \$100 bills or \$50 bills; Brittany had a \$100 bill and was able to exchange that; I had a \$50 bill but it had a small tear and thus they would not accept it. The woman at BanRural suggested that we try Banco Azteco (also in Santa Elena), as she had heard that they accept bills with small tears, as well as \$20 bills and \$10 bills. We unfortunately did not have enough time to try the other bank, as Mayra had to get back to the school to provide transportation for the students going home.

From 4:30pm on Tuesday to 4:30pm on Wednesday, I used Verizon TravelPass on my phone to text, call, and use data for internet. The cost was \$10 for the 24 hour period, and it worked well.

Seiner's aunt, Ana, is cooking for us during this trip... so far, so good!

#### **THURSDAY, JAN 24:**

The electricity went out this morning at about 7 am and returned at 5:10 pm, so most of the day was spent electricity-less.

Edwin came at 8 am; Tim had made a list of hardware needed for his projects, and the two of them set out to try and find a hardware store that accepts credit cards (we agreed that paying with credit card would be the best option, since getting cash was proving difficult and we wanted to reduce the burden on SewHope's Guatemalan bank account). They had a fairly successful shopping trip, and began work: valves in the water tank were installed so that the pump can be run and the tank won't overflow, an additional spigot was installed next to the Clean Water for the World filter so that it can always be hooked up without monopolizing the water source, and the task of installing an electrical outlet next to the water filter was begun.

Mayra showed me a letter she received from Golan (our security guard company), regarding rates being raised in 2019 (due to inflation, according to the company). She had also received a bill (initially emailed to Ismael, who forwarded it to Mayra) for January services, which she had already paid. She called the company representative and asked him to come in person to go over the charges with us—we will meet with him on Saturday morning at 10 am.

Brittany and I spent the better part of the day in the office, organizing files. Everything had been left in a stack of folders, so we went through and sorted papers into appropriate categories so that, in the future, everything will be easy to find. There is a desk drawer that locks, where the money is kept, but not a filing cabinet, so tracking one of those down has been added to our to-do list.

At 3 pm, we met with the accountant Marco Tulio and his daughter (who is the secretary for his company). Our objective for the meeting was to determine our roles: what all does he take care of for us, and what does he need from us to do his job? He explained that he needs our expenses and income for the month, as well as a reconciled bank statement. He then takes care of making profit/loss statements and calculating IGSS/taxes (we pay the taxes ourselves with a check taken to the bank). He comes the first week of each month to get the documents from the previous month; everything is due on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month after the month in question. All

2018 documents have already been submitted and he is working on the final 2018 documentation.

Mayra made phone calls to the community schools to schedule good days for us to come and distribute vitamins, deliver KAH food, and promote Dr. Anne's February jornada. She is skeptical of the value of weighing and measuring the children in the community schools because we don't have close contact with them, and I asked her to send an email to Dr. Anne to see if perhaps that's an initiative to put off for another time when we have more staff and resources to devote to follow-up.

### **FRIDAY, JAN. 25:**

The electricity went out again this morning around 7 am, but only for a few minutes, and was fine for the rest of the day.

Brittany and I worked on some promotional/donor relations projects: we interviewed Elder (on video) about the agriculture projects, collected some B-roll of the fields, and spent part of the morning and all afternoon in the classroom collecting footage for a "Day in the Life of a SewHope Student" video for sponsors. We helped a little bit in the classroom, and Brittany led a spontaneous lesson on the English words for family members. Fridays seem very overwhelming in the classroom, but Seiner said that Mondays through Thursdays are much more manageable; students come three days a week, either Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday/Friday, so everyone comes on Friday.

We also worked more on office organization, scanning documents that would be good to have a copy of in the U.S. (founding documents and property deeds), and labeling folders for a filing system. I found the logs for KAH food distribution, and will get those scanned in so that I can use them for data purposes (such as for the 2018 Annual Report).

Mayra was making phone calls to set appointments for during Dr. Anne's jornada, and she was using her personal phone because the SewHope cell phone hasn't been working. She said that it ran out of minutes, and loading more minutes onto it wasn't working. Tomorrow we will be going in to Santa Elena to the Claro office to fix the issue (as well as talk to them about Internet possibilities).

Mayra also mentioned that people had been asking about the little efficient stoves and the solar lamps; I will ask Randy his thoughts about bringing more down to sell.

Brittany had a good idea to create a cookbook of Guatemalan recipes to sell as a fundraiser; she spoke with Anna (our cook) about perhaps getting some recipes from her, and Anna seemed eager to help with the project. We decided it would be created in memory of Paula, Anna's mother and our previous cook (who passed away at the end of 2018).

Tim and Edwin continued their work on the water tank (installing valves so that it won't overflow) and the Clean Water for the World filter (it is now connected directly to power, so there is no more need to plug it in to an external outlet).

## **SATURDAY, JAN. 26:**

Saturdays in Guatemala are for pancakes! I made pancakes (with cream cheese, of course) for Tim and Brittany. We insisted that Mayra sleep in a little bit, and she arrived at 9 am. (We told Edwin he did not need to come today.)

Brittany and I worked more on organizing the office, while Tim finished putting the water filter back together. Now there are no external cords and it is hooked directly to its own water source, so it will be very easy for anyone to use it.

At 10:30am, Brittany, Mayra, and I met with Elmer from Golan (our security guard company). They had sent a new contract with a 5.00% increase in price for services (due to inflation and the expiration of our “promotional” rate, according to their explanation); we explained to Elmer that we are a nonprofit organization who does good work in the community but does not have a lot of extra money, and requested that the increase be lowered to 2.50%. He made a phone call to his office and agreed. Mayra and I both signed a note saying we would accept a 2.50% increase, and Elmer will resend a new contract with the amended amount. We also requested that emails no longer be sent to Ismael, but instead be sent to Mayra and me. Mayra asked about the bill she had received for January services; Elmer made another phone call and confirmed that the bill had been emailed before the payment had been processed, so we currently owe no money.

In the afternoon we headed to Santa Elena to run some errands. We were able to pick up a locking file cabinet, plus hanging folders and more manila folders for organizing the office. We also went to the Claro office to speak with them about our phone and internet situation. The cell phone that belongs in the SewHope office does not work anymore (it keeps dying spontaneously), so Mayra had been using her personal cell phone to contact patients. At the Claro office, I let Mayra pick out a nice new phone for the office use (it’s a smartphone, so that she can also use WhatsApp to contact patients who prefer that method of communication) and paid for it with my SewHope credit card (I’ll make sure Gloria gets the receipts). Mayra indicated that it would be good to get on a phone plan (instead of pay-as-you-go), so that someone wouldn’t have to be constantly loading it up with minutes; I agree that it is a good idea, but I first want to look at the budget and confirm with Anne and Gloria, so for the moment we are continuing with pay-as-you-go (we will be able to use the same phone with a plan, if we choose to get one). We also spoke with a representative about what it would take for a direct internet line to the clinic, but he was not very helpful. We asked about paying for them to put a direct line in, but he said that they would not do it, even if we paid (the reason given was that there are not any other residences that would benefit from the line, so it is not worth it for them to install).

## **SUNDAY, JAN. 27**

We went to Tikal today! Tim drove (quite well!), and Edwin came along as our tour guide. So I can now say that I’ve finally made it to Tikal... hooray!

## **MONDAY, JAN. 28**

After many unsuccessful attempts to contact Ismael over the past week (phone calls, emails, and WhatsApp messages), I asked Mayra to call him about having a party for he and Orfe on Sunday. Mayra called but there was no answer; later she tried Orfe's number, and Orfe answered and said that she did not think that Ismael wanted a party because he does not like parties, but that Mayra could call Orfe again around 5, when Ismael is home, and Orfe would ask Ismael.

I asked Mayra for her opinion on the guards; is it necessary to have them all the time (every night and all day during the weekends)? She said that yes, it is important because once the chicken projects get going people try to come and steal the chickens, so it is good to have a guard on the property.

We also spoke with her about the idea of using a local business as a waypoint for the internet signal; she said it may be possible, and that there is a teacher who has a internet café who may be willing to help. She will talk to her.

Brittany and I took photos of the students for sponsorship purposes, as well as getting videos of little "interviews" (name, age, grade, favorite thing about the education program) of the students. In the afternoon, Brittany had a game for everyone who had attended the "English class" on Friday.

Elder told me he had found someone to help on a "per day" basis with grounds maintenance, so that Elder has enough time to lead the women's projects. He will begin the chicken projects in February. He asked if certain women could host a project at their homes, if they wanted to, and I told him that it was okay with me and I would leave it up to him to decide how best to run something like that (the only limiting factor being the budget, which he looked at decided was sufficient).

Mayra asked about having a SewHope Facebook page (that would be in Spanish, for the clinic, as opposed to our current page directed towards donors). I thought it was a good idea and confirmed with Anne; Mayra and I will work to set up a Facebook page before I leave.

Tim discovered last night that if the valve to the black water tank (over the shower building) is open while the pump is on, the tank will overflow, so his next priority is to install check valves in the black tank to prevent that from happening. With the valve to the black tank closed, and the water pump running, we were able to do a load of laundry (we added a pot of boiling water from the stove to make a "warm water wash"), and the day was not too humid, so everything was able to dry on the clotheslines outside.

Brittany and I encountered an enormous spider in our room, on the bathroom doorway, and we called the guard to come kill it for us. He did so by stabbing it with a stick, very solemnly.

## **TUESDAY, JAN. 29**

Today Mayra, Brittany, and I went to Mango to deliver KAH food, apply fluoride, take heights and weights, and administer Vitamin A. We went to the main public school (both morning and afternoon classes) and to the preschool. The afternoon classes are bigger, and also much nicer: the kids seem healthier, the teachers dress better, the classes seem to be more orderly/on task than in the

morning (Mayra said that the afternoon teachers have a higher degree of education than the morning teachers). They also get to use nicer classrooms.

We took the red truck (the janky one); I asked Mayra why not the green truck (the newly imported one), and she said that the green truck's undercarriage is rusting and they're afraid to drive it on bumpy roads lest something fall off or break. The green truck is only used for driving on paved roads. I mentioned this to Tim when we returned, and he said he would take a look at it.

Tim "held down the fort" in Santa Ana. He and Edwin installed check valves on the black water tank so that it will not overflow once full, and they began working on installing electricity in the school kitchen. (There is currently an extension cord strung out from the clinic to the kitchen; their plan is to bury a wire between the clinic and school kitchen.)

Tim has been using his personal cash and credit card to purchase many items for himself and Elder during this trip, because of the hassle of needing Mayra and Seiner to both sign any checks on SewHope's behalf; he has been categorizing his receipts and will submit them for reimbursement. I will talk to Mayra about keeping petty cash at the clinic so that checks do not need to be used all the time.

### **WEDNESDAY, JAN. 30**

In the morning, Mayra, Brittany, and I went to Pueblo Nuevo to deliver KAH food, apply fluoride, take heights and weights, and administer Vitamin A. The second and third grade classes were not attending today, because their teachers had decided not to have class. Mayra asked about getting more vitamins from Vitamin Angels; she said that she thinks the prenatal vitamins and albendazole are the most important, and the Vitamin A less so (apparently the government used to have an initiative that included distribution of Vitamin A, but they have determined that it is no longer necessary because Vitamin A is added as supplementation to things such as sugar, instead).

Tim and Edwin have hooked the school kitchen up with electricity: two lights and one outlet, with the availability for additional outlets if necessary. The wire between the main building and the school kitchen is buried in plastic conduit (in a straight line from the main box on the pole outside the current classrooms, to the nearest corner of the school kitchen).

In the afternoon, we took more student photos and worked on office organization. Mayra indicated that it would probably be helpful to keep petty cash ("cajachica") in the office; I will look at what usually gets spent per month and see what a reasonable amount would be, and I will run it past Gloria.

### **THURSDAY, JAN. 31**

In the morning, Mayra, Brittany, and I went to Nuevo Porvenir to deliver KAH food, apply fluoride, take heights and weights, and administer Vitamin A. Afterwards, we went to Nuevo Verapaz to do the same; however, there is no cell service in Nuevo Verapaz, and Mayra had not been able to call ahead to confirm that we could come. As it turned out, there was no school that day because of a

community meeting. However, Mayra was able to speak for a few minutes at the community meeting to promote the February jornadas, and she also got the cell phone number of the school Director (who lives in Pueblo Nuevo and thus has cell service when she is at home in the evenings); Mayra will return in March to administer vitamins and fluoride and take heights and weights.

Edvin did not come today; Tim is not sure why. Tim is working on filling the spaces between the wall and roof in the outside shower building, to prevent bugs and birds from coming in through the back opening. (He has a plan involving plywood and screen that he is going to test out.)

We took more student photos; there are a few that we've missed, because we've been gone in the mornings, but we still have Friday and Monday to take photos and with any luck we'll have photographed the majority of the students.

Mayra and I paid all the salaried staff (Seiner, Elder, and Mayra) for the month of January. I fortunately had a copy of Ismael's payroll documents (he had sent it to me last May), so we were able to update that with the most recent information and use it for payroll purposes. We also counted and double-counted the income from the month of January; Mayra will deposit it at the bank on her way home this evening.

### **FRIDAY, FEB. 1**

This morning was the final day for Brittany and I to go with Mayra out to the schools—we went to a community that SewHope hadn't been to before (La Union) and another community that SewHope does usually go to (Via Nueva).

Tim continued working on shoring up the outside shower building. Again Edvin did not come; Mayra called him to see if he can come tomorrow to help Tim, and he said that yes, he would be available (he also said that the reason he had not come the past two days was because he had an interview and his mom was in the hospital for hypertension).

In the afternoon I worked on the financial report for January. Mayra had been keeping all the receipts together, so I went through and recorded dates, check numbers, payee, and description of purchase, and assigned everything to a budget category.

In the evening, we took the staff and their families out for dinner in Flores for a staff appreciation event: myself, Brittany, Tim, Mayra, Mayra's husband (Everson) and children (Julio and Melani), Elder, Elder's wife (Alexis), Seiner, and Ana (Seiner's aunt and our cook). We went to El Capitan Tortuga for dinner and then took a stroll around the island before hopping back into the microbus (which Mayra graciously drove) and returning to Santa Ana.

### **SATURDAY, FEB. 2**

This morning (with internet access) I printed out the monthly statements from the BanRural online and finished preparing the financial report with a reconciliation. The accountant, Sr. Marco Tulio, came at 10 am for our meeting; he looked over the financial report and statements and said that everything looked good.



We asked him about petty cash (“cajachica”); first we need to determine an amount of petty cash to keep on hand (for example, Q.2000 or Q.3000) and then to make a withdrawal of petty cash, we need to write a check to the person responsible for petty cash (in our case, our director, or Mayra in absence of a director). Petty cash can then be used to pay for small items, but each payment cannot exceed more than 10% of our total petty cash amount: for example, if we keep a stock of Q.3000 petty cash, we can only purchase items of Q.300 or less. Bills greater than Q.300 need to be paid with a check. Just like for check payments, we need to make a report at the end of each month with the information for petty cash expenditures: date, receipt number, description of purchase, amount. In each new month, we can then withdraw (by writing a check) enough money to bring our petty cash stock back up to its original level (so if we only spend Q.1000 in a month, we would only withdraw Q.1000 for the next month to bring the petty cash back up to its original level).

We also asked about situations in which people request cash for amounts greater than our petty cash allowance. Specifically, the business from which we purchase speculums does not have an account with our bank, and it takes them a longer time to receive payments from us because the banks have to talk amongst themselves to confirm the payment. Thus, they request that we pay them in cash, but it is a larger amount than what would be included in our petty cash allowance. In the past, Ismael had written a check to himself for the amount (like a petty cash withdrawal, but a larger amount) and then paid for the speculums in cash (or he had simply paid out of his own pocket and been reimbursed by SewHope’s U.S. account). Sr. Marco Tulio said that this is not best practice and he strongly recommends always writing a check for amounts greater than our petty cash allowance. Mayra will call the company from which we order speculums and will explain to them that we would like to pay with a check, and she will see what they say (she also says there are other companies that sell speculums, so if our usual company is not agreeable, we can shop around for someone who will accept checks).

Edwin came this morning, and he and Tim continued working on sealing up the outdoor bathroom building against insects and birds. In the afternoon, Tim, Brittany, and I went to town to run errands; Edwin stayed behind to finish cleaning up what he and Tim were working on. Mayra later told us that once he was done cleaning up, Edwin came to the office and demanded that he be paid for his day of work. Mayra couldn’t pay him because Seiner wasn’t here today and the checks need both Seiner and Mayra’s signatures, and Edwin said that he wouldn’t have come if he had known that he wasn’t going to get paid. (At the beginning of our trip, Edwin had asked for an advance to help cover his transportation costs for coming each day but had said besides the advance, he was fine being paid at the end of the jornada. We provided him with the advance, but it turns out that he has been asking for payment every day anyway, and Mayra has been paying him. On the first day, Mayra loaned him money because Seiner was not available to sign a check, and though Edwin said he would pay her back, he hasn’t. Last Friday, Edwin came to me to say that he couldn’t cash his check for some reason related to his DPI card, and asked if I would give him cash; I told him he needed to talk to Mayra about that, and Mayra explained to him how to cash his check properly and did not provide him with cash. On Monday, he asked Tim instead of Mayra, and Tim paid him in cash, not realizing

that he should only be paid with a check.) Edwin is caught up with payment except for today, so we owe him Q.200. Because he has made Mayra feel uncomfortable, I do not think he should translate for us anymore. Mayra knows some other options for translators.

### **SUNDAY, FEB. 3**

Anne arrived this morning; Tim, Brittany, and I went to the Flores airport to pick her up.

Anne reported a conversation that she had had with Krista Dover from Clean Water for the World; we could talk to Elder about developing a program for delivering water. Also we can talk with Elder about having Jose help with stove installation. We will talk to Mayra about paternity leave for Elder—what's typical: **3 to 5 days**? Is there anything else in terms of job expectations (in general) that we've missed: **she doesn't think so**?

Clarify what year we need to go back to for saving for retirement, and ensure that the staff understands how retirement bonuses are getting paid. Look and see what is laid out in the current staff contracts regarding this; consider amending staff contracts to specifically spell out the retirement bonus.

Make a general policy – no one messes with the electric.

Rachel – make a password for your hard drive.

Talk with Mayra about program for kids with low weights and measurements.

May trip dates: May 12-19

Informal interview with Mayra in regards to the director position.

Ask Marco Tulio about liquidation of salaries (retirement); also about using a credit card