

Roxanne Ward's SewHope Trip Report May 3-10. 2023

Wednesday, May 3

Tim drove me to Anne and Randy's house and our cheerful driver, Randy, shuttled us away at 3:15am to Detroit Airport. Our flight left for Miami at 6:00. Emily met us in Miami and then we caught our flight to Guatemala City which arrived around 11:10. Our TAG flight then left at 3:30 and arrived in Flores about 4:30. Anne told you about the TAG luggage price increase...if that wasn't bad enough, the guy tracked us down and charged another \$20 for a mistake he made. Myra was there to pick us up and we were off to the campus and settled in. We were able to find another fan so that sleeping would be more comfortable.

Emily and I were wearing jackets with the SewHope logo on them that we had made at Vista Print. Emily made cards that have our website and our mission printed on them. My goal was to engage people in conversation about SewHope, spark their interest and give them a card! So far no cards were given out. 😞

Thursday, May 4

Up bright and early (not quite as early as Anne!) and exited to see the kids and the teachers. I decided to try to make it a little easier on myself this time by making name tags for each student. Before I left I purchased clip on name tags and made inserts with the students' names and inserted them in so that each student would be easily identified. I used a different color for each classroom for a total of nine classes. This really streamlined my search for pictures! Why didn't I think of this last time?

I gave Seiner the pen pal letters from MVCDS. He was so excited.

This day included observing in every classroom and doing a project of making a postcard with each students for their sponsor. I also took a picture of each child with the postcard in hand. I want to make sure the sponsors are staying connected.

Emily helped me and we started in the 1st grade classroom. You kind of feel like you are honey when you go into the classroom as you are swarmed with lots of hugs...almost every child was in ONE GIANT hug! Can't beat that kind of a greeting!

We traced the hearts and put the cuatro nombre on each card. At LEAP time many of the students did not put their given name or all names on the items send back and it was crazy to sort things to get them to the correct sponsors. I asked each teacher to help me by always putting cuatro nombre on the papers! We continued with the second, third, and the morning reinforcement classes. We didn't see a ton of teaching but as we went in classrooms many of the classes were working

on computers. I wanted to get this task finished and knew I would be able to observe teaching and work with the kids on other days.

A delicious lunch was prepared for us. All three of us were able to eat and pray together.

Kids in all classrooms were practicing the song for the Lunch and Learn.

In the afternoon the postcard making continued with two of the classes and I was able to observe some computer work. The reinforcement has many older kids who are very familiar with RAZ and Khan and I felt they were very self directed.

Friday, May 5

Emily and Anne left and I never heard them! I slept like a log with an oscillating fan blowing on me! I still rose early...just not as early as them!

I was able to greet the teachers and students with their parents at the school. Even though I don't speak much Spanish, I could sense the appreciation they had for what was happening at the school. From things that Seiner showed me I know that many of the parents do not read or even know how to write their names. They "sign" permission slips and papers with a fingerprint.

Seiner's class made instruments out of recycled materials and each student performed a song in front of the class. There was a guitar, drums, and maracas. The children seemed very confident when they came up in front of the class. It was nice to see and a great life skill to talk (sing) in front of a group.

We had a ZOOM call with the students in Kathleen Mlick's classroom from MVCDS. Each child in Seiner's room was called up to the computer introduced him/herself and talked to the Kathleen's class. Seiner and Kathleen helped to monitor. The kids loved seeing their pen pals!

Marcelo worked with the students to water plants. There is piping that helps to water deeper into the ground. A water bottle with the bottom off is used to cover the pipe hole when not being watered. The watered in the pipe and on the surface. Marcelo had a great smile when working with the students. (His son is a student at our school!)

Kids in all classrooms were practicing the song for the Lunch and Learn.

Emily and I practiced with Cecilia for the Lunch and Learn that will take place on Tuesday at 10:00am. Emily had a great "stick" that had a self balancing feature that made the phone more stable for videoing. There were a few tricky spots but Emily was able to switch the internet connection as we were practicing. (At the school each classroom and the administrative offices have a different internet connection!)

Some observations of the school day include:

- **Students are walking to the clinic to get computers because it is perceived as a safer place but seems to waste time. I think the storage area and Seiner's office would be a better choice. There would be two locked doors before anyone would have access to the computers. The next time we send a container I would like to send five computer charging carts so that all the computers can be charged in one place and the cart can be wheeled to storage and to the classrooms.**
- **Students have idle time when they get there in the morning. I made the suggestion that something be ready for the students as soon as they get there. For example, a book, a workbook assignment, a journal, or the students can get started right away on RAZ or Khan.**
 - **The kindergarteners seems to be having some difficulty getting to the right spot on the computers and it is very difficult to have one teacher and 25 young students. I suggested that some of Seiner's third graders go and help the students get the younger kids on the computers. This will show responsibility and leadership for the third graders and build a sense of community. This was well received.**
- **Some classes are louder than others and I showed each class a clapping technique that is pretty universal in the US. The kids caught on and I reminded the teachers that this is a great way to get the students' attention. I also told Seiner in our closing meeting that just saying, "put your hands on your head." is another very effective way to get silence! I am not sure why it works but it does...he thought it was very funny!**
- **Emily and I met with the teachers and gave them each a new SewHope T-shirt. They loved the shirts and told us that they were going to wear them to Tikal on Sunday!**
 - **Some students are using older laptops, we have 73 Chromebooks and 88 kids.**
 - **Suggestion is to create a schedule so that all students in school use Chromebooks and students in reinforcement use other lap tops.**
 - **Kids switch computer tab on side and it disconnects it to the internet. Older kids will know how to fix this and time will not be wasted.**
 - **Another suggestion was that they stagger the computer usage having half the class work on computers while the other half works on another project.**
 - **Would like to purchase enough Chromebooks so that each teacher has the correct amount for their classroom. We have money that was given in December and is restricted for school supplies that could be used.**
- **Khan and RAZ- be sure they are using the programs daily.**

- There has been an issue with RAZ where some of the quizzes are coming up in English. I have contacted the company and they are working on the problem.
- Reviewed with Seiner and the Teachers that students should listen, read and then take the quiz one time on RAZ...too many quizzes are being taken.
- We will try to start spotlighting some of the students/families in communication to our sponsors. A Google Doc was sent up that the teachers will be able to add to. A few suggestions were made, Dayrin who is a students with CP and Julio who has been in the program for seven years. Each teacher should try to highlight a student/family each month.
- Headphones- there is too much noise when kids are working on the computers. We asked that the students wear headphones. Seiner has headphones and the teachers were asked to let him know how many they need so that all students have them. I showed a way to wrap the headphones so they don't get tangled.
- We talked about the Lunch and Learn and told the teachers that we would be moving from room to room and talking about the school and the experience for the students. We asked for all the kids to sing a song at the end out front of the school. They agreed and were going to practice.
- Anne mentioned that the noise level was better than last time. I still thought it was a bit loud at times. I taught a clapping technique that is universally used in the US to all students. I told the teachers this is a great way to get attention. As mentioned before this and hands on the head are very effective ways to get thing quiet and gain attention!! When I was in a classroom and the next door class was noisy, I just went in, did the clapping pattern or put my finger up to my mouth and the students were quieter.
- I explained about an APP called Class DOJO and told the teachers I would teach Seiner about it.
- Tikal- somehow Seiner got the entrance tickets to Tikal paid for and we only paid for the lunch at the restaurant.
- Everyone will wear their blue Jummode SewHope shirts on the field trip.

Saturday, May 6

No students today...it is Saturday.

The students had been making postcards for their sponsors and I had been taking pictures of each child. My goal for the day was to start sending out emails with pictures to each sponsor. I also needed to address the postcards that would be mailed when we got back to the US. I figured with the cost of postcard stamps that we could put the postcards of people who sponsor more than one student in an envelope and save money on the postage.

I had thought about addressing the postcards before I arrived but it was important for me to have each student write their name on the postcard if possible. The younger kids did not write their name on the postcards because it would take too long! Many students used the name tags that I made to write their name on the postcard. Having four names is tricky!!

This was a day long project that started in the community room and then moved to Emily and my room. I stood up at the table and spent the day working on this project! When Anne popped her head in and asked about getting ice cream...well you know what they say, "We(Roxanne) all scream for ice cream!" What a great treat for a hot long day with the computer! Ice cream never tasted so good!

Sunday, May 7

Today is the big day Emily and I are taking a trip to Tikal with 63 kids. There were suppose to be 46 and all of the sudden there were 63! We will be taking a school bus to Tikal.

We were supposed to leave at 7:00am and the kids, teachers, Emily and I were ready...but we left at 8:20 instead!

When we went to get on the bus, there were 22 seats...with all the teachers, a dad of Dayrin who has CP, Emily and I there were too many to fit on the bus. Weel, Emily, Dayrin's dad, Dayrin, one teacher, four other students and I got to ride with Emerson (Myra's husband who was our tour guide) in the AIR CONDITIONED VAN!!!!!! Wow, what a blessing! It was just about 100 degrees at Tikal.

We arrived at 9:30, got checked in, parked and were going through the entrance gate and I finally got to pass out one of the cards that Emily made! This made me very happy to tell another English speaking person about SewHope.

Emerson was an amazing tour guide not only sharing about the ruins at Tikal but also about the nature and the many trees. He also shared about where the food was stored in the Ruins. The kids were very engaged and asked lots of questions. Many of them were taking notes and were very serious. The students also brought snacks and water. We had many refreshment stops! I saw kids being kids which was so sweet. Kids holding hands and playing clapping games with chants. This was a tearful moment. (Ask Anne...a lot of things are tearful to me!)

Walking on the "trail" had many obstacles including large and small tree roots, steps reinforced by wood, cement and stakes, extremely steep step that had a railing. Emily was great at helping me when my vision was a little tricky...my perception is off being blind in one eye. Thank you Emily!

Dayrin, who has CP and is mostly nonverbal was so excited about coming on the trip and her dad went along to help her although she really didn't want help. She was a real trooper. She climbed the stairs on the two ruins that you could climb

up. The first staired area was five meters up and I mean straight up! The pride I saw in her and her dad was tearful. There were so many picture taken by her dad. I know it is something she and her dad will never forget and either will the other kids or Emily or I. Seiner shared with me that they said she would never walk and her family prayed about it. Well, God is great and she is walking and doing it with such determination.

After going to the last area of ruins, we were headed back at least that is what Emily and I thought. We got to the area where we could see the bus and van and then all of the sudden we turned right instead of going straight to the vechicles! Well, of course there was a amazing museum to see that was included in the admission! It was a small museum and had some amazing artifacts in it. We were glad we went. We then loaded on the bus and in the van and were on the way to the restaurant at the front of the park.

At the beginning of the day, Seiner told Emerson we would be back at the restaurant between 1:00 and 1:30. It was now 3:30! Kids in the van fell asleep on the about 30 minute ride back to the entrance where the restaurant was. They were waiting for us. The kids had a real treat eating at tables with tablecloths and china plates. Everyone seemed to enjoy the meal. The meal consisted of a chicken leg, vegetables, rice, tortillas, and a drink. We got back in our vehicles and were headed back to SewHope's campus. I saw an amazing sunset on a lake and Emerson stopped so I could take a picture. It was breathtaking.

We got back to campus at 6:30 and many parents were there to pick up their kids. Anne mentioned about the accident in her report. The daughter of the mom that was hurt was really shaken. I asked the teachers using Google Translate (my best friend) to pray for the girl and her family. We all put hands on her shoulder and prayed for her. This seems to settle her down and her grandmother came to pick her up.

A few kids remained and I tried to get the teachers to leave and let me wait for the parents but they would not have it. They felt responsible and were happy to wait.

I worked on sending more photos to the sponsors while Emily took a shower. I took a shower...by the way, the shower head was changed since last year and was great. The cold water was so refreshing every day when we took a shower or sometimes two showers in a day. Emily and I crashed! It was a very fun day and I know it is something none of us will ever forget.

Monday, May 8

Emily and I noticed that we saw teachers at their usual time but there were no kids coming to school. We asked and found out it was Mother's Day and a big celebration was going to take place.

Out in front of the clinic Seiner and the teachers were setting up with a background, the letter MAMA and a silhouette with a mom and child. There was a tent, chairs, a computer to provide the music, and a microphone.

Each classroom of moms were called up and they each received a Happy Mother's Day mug and a hug from the teacher.

Sitting on the table was a sash and crown with gold bobby pins and a bowl with heads of lettuce in it...oh yes, I was very curious about this and I asked what they were for only to find out that they were to crown the Miss Mama. The lettuce was for a salad making contest.

Apparently this is something that all schools do according to a visitor named Vicki who has been a partner with us in the past and just happened to stop by on Tuesday.

How do you earn the Miss Mama crown you might ask...

- You need to assemble two judges who will score the 6 contestants in different categories with points totaling 100. (Seiner and a runner up in a beauty contest were the judges)
- Walk in a fashion showy way when your name is called
- Bring your best salad making tools and make a beautiful salad and "model" it for the judges.
- Red is the color of Mother's Day...you get a red ribbon and perform a choreographed dance with the other competitors
- Give a speech about the importance of motherhood
- More fashion showy walking

There were other competitions that took place:

- Youngest mom
- Oldest mom
- Baby feeding contest with two adults, one as the baby and one as the adult
- Eating contest
- Musical chairs

It was finally time to crown Miss Mama. She was very happy but a few of the others seemed very disappointed they did not win. She received a sash and the crown which was put on by the beauty queen. (They asked Anne to do it but she gracefully said no!) Miss Mama was then given a giant basket of food.

There were many gifts including:

Mother's Day mugs

Silver cooking pots

Plastic plates

Plastic glasses

A basket of food

This was certainly a topic of discussion for Emily, Anne, and me!

We had dinner and another refreshing shower and it was time for bed!

Tuesday, May 9

There were a few more classes of postcards to be completed. Emily helped me and we started in the Kindergarten classroom. There are 25 kids there which is quite a lot of this age but Sophie seems to manage the behavior.

You can definitely feel the love in all the classrooms! You walk in the room and then you are encircled with lots of hugs that turns into a giant hug!

We also completed the postcards and took pictures with two reinforcement classes.

Kids in all classrooms were practicing the song for the Lunch and Learn.

Marcelo worked with the students to harvest watermelon. Marcelo is so happy and was smiling from ear to ear again today. The students were so excited because they got to take a watermelon home today!

10:00 We had our Lunch and Learn. Thanks to Cecilia for setting everything up and to Emily for video taping. Unfortunately, Emily's phone that was fully charged when we began, got the life sucked out of it and died right before the kids were going to sing. Cecilia was able to end the ZOOM, I recorded the kids singing, Emily spliced it in the recording, then Cecilia emailed out the link on YouTube to everyone so they could see the kids singing. WOW!

I spent time going from classroom to classroom working with kids. I also sat with students who were working on the computers in both Khan Academy and RAZ. It was much quieter today as the teachers got headphones for the students who did not have them. I was able to observe teachers actively teaching math and language. The students seemed to be engaged. One of the reinforcement classes was doing exponents like 6^6 . I did some other exponent problems with the students. Another class I showed some division tricks and gave some suggestions to the teacher. The Spanish language is so different, I saw a lot of language lessons that were related to the masculine and feminine forms of words.

Seiner gave me a half a suitcase of envelopes that contained letters for the students at MVCDS.

I met with Seiner and Emily sat in. Here are things we discussed:

- **Thanked him for all he and the staff is doing**
- **Asked about 4-6. This is the Google translate answer he gave me:**
 - **I am finding out about the department regarding the next primary cycle since next year we should have started fourth, fifth, and sixth. Currently we have K, 1, 2, and 3. They tell me in departments that it is not possible to work with a cycle in the morning and in the evening.**
- **Revisited the number of working computers- 73 Chromebooks and 8 other computers- would like to send more for the next trip**
- **Asked Seiner to share all photos he takes with Cecilia, Emily, and I.**
- **Revisited the headphones and told him we saw improvement**
- **Asked that each teacher spend at least ½ hour per week on Khan**
- **Talked about showing growth in reading and math**
- **I will share the reports from Khan and RAZ**
- **Teachers should be sitting with kids at least once or twice a week to make sure they are getting the most out of Khan and RAZ**
- **Suggested 3rd graders help get the Kindergarteners on the computers**
- **There is a lot of idle time especially in the mornings when the students first get there**
- **Suggested students have an activity, (morning work) a book, or start working on the computers right away when they come to school**
- **Asked about Bible study. Last time I saw it at the end of each day. I saw Seiner's class studying the Bible and praying but no others. He said they do it at different times of the day**
- **All the classrooms are decorated in a very appealing way**
- **Manners and Character Traits are posted in each classroom**
- **The rules are not posted in the classrooms, asked that the same rules be in each classroom so that when the kids move up a grade there is consistency, these rules will be incorporated into Class DOJO**
- **Showed Seiner the APP Class DOJO and explained how it works, he will check into it, this is a behavior tracking tool that can be customized to your rules, students can be rewarded for following the rules and for positive things they do to help others**

General comments- Using Google Translate to talk to people takes a long time. Language is definitely a huge barrier. Things are not often understood or have to be reworded to try to get the understanding in check.

Using Google Translate really drains a battery but I couldn't have survived without it. Many times I went to recharge my phone and it said something to the

effect, your phone will start charging when it cools down. I never had that happen before.

One of the classrooms seems to have the most “stinkers” and therefore is not as in control as the others.

Noise levels are elevated by the material on the walls. When going into the classrooms it didn't seem as noisy as when you were out front.

Seiner is definitely the most experienced and most effective teacher.

The school will need to be painted. It is fading. Myra thinks it should be the same color as the clinic. I like the brightness of the school, kind of a symbol of the brightness we hope to bring into the world by educating the children.

There are always things to improve on. I have given Seiner some things to work on and I know he will work to improve these things and next time there will be more!

The rock in front of the school needs to be leveled out. I would suggest we have a finer gravel walkway from the hostel to the school and a path that the students come when they arrive and leave school to the left of the hostel. The step up to the school porch is very high in some places and low in others. This should be the same all the way across.

There is no doubt that the work we do to support the school is so appreciated by Seiner, the teachers and the students.

Seiner wrote in Google Translate:

Thank you for trusting us and being able to place that trust, we were very pleased with you and above all for helping our children in our country and wanting a blessing for them and being able to have people like you on their side.

Also, all the sponsors that I think of are always thinking of our children. Thank you for all the love that each of you have shown. You are great people and the children appreciate it in a very special way and much, much.

Emerson took us to the airport. We flew to Guatemala City and got a ride to a hostel at 10:00pm. Our room was upstairs and Anne had a large bag. The host tried to put it on like a back pack and his 5 foot about 80 pound stature just wouldn't have it. Anne had him keep it downstairs and just got out what she needed! I am still giggling about that one! We got up at 3:40 and were picked up to go to the airport by the same guy who brought us to the hostel last night! All went well and we were off to Dallas. We had lunch, said good bye to Emily and

then we were off to Detroit where our chariot was waiting! Thanks to Randy for his amazing round the clock chauffeur services!

I am sure I forgot some things but the beauty of Google Docs is you can add later!

Thanks for reading.

It was a great trip