

Honduras Report to Shorey Chapel

January 7, 2022

2021 was a challenging year for us as we continued to assist the young people of El Junco, Honduras while they strive to continue their education. We are disappointed that again in 2022 it is not wise for us to travel to Honduras. We have not been in El Junco since January 2020. Normally we are able to be there for a week to ten days in January and again in March. Not long ago we felt that it was imperative for us to go this year. Lorenzo, the man whose request for help got us started with the Scholarship Program, and who had meanwhile suffered a stroke and then lost his home to flooding, was disappointing us in the way he was handling the money we were sending.

Fortunately, there is a young woman with excellent communication skills who has taken on more and more responsibility, keeping records and distributing tuition. Dania is a graduate of a business course that we have sponsored. Lorenzo was picking up the money from the Western Union office, then he and Dania worked together to distribute it. Lorenzo's poor communication skills, his cultural difficulty in working with a young woman and his desperate financial needs were causing us to worry. In solution we have been able to shift the responsibility for picking up the money to a young man who attends auto mechanic vocational school with a scholarship.

Our concern about the handling of the funds is alleviated for now. We are continuing to provide a bit of financial support for Lorenzo from our personal funds. Without him the program would not exist, and he remains our friend.

We receive Facebook messages almost daily from El Junco young people who are excited about their vocational education or explaining why they felt they can't continue this year. The original eighteen has shrunk to fourteen. Often there are a few who don't finish the year they started.

The four young women training to be beauticians are buying the equipment, such as dryers, scissors and polish, that they will need to ply their trade. The young man who has learned to repair cell phones has also needed to buy tools. He is now learning how to use cellular communication for building community networks.

These are the fortunate ones. Their classes meet in person. The junior high and high school students have to do it all on-line. That has been frustrating for them. Elsa said she needed a better cell phone to do it. All but she and Darwin are continuing with their courses. Darwin tried to immigrate to the U.S. but was apprehended and was lucky enough to get home again after incarceration. Unable to keep up with his classes while in custody, he dropped them. Fany and Dania, who registered for university courses, gave it up until they can attend classes in person.

Yeimi has just graduated from high school, and her brother, Josue, finished the year with the highest grades in the seventh grade. Lorenzo reports that two students who have finished sixth grade at the El Junco schoolhouse want to join the program to attend seventh grade. The new school year always begins in February after the coffee harvest. Honduras needs educated citizens if it is ever to defeat corruption and systemic poverty.

The \$200 budgeted by Shorey Chapel last year was used to buy basic grains for the women in El Junco to use for making a mid-morning meal for the elementary students in El Junco. They are very grateful.

At CEVER vocational school in Yoro, several hours distant from El Junco, classes have resumed for several courses but with only half of the usual students so they can maintain proper separation due to the resurgence of COVID. The school is working with the Mennonites to provide vocational classes for deportees sent back from the border. The Maine UCC Conference Resource Team has elected to send our budget money along with other donations to CEVER for the director to use as appropriate. We hope that someday soon we will be able to resume teaching there.

It is a bit of work for us to raise the money to continue this program, but it is also a blessing for us to feel the difference that we are making in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Honduras.

Respectfully submitted by Bob and Craigen Healy