

Christmas Toys & Donations Needed at Casa Guatemala

December 12, 2016 by Jody Aston, Editor, and Heather Price, Exec. Dir. of Casa Guatemala

The previous article, dated December 9th, provided information regarding a program by Miniland that will benefit Casa Guatemala. For every postcard written to a child at the home, Miniland will donate a toy. This is a simple way to make a direct connection with the children that will enrich both your lives! Click this [link](#) for an easy way to send the cards through Miniland's website. We would like to point out, however, that these toys will not arrive until the New Year. They will be stored for distribution next Christmas, 2017. That means Casa Guatemala is still in great need of toys and donations for THIS Christmas! They only have about 10 days left to make purchases with monetary donations, pick up toys from the drop-box locations, sort and wrap all the presents, and have them ready for Santa to hand out to the 600 children who will attend the two Christmas events at Casa Guatemala.

For more information, the following excerpts are taken from the Casa Guatemala Christmas letter, by Executive Director, Heather Graham (bold emphasis is mine). If you would like to read the letter in it's entirety, click [here](#). We hope you will find it in your heart to help make it a joyful Christmas for all the children at Rio Dulce's own Casa Guatemala Children's Home.

It is a very busy time and we still have so much to do to prepare for our two celebrations. The end of the summer school program will be celebrated with our Christmas Concert on December 21st. The children will perform their play and sing their songs and we will have a special lunch followed by a visit from Santa with presents for everyone!

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We are still fundraising to cover the costs of the special lunch we have planned for the children and of course for all of the other expenses that comes with the season! Now that we are celebrating twice, we really have raised the cost of our Christmas celebrations but we are very pleased with the results of our summer school program and are happy to be able to reward all of the kids who have continued to be with us during their vacation with a special experience that we know they wouldn't have if they were at home! Once the children finish their classes, we get to work getting ready for the big day! We are working to collect toys for all of the children who will be joining us on Christmas Eve for our main festivities. We are happy to be able to bring the families from the surrounding villages this special event to come together and celebrate. We are collecting toys here in the local community and donations to purchase other gifts for the 500 children that we are expecting to join us. Our major need is for toys for girls from babies to 12 years old and for boys from 6 through 12. We are also collecting funds to help us to cover the cost of making all of the 700 tamales that we will distribute to the families who will join us as well as the 500 Christmas dinners for the children. There will be apples and grapes, cakes and candies, hot chocolate, and of course, lots of sparklers and fire crackers! We are excited to have a great team of volunteers with us to help out as well as our wonderful teachers who sacrifice spending their Christmas with their families to be at Casa Guatemala to share the magic that we bring to the children. If you want to be a part of the magic, you can make a donation towards the celebration today! We have also introduced our new sponsorship program which has already doubled the amount of sponsors we have for the kids! We will be updating the program next month to add the new kids who will be joining us and take down our graduates who have successfully moved on to their next level of education. We would love to have more people sign up as sponsors as their contributions really help us to cover the costs of the education and nutrition programs.

We were able to provide school for 235 vulnerable children in 2016 and 110 during our vacation program. We had 130 kids living on site throughout the year. Those kids who live at Casa Guatemala have breakfast lunch and dinner as well as two snacks a day while the additional 105 kids who only come during the day have their lunch and snacks with us. That works out to about 42,000 lunches and 84,000 snacks just during the week plus around 45,500 breakfasts and dinners throughout the year! The children are also provided with all of their medical care, clothing, personal items and of course, the love and attention of our staff and volunteers.

And all of this is possible because of you. Your donations truly make a difference to our work. We have been really lucky so far with our holiday giving campaign and have almost reached our goal! We have raised just over \$11,000 since Giving Tuesday which means we still have almost \$17,000 in matching funds available to double your impact if you donate before the end of the year! We have been so touched by the generosity of everyone in our Casa Guatemala family that we wanted to show you all just how grateful we are!