

April 2011

Dear Friends,

My parents became a part of the Yashalum (the civil association in Mexico partnered with Mission Teaching Foundation) family almost a decade ago after hearing an emotional account at Mass one Sunday morning by Fr. Loren Riebe. I was fascinated by his lecture on the culture but disturbed by the human rights abuses that the indigenous face in Chiapas, México. In January and February of 2011, I had the honor of becoming familiar with the indigenous Mayans that make up the organization first hand. I was able to sit in on council meetings and view the democratic process with which decisions were made for the greater good of the organization. The advancement of the community was always a priority with the board members.

Staying in the guest house behind the girls' dormitory, I had the opportunity to eat, talk, and share stories with each one of the young women residents that are given a unique opportunity to continue their studies. I was a witness as night after night they stayed up until the midnight hours doing chemistry, geometry, history, and English homework. I have seen how they have the opportunity to live in a safe environment and focus on their studies through the Yashalum dormitories. I am proud to have spent two months teaching English to the students. Since they were all familiar with English grammar from their studies in the public schools, I had the opportunity to help them improve their pronunciation. During this time, I was able to see their intelligence as they quickly were able to communicate with me in English.

It brought me great joy and laughter to have the students show me pictures of their sponsors, asking me if I knew them. I enjoyed pulling out the atlas and pointing to the state in which their sponsors lived. It was a very powerful class when I had the opportunity to translate a letter a student had received from a sponsor. The woman wrote to these young women about the power of education and that each one of them contained the ability to succeed and graduate from the university with a career. The students were filled with excitement to hear the encouraging words that each one of them had the ability to pursue and obtain a degree in higher education.



Every family, community and person I spoke with sends their thanks to all the sponsors that help their children study through scholarships and to Fr. Loren Riebe for his commitment to the community. I hope I can be a testament of the productivity and positive impact Yashalum has made and will continue to make in the city of Yajalón, Chiapas. I will always feel connected to these strong and proud people with their important view on life.

Sincerely,  
David Paul Ramírez Douglass

(David is 21 years old from Santa Rosa, CA)

Note: MTF is in the early planning stages of a visit to Chiapas in July 2011. Please contact us if you are interested in going at [info@missionteachingfoundation.org](mailto:info@missionteachingfoundation.org) or by calling Art and Julie Hoesterey, (480)814-7396.