



Fun at the After School Program at the Pomona Hope Community Center

### New in America by Meg Connors, Community Liaison, PHCC

Four months ago, seven year old Raul came to America. Until that time, he lived in a rural part of Guatemala without electricity, running water, or a school. Coming to America was a very big adventure for him. It was his first time away from his family, first time speaking English, and first time using a porcelain urinal. (The later of which was a total fascination to him) As he was seven years old, he was placed in second grade. He came to our program to get homework help.

A volunteer sat down next to him to look over his weekly spelling words: 'edge, wedge, hedge, ridge'.....and six others.

"Do you know this first one?" she asked.

He shot her a big grin, missing the two front teeth, and shrugged his shoulders. (Charm will get you somewhere, Child....)

"Raul, say 'edge,'" she said. He said it twice. She made a flashcard with a little picture on the back.

"Let's try the next one," the volunteer continued. "This is letter 'w.' What sound does 'w' make?"

He gave her that grin again and blinked his big, brown eyes at her. Cute, but clueless. The volunteer flipped the homework paper over and printed the letter 'a.'

"Do you know what this is?" she asked.

"Apple! A! A!" he exclaimed.

"Yes! That's right!" said the volunteer. She went on. Twenty-six letters later, Raul knew 17 of them. Somehow, his teacher had found time to teach him the kinder skills. The volunteer went the next week to meet her.

The volunteer introduced herself to a young woman in a classroom of 32 children.

The teacher exclaimed, "So YOU'RE the one helping Raul! I knew someone was. He got a number of the spelling words last week and hasn't been able to before."

"Great!" said the volunteer, "I'm glad you can see a difference. I came to ask you what I can do to support you in your teaching him." So the two of them made a plan.

The teacher said, "I'm so glad you're helping him! He needs so much, and I can only get to him about a half hour a day."

So Raul is coming along in his studies. He's still quite a bit behind his peers, but gaining in speed and confidence. And he's enjoying school more now.

One day recently when he came to the center he was asked how school was.

He replied through his toothless grin, "It was thweet (sweet)." You're going to make it in America, Raul!

### Special Events at Pomona Hope

- April 10th to 14th is Easter Vacation, there will be no After School Program
- We are always in need of volunteers at the center. So if you wish to make a difference in a child's life come down and volunteer Monday to Friday from 3-5pm at the center.
- Volunteer and Donor Appreciation Dinner coming in May, more details coming soon

*"Volunteering at Pomona Hope is always a restorative time for me."*

*Debra Mashek, volunteer*

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Soon more of Pomona may be lit up with streetlights, thanks to the organizing efforts of Pomona Hope and OneLA.

## Organizing Update

### RISE UP AND BUILD

The churches are bannng together to be the conscience of our community.

Over five hundred came together from various denominations on January 18th. Three invited members of city council attended. Church members clearly stated grievances about our city, and asked for change. Council members responded positively and agreed to meet with us further. Dan Rodriguez of the council exclaimed that this meeting had given him tremendous hope. He wrote a powerful letter to the editor endorsing our efforts.

The streetlight issue has been a long-standing symbol of our city's brokenness, and our story hit the

front page of the newspaper along with a large photo! RECOGNITION!

In addition, the director of city planning and team met with our leaders. We made it clear that we wanted a voice in our city's future. Some of us live in areas that were under scrutiny for redevelopment – potential to be driven off by developers. Now no longer! The city planners agreed to meet with us in April. One member commented if she had been aware that such a group existed in Pomona we would have been invited to the planning meetings at their inception. We are gathering and growing! In the words of Jeremiah of The Old Testament, it truly is time for us TO RISE UP AND BUILD.

## Volunteer Highlight

The Pomona Hope Community Center depends on our many volunteers to make its programs a success. The volunteers come from many walks of life and make a huge impact on the lives of the kids with whom they work. One such volunteer is Ryan, a college student from the Claremont Colleges. He says, "The reason I am volunteering has to do with Matthew 25:34-40. Given all that I have been given, the least I can do is in some small measure to give to those who have need, and thereby, hopefully, to see Christ in some way through it. Plus I love kids." Ryan shares that volunteering has been a challenge, but it has definite rewards.

"It has been a really good experience, though not easy. It's pretty difficult to think of ways to make a real difference for these kids, some of whom have already seen more hardship than I ever have. Still, to see them start to respond to the volunteers, to see them show real creativity and express real interest in things that matter - it's wonderful." We want to express our gratitude to Ryan and all of our volunteers. Thank you for bringing hope to the kids of Pomona.



### From the president:

In this quarterly newsletter you may read the unfolding story of the Pomona Hope. This year we have faced many challenges such as raising funds, recruiting volunteers, and dealing with the thousand tiny disasters that can only come from working with large numbers of children. At every turn, our prayers have been answered as the money has come, people have come forward to serve, and with patience, creativity, and love, problems have been solved. It has been a tremendous joy to watch the Pomona Hope Community Center grow from a simple idea to a dynamic reality. In addition to the Community Center, Pomona Hope has been part of several successful organizing efforts such as getting streetlights for our neighborhoods. We believe the strides that Pomona Hope has made so far are only the beginning. Your support is a vital part of this work. We are so glad you are partnering with us in the good work the Lord is doing in Pomona.

If you want to unsubscribe to this newsletter, please contact us at [info@pomonahope.org](mailto:info@pomonahope.org).

### Joe George

*I have learned two lessons in my life: first, there are no sufficient literary, psychological, or historical answers to human tragedy, only moral ones. Second, just as despair can come to one another only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings. Elie Wiesel*