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# Solidaridad

News from Foundation Todos Juntos  
and Asociación Pop Wuj

Winter 2018

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## Pop Wuj Celebrates Students and Graduates



Herman and his sister, Marta, another scholarship student. Herman graduated from nursing school at Xela's prestigious public university and is now working toward an advanced degree in nursing.

Photo by Amy Scheuren

By Amy Scheuren

On Wednesday December 6, 2017, [Pop Wuj](#) invited over 100 Scholarship Program students and their families to celebrate another year of hard work and academic success at the Annual Scholarship Assembly. Pop Wuj staff and volunteers recognized 15 primary school graduates, 6 middle school graduates, five high school graduates, and two very special university graduates.

Graduating from college is a rare achievement, especially for students from rural areas of Guatemala. Herman Alberto Tambriz Tambriz graduated from the Nursing School at the Universidad de San Carlos in Quetzaltenango (Xela). Throughout his academic career, Herman suffered several setbacks and was challenged by economic as well as institutional barriers. We are incredibly proud of Herman's commitment and unwillingness to give up on his dream.

In 2018 Herman plans to work as a nurse during the week and continue his nursing education on the weekends. He wants to complete his licenciatura in nursing (similar to a master's degree) within two years.





Yolanda, doing homework at the Guarderia in 2006 (upper photo) and speaking at the 2017 Pop Wuj Scholarship Assembly after graduating from college (lower photo).

Photos by Amy Scheuren

Pop Wuj also recognized Gloria Yolanda López López, who is the first Family Support Center participant to graduate from college. In 2017 Yolanda passed both her written and oral exams to complete her degree in English Education at the Universidad Mesoamericana.

Yolanda and several of her younger siblings joined the Family Support Center (then the Guardería) in 2006 when her father passed away and her mother found herself raising six children alone. Yolanda holds the distinction of not only being the first

Family Support Center participant to read all the Harry Potter books, but also being the reason why the project procured the books in the first place!

Yolanda teaches pre-school and elementary English at a private school in Xela. Like Herman, Yolanda plans to continue her education. In 2018 she will study for the public university entrance exams with the goal of entering a licenciatura program in 2019.

¡Felicidades a todos los becados de Pop Wuj! Congratulations to all Pop Wuj scholarship students!

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## For Luis and Miguel's Family, One Positive Change Fuels Another

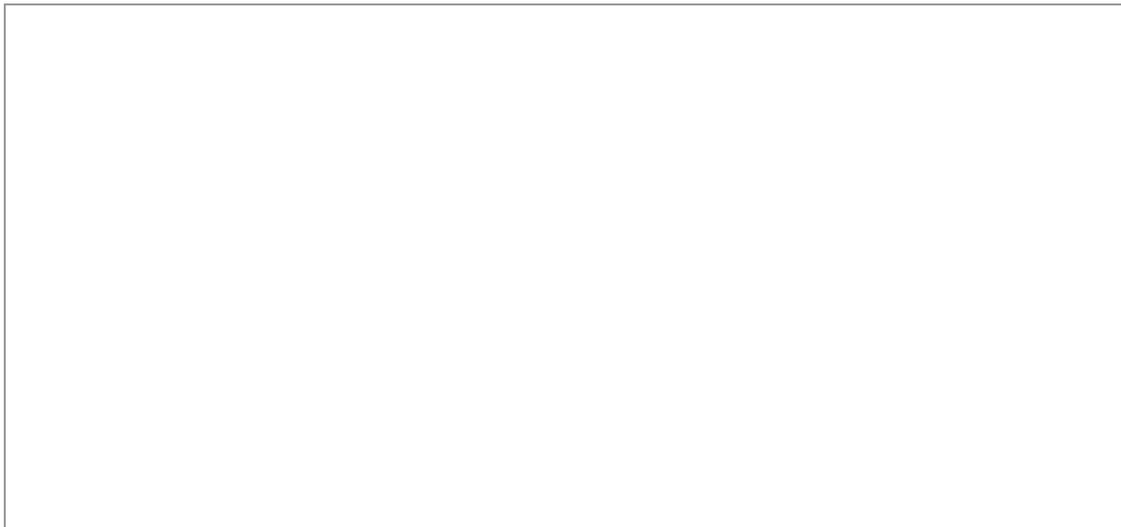
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By Marysabel Vasquez and Elizabeth Barnes

For families who participate in Pop Wuj's projects, the obstacles of poverty are multidimensional. Pop Wuj recognizes that home environments affect health, health affects academic and professional success, success can help secure better living situations, and so on. Rather than isolating one area, Pop Wuj projects offer interconnected resources.

Luis and Miguel's family in Llanos del Pinal is one family that has engaged successfully with multiple resources to see improvement in multiple areas. In 2017 their mother asked to enroll 7-year-old Luis and 10-year-old Miguel in the Family Support Center (FSC).

However, while interviewing the family for the FSC, Pop Wuj staff and volunteers learned that the family was cooking over an open fire in their home and informed them about the Safe Stove Project. The family joined the next stove group and began to benefit from the improved indoor air quality and a decreased need and cost of firewood.





Gloria, Luis and Miguel's mother, stands by her old stove

Photo Courtesy of Pop Wuj

At the FSC, both boys made significant strides in their first year. The FSC supports the community of Llanos del Pinal by providing a safe space for children to go after school where they are fed a healthy lunch and snack, work on skill-building activities, learn healthy socialization, and receive help and resources to complete their homework.

Luis and Miguel started the project with health issues due to malnourishment. Now, with daily access to healthy meals and snacks, their health has improved. They are known as the best eaters in the FSC, eating everything that is offered to them and even going back for seconds.

The brothers have also benefited from the socialization that the FSC offers. Participants learn to get along with dozens of other children, and the structure and guidance of the FSC has positively impacted the boys' behavior.



L-R Miguel and Luis enjoy the end-of-year activity with the Family Support Center.

Photo by Amy Scheuren

But perhaps the most striking change has been in Luis and Miguel's education. Before starting at the FSC, the boys simply never did their homework. Luis and Miguel's parents are illiterate and not able to help their sons with schoolwork. At 10 years old, Miguel was still in first grade.

Now that the boys have help from the FSC staff and access to additional resources, they have more confidence in their reading and writing, and Miguel finally passed the first grade. He started second grade in January 2018.

Luis and Miguel have accomplished so much in just over a year at the FSC, and we look forward to seeing the family continue to grow.

Due to their success in 2017, both Luis and Miguel will receive a Pop Wuj scholarship in 2018. If you are interested in sponsoring Luis or Miguel's education, please contact Amy Scheuren, Foundation Todos Juntos treasurer, at [info@todos-juntos.org](mailto:info@todos-juntos.org).

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## Nutrition Program Gives Sisters a Head Start

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Photos by Dr. Carmen Rosa Alvarado Benítez

By Carmen Rosa Alvarado Benitez and Elizabeth Barnes

Meet 4-year-old Melissa, 2-year-old Dayana, and 10-month-old Lusmy—sisters who each joined the Pop Wuj Nutrition Program in Llanos del Pinal at less than 12 months old.

The girls' parents, Jose Luis and Annabelle, work in the informal economy as agricultural laborers and do not have a regular salary. Like all other Nutrition Program participants in Llanos del Pinal, the family lives in extreme poverty, earning less than \$1 per person per day.

Like most children in the area, Melissa, Dayana, and Lusmy live in a toxic environment with mining pollution, lack of clean water, and poor housing infrastructure. Before joining the Safe Stove Project, the family also cooked over an indoor open fire, which caused pulmonary infections and allergies that prevented the children from growing normally. Left unaddressed, such exposure to smoke can lead to serious consequences in adulthood such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases,

learning problems, criminal behavior, mental health illnesses, pregnancy complications, even death before five years of age.

The family's poverty and home environment led to severe stunting in all three girls. However, through the Pop Wuj Nutrition Program, they have benefited from food and vitamin supplements, monthly pediatric and nutritional care, parenting education, and early stimulation. This care and a safe stove have improved Melissa, Dayana, and Lusmy's lung health. All three girls have achieved healthy parameters for growth.

Melissa, Dayana, and Lusmy are among hundreds of children who have become healthier and happier in the Pop Wuj Nutrition Program. When you support Pop Wuj's community projects, you are part of that success.

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Tax-deductible donations may be sent via check to:

Foundation Todos Juntos  
P.O. Box 533  
Honey Brook, PA 19344

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[Foundation Todos Juntos](#), a 501(c)3 non profit, was founded in 2001 by former students of [Pop Wuj Spanish School](#) to facilitate ongoing collaboration with various projects in and around Quetzaltenango (Xela), Guatemala.

Today the Foundation supports educational, medical, social, and public health projects in the Western Highlands of Guatemala.



[Pathways \(Abriendo Caminos\)](#) is a small, Guatemalan non-profit association working to support individuals with developmental disabilities in Xela, Guatemala. To support Pathways, simply [donate](#) via Foundation Todos Juntos and request a donation designation for Pathways. Gracias!

## AmazonSmile & Todos Juntos

[AmazonSmile](#) allows customers to enjoy the same shopping options as Amazon.com, but with the benefit of supporting the work of Foundation Todos Juntos. When customers shop on [AmazonSmile](#) and select Foundation Todos Juntos, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible



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## Foundation Todos Juntos and Thrivent Choice®

Through a unique member-advised charitable grant program called [Thrivent Choice®](#), members of [Thrivent Financial](#) are now able to support Foundation Todos Juntos.

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