

## MOUNTAIN MILESTONES

News from Bill and Linda Brierly in Guatemala

### Help Us Keep the Window Open! – November 2009



Olivia Cal Mis, Age 19



Ofelia Chacoj Mo, Age 19

The **Window of Opportunity** has been open for the past 3 years for these two rural Pokomchi young ladies.

Through a scholarship from Hope of the Pokomchi, they were able to complete middle school this month.

So What? What's so special about that? Let me tell you "So What"! Let me list for you the reasons why they are so special:

- They live in a remote mountain village in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, in dirt -floored one-room houses with their families; the families cook on open fires in the house; they have no water, no electricity, no sanitation, not even a latrine
- To get to the small market town of San Cristobal where they studied, they had to walk 3 hours on a mountain trail, take a one-hour bus ride on a dirt road to town, and then walk 30 minutes to their place of study and student house. They did this every weekend for 3 years.
- They are the first young ladies from their village to ever get past 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the village school and leave their village for a higher education.

- When they started the first year of middle school, they couldn't speak Spanish (the language of their studies), and their actual academic level was at 4<sup>th</sup> grade primary; they had never been away from home before; as per the culture of their village, they wore no underwear and had no knowledge of feminine hygiene
- They were treated by many of the villagers with criticism and suspicion; "It's a waste of time! They should get married and start having many babies." (The normal age of marriage in the rural villages is 15; it's not unusual for a woman to have 10 children.)

But they persevered, overcame their fears and the many obstacles, studied hard ...and **ACHIEVED SUCCESS!** They are now both confident, speak Spanish, have an expanded world view, and a passionate desire to keep studying.

Says Olivia:

"The first day, I was frightened because I couldn't speak Spanish. But now I am very happy and excited because 3 years later I have graduated. I would like to study nursing because I want to help my community and my family."

Ofelia says:

"When I started, I couldn't speak Spanish and I had a hard time trying to write and read. I didn't want to talk to the other students. Now I have finished and I would like to continue to study. I would like to keep improving myself, my family, and my community. That is why I would like to study nursing."

**SLAM!** The **Window of Opportunity** that has given them a breath of fresh air, achievement, and self-fulfillment, is about to slam shut. There are no more funds for them to study nursing.

Again, you might say:

"So what?"

"Their middle school education can serve them well and maybe sometime in the future they can study nursing. They're young yet."

Here's a Reality Check!

If they are not able to study next year, the cultural pressure in their community will see them married and starting to have many babies. The culture of their community considers them **OLD**,

not young, and they have already wasted 3 years. They are too old to continue to be financial burdens on their fathers.

Consider This!

These two young women have made a **CRACK** in the grinding cycle of poverty, ignorance, and superstition of their culture. Now they are on the brink of

Either...

1. Widening that **CRACK** by becoming nurses, earning their own income, having more say in their lives and the life of their community, helping others in their community to slip out of that grinding cycle of poverty

Or...

2. Being swallowed up again

We invite you to make Option #1 possible for them.

We invite you to, by January 31, 2010...

**...Be one of 20 people who commit \$50 USD per month each, for only 12 months**

To help these young ladies, please mail your checks to the following:

In Canada

Hope of the Pokomchi

Box 1817 RR#1

Clearwater, BC V0E-1N0

Make check out to:

Clearwater Christian Church

In U.S.A.

PRISM Foundation

6831 Cottage Hill Lane

Celina, TX 75009

Make check out to:

PRISM Foundation

In lower left of check, write: Hope of the Pokomchi - Nursing Scholarship

We thank you for your careful, prayerful consideration!

*Bill and Linda*