



# MI REFUGIO

San Pedro, Sacatepequez & Zona 7, Guatemala City / [www.mirefugio.org](http://www.mirefugio.org) / [mirefugiokari@verizon.net](mailto:mirefugiokari@verizon.net)

## GUATEMALA

The largest country in Central America, yet in size slightly smaller than Tennessee, with a current population of 13.5 million. It is the home to the western hemisphere's greatest ancient civilization, the Mayan, which flourished in Guatemala and surrounding regions during the first millennium AD. It was conquered by Spain in 1524 and after almost three centuries as a Spanish colony, Guatemala won its independence in 1821. During the second half of the 20th century, it experienced a variety of military and civilian governments, as well as a 36 year civil war. In 1996, the government signed a peace agreement formally ending the conflict, which had left more than 200,000 people dead or missing, and created some one million refugees. Some of these refugees found their way from the rural areas to the Guatemala City garbage dump, where today over 1,000 children and their families scavenge for food and recyclables. According to UNICEF almost half of Guatemala's children are chronically malnourished – the sixth worst performance in the world. In most of rural Guatemala, where the population is overwhelmingly of Mayan descent where parents work in agriculture, the incidence of child malnutrition reaches 80%. A diet of little more than a tortilla does permanent damage. The country has a literacy rate of 50%, with a population of 45% under 15 years of age and 3% over 65. The language is Spanish but over 40% speak one of 18 Indian dialects.

## MI REFUGIO

MY REFUGIO is a nondenominational Christian ministry which provides free education (pre-school thru college), food, clothing, medical assistance to children and their families who live next to the Guatemala City garbage dump and the Mayan families that live in poor rural villages

surrounding the San Pedro school property and the town of San Juan. The school has been accredited by the Guatemalan government, and all the teachers are graduates from Guatemalan schools with teaching credentials. Kari Engen is the founder and Executive Director of the ministry, living full time at the school property in San Pedro, Sacatepequez, Guatemala.



**Top: Kari Engen and a few of Mi Refugio's kids; Above: The kids learning to sew and bake, in addition to their academics.**

## HISTORY

Kari Engen first went on the mission field in 1978 while attending school by going on short-term summer mission trips to Mexico. In 1984, after completing college, she went back to Mexico full-time, and then in 1985 to Guatemala where she worked with children in several different ministries. In 1988 Kari started MI REFUGIO with 50 students in a rented building next to the Guatemala City garbage dump in Zone 7. In 1990, a second building in Zone 3 was rented for academic classes as the school expanded. The original Zone 7 building was purchased in 1991 and converted into a trade school. In 1995 a 12.5 acre property, with several buildings, was purchased in San Pedro, Sacatepequez to replace the rented Zone 3 building which the owner wanted back.

The San Pedro property is 26km from the Guatemala City garbage dump so the children are bused to the school. The school expanded at this time to include children from the poor Mayan Cakchiquel villages surrounding the towns of San Pedro and San Juan who are also bussed to the school. The Zone 7 building is now used for child-care up to 3 years of age and bus depot. Since 1995, numerous renovations and new structures have been added to the San Pedro property by short-term mission teams. The school has an enrollment of 400 students from pre-school (3 yrs & up), primary (grades K-6) and high school (grades 7-9).

## MISSION TEAMS

Groups, families and individuals are welcome to volunteer during the school year (January-October). The three time periods for ten day trips are February/ March, June and September/ October. Specific dates are announced a year in advance in our Volunteer Information Sheet. Servants are needed for the following activities at the school, in the Mayan Villages or the Guatemala City garbage dump: Medical/Dental/Eye Clinics; teaching children arts/ crafts, baking, computers, English, sewing and wood working; construction projects requiring some masonry, carpentry, electrical and plumbing skills and kitchen/bakery helpers. Spanish translators and assistants in all areas are needed. The Volunteer Information Sheet containing all the details is available by contacting Harry Engen at the Maryland office address of 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, MD 20853, telephone 301-929-1267, fax 301-929-1235 or e-mail mirefugiokari@verizon.net. Information is also available at <http://www.mirefugio.org>. It is best to plan a trip a year in advance. Approximately 250 volunteers come to the school each year.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

MI REFUGIO is a faith ministry, trusting God for every need that they have. Many organizations and individuals support MI REFUGIO with monthly, quarterly, annual and one time donations. MI REFUGIO is a USA tax exempt nonprofit corporation registered in Maryland (#52-1610744). Contributions should be made out to MI REFUGIO and mailed to 4908 Jasmine Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20853. Contributions from outside the USA should be by international money order. Stock contributions are also welcome-call for details. All contributions are banked in the USA and then transferred to MI REFUGIO's account in Guatemala. A tax receipt is mailed. All administrative costs in the USA are donated, so 100% of your contributions go to work in Guatemala. The funds contributed are used to pay salaries of Guatemalan teachers, cooks, bus drivers and maintenance personnel; food for two meals and snacks daily; transportation costs, utilities, school supplies and uniforms, medical costs and scholarship costs for children going beyond highschool. Kari receives no salary as a missionary. You may view our annual financial report at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org). Current monthly operating costs are \$37,500. Any correspondence should be sent to the Maryland address, as mail sent directly to Guatemala is frequently stolen. Packets of mail are sent to Kari through a courier service on frequent intervals. Also, in-kind donations of school supplies, clothing, medical supplies, sewing materials and construction items should be sent to the Maryland address. Please check first by requesting a current needs list. Mission team members and other's traveling to Guatemala take extra suitcases of donated material with them.



**Clockwise from top: Volunteers have been involved with carpentry, dentistry, computers, sewing and medical outreaches. Above: The kids going back to the garbage dump on the school bus.**

## NEWSLETTER

Kari prepares a quarterly newsletter to keep those who have contributed or volunteered up to date with the ministry. We will put your name on our mailing list unless you request that we do not. We never give or sell our mailing list to any other organization. Kari does not come to the USA very often, and when she does, it is for much needed rest and time with family. If you are interested in having someone speak to your church or mission committee about the ministry, her father who travels to Guatemala on a regular basis or mission team volunteers can be available. Also available are two video tapes to see and understand the ministry. Please call the Maryland office to arrange either option.

## ADMINISTRATION

MI REFUGIO has a volunteer Board of Directors (10) which handles the administration, newsletter and contribution receipting functions in the USA. All volunteer on a regular basis in Guatemala. We are a small organization and we ask your patience and understanding as we handle your contributions, your requests, pray over your prayer requests and keep things flowing smoothly. Most of all we appreciate your interest and generous support to reach these poor families in Guatemala.