



La Limonada Visitor Overview

Tita Evertsz began **Vidas Plenas** (“Fulfilled Lives”) in 1995, providing gang prevention through gospel-centered education, healthy meals, nutrition and hygiene training, sexual education, a spiritual safe haven, discipleship, and a bridge over the darkness of poverty and marginalization that hits the children around age seven. The Limon academy was started in 2000, Mandarina in 2008, and Lima in 2014.

Lemonade International was started in 2008 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to act as a conduit for generosity and love in partnership with Vidas Plenas. We facilitate child, scholar, and teacher sponsorship and other kinds of partnerships with churches, schools, and businesses in the US to support the work.

The Community

Considered a Zona Roja (“Red Zone”), a designation given to Guatemala City’s poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods, the ravine is now home to over 60,000 people and is considered the largest urban slum in Central America. It forms a border between Zona 1 and Zona 5 and consists of ten barrios (districts or neighborhoods) ruled by rival gangs. Having a La Limonada address prevents residents from getting hired for honest work. Many feel forced to lie about their address, while others succumb to illegal activity.

The Children

Spiritual

The children have all heard the story of the Gospel and learn about the life of Jesus on a daily basis from their teachers. Under the direction of the Vidas Plenas chaplain, they also receive “Value of the Month” lessons. The children are receiving a gospel-centered education, but are always in need of lessons on the impact and implications of faith. How does God want us to live? How do we face hard things? What is our hope?

Emotional

Many of the children are experiencing ongoing physical, verbal, or sexual abuse. Some have been abandoned, gone out to search for a family member passed out or dead in the streets, experienced exploitation, heard gunshots while trying to sleep, walked past bullet-ridden walls, and live with constant signs of gang presence. Academy psychologists are addressing the emotional, spiritual, and psychological impact of ongoing trauma, illness, extreme poverty, and family disintegration.

Physical

Many of the children are experiencing malnutrition, chronic hunger, illness from poor sanitation, respiratory infections, and other physical effects of poverty. A piece of candy, a soda, or sweet bread quickly abates gnawing hunger and offers quick relief, especially when life is difficult and all parents can do is take one day at a time. It can be difficult to concentrate, listen to instruction, or behave well. They receive a vitamin and one hot nutritious meal in the academies each day to fuel their little bodies as they grow. They also learn basic hygiene as they practice washing their hands and brushing their teeth each day.

To sponsor or support from the States: www.lemonadeinternational.org or email katie@lemonadeintl.org

To get involved from Guatemala: www.vidasplenas.org or email tita@vidasplenas.org



Requests for Visitors to La Limonada

1. Please embrace the people you meet and allow them to become a part of your life story. Ask God to open your heart and reveal his heart for the poor to you. Why has he brought you to La Limonada? What does he want you to do with what you experience here? What is God teaching you? What can you learn from the people you meet?
2. Please wear modest clothing and closed toe shoes; do not wear any jewelry or anything fancy. We want to come into La Limonada emphasizing our similarities and not differences.
3. Please always stay with someone from the staff of Lemonade International or Vidas Plenas during your time in La Limonada.
4. Please be sensitive about when and where you share your reactions to homes, difficult stories, and smells. Facial reactions can still be understood by the people. Please show respect for their beautiful hospitality – they are allowing you to enter their community and home! Of course, it is okay to cry with them and let your concern show!
5. Please do not make any promises to people from the La Limonada community or our team on the ground in Guatemala about what you plan on doing when you return home, when you will be coming back to the country, or what you plan on doing to help them. Even if you have the best of intentions it is important not to make promises.
6. Please refrain from giving any money directly to the people of La Limonada or anyone on the streets of Guatemala City without consulting Vidas Plenas staff first. If you feel led to give, please ask them what is appropriate and best.
7. We have never experienced a threat from the community, however, if you are robbed, please give up your items quickly and do not fight back.
8. Although cameras are encouraged inside the schools, we ask you not to use cameras while on home visits or in the streets. You may ask a staff member when it is appropriate to take a picture.
9. It is customary and polite to kiss almost everyone you meet on their right cheek. It may be slightly awkward but it is less awkward to kiss on the cheek than *not kiss* and have the possibility of offending someone. (Please refrain from kissing the children on the lips)