



## Dear Friends and Partners,

We are so grateful for the spirit of generosity and encouragement from our sponsors, donors, businesses and church partners who helped us finish 2021 on solid ground! During the second year of a multi-year public school shutdown in Guatemala, your partnership with us provided ongoing financial support for food, academic support, community relief, and continued growth of our Sponsorship program to serve new students and families.

Lemonade International's focus on academic support, individual students' wellbeing, as well as families and neighborhoods is not accidental. We truly believe that the healthiest communities are made up of empowered individuals, and as a culture transforms future generations, those students will invest back into healthier families and communities. This is the beautiful thing about our work together in La Limonada.

Over the last four years, one of my goals as Executive Director has been to hold the tension between these two different, and often opposing, viewpoints: personal transformation and community shalom-justice. I like to think of them as two sides of the same Gospel coin. One of our partner churches describes them as two wings of a plane. If we only focus on one side, we get off-balance. The Gospel is good news for both students and the community as a whole.

The impact of the pandemic and shutdown of schools reminded us that the work in La Limonada is about more than academics. It is about deep transformation at a generational

pace; children learning to take responsibility for their future as well as families challenging the status quo of the violent neighborhood around them. Here are a few highlights from this year's report:

- Record-breaking achievements during our Give Christmas campaign raised money for shoes, school supplies, vitamins, and ongoing support for staff salaries to serve nearly 700 children and Scholars.
- Our Sponsorship Program has consistently provided for the needs of children in La Limonada. We have over 350 sponsors, and some are sponsoring two or three children each month. Faithful sponsors are a big part of our story of sustainability over the last two years.
- Our sponsors have been faithful heroes, and by sharing their love for their sponsored child, scholar, and staff, they motivated nearly 20 new sponsors to join our team.
- Despite a second year of at-home learning, students continued turning in school-at-home assignments on time, advancing academically, experiencing growth in their character formation, and Scholars demonstrated great diligence in finishing their studies.
- Several muchachos (young boys or men involved in violence, drugs or abuse) made choices for a better life with the support of the Rescue Team. Their choice to focus on their spiritual growth and continue their academic studies at home has great impact on the wellbeing of their families.

- Lemonade International sponsors and donors sustained support of all five Academies throughout the pandemic, including Naranja Academy, which opened in the Lo de Reyes neighborhood one month before the public school shut down in March 2020.

Although the five academies are powerful tools of transformation in La Limonada, greater still is the power of our team! During the crisis the pandemic caused over the last two years, Vidas Plenas has continued education, gang prevention, and community relief by actively meeting the most basic needs. Food provisions distributed every two weeks helped families see the holistic nature of our vision.

Teachers took time to personally call each child regularly, helping them with homework, singing songs together, and even teaching younger children how to read over the phone. Psychologists reached out to encourage and counsel them, speaking with concerned family members, and involving the whole family in education and healthy communication. Throughout this process, opportunities have grown to share hope with more families. Families are more open, increasingly asking staff for help with individual and community struggles, and trust has deepened more than ever before.

Lemonade rolled out a new logo to reflect our relationship with the children and families of La Limonada—the heart of our support. The new design communicates the vibrant and youthful hearts we invest in daily, with the icon displaying rays of sunshine over a lemon slice.

Those who have had the privilege of visiting Guatemala may remember seeing nearly a dozen volcanoes during the takeoff or landing. The sight of those powerful, mysterious triangles rising out of the lush landscape in contrast to the bright blue sky often makes me wonder how something so beautiful could come from what was originally such a destructive force.

Suffering, loss, and uncertainty have become an increasing reality for many of us these days, yet we continue to believe in faith that *beauty is coming from ashes*.

***Isaiah 61:3: “To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”***

Serving Him together,



Charles “Chal” Knox  
Lemonade International  
Executive Director

## OUR MISSION

We exist to stand in solidarity with the local leaders of Vidas Plenas as they break the cycles of poverty, violence, and injustice through education, gang prevention, and community relief for the people of La Limonada in Guatemala City.

## OUR VISION

To see those most in need in La Limonada experience transformation and live full lives in Jesus.

## What We Do



### Education

Walking with the children and youth of La Limonada during their most vulnerable years through education and gang prevention, the team in Guatemala offered a bridge over the darkness that pulls young people into self-destruction and cyclical poverty. The holistic transformation of the five Academies and the opportunity of the Scholars program ushered children and youth through another year of discipleship, character development, and trauma healing.



### Community Relief

Providing relief for the urgent and unexpected needs of the most vulnerable in La Limonada, the community support team responded with compassion, presence, and tangible support. They offered benevolence and relief to many suffering from respiratory illness, diabetes, ulcer and bullet wounds, high blood pressure, and other health concerns.



### Rescue

Reaching out to youth who are deep in darkness, the team demonstrated love and hope. On the streets, youth must show they are tough and can't appear vulnerable. But many were eager to share their stories of pain with trusted mentors. Some gang members enrolled their kids in an academy, and others asked when an academy would be started in their neighborhood. One young man even made the decision to leave his gang, and our team helped him erase his profile from social media and relocate safely.



# The Neighborhoods

Holistic support is in reach for families and children in Guatemala City's poorest and most dangerous neighborhoods.

## Lourdes Uno Neighborhood

The Limon academy serves this neighborhood where many children are forced to live with distant relatives, have to drop out of school, and face extreme malnutrition and hunger. Food provisions and vitamins during the pandemic helped them remain strong, and families in La Limonada responded by generously sharing what they received with their neighbors.

## San Jose el Esfuerzo Neighborhood

In this neighborhood where the Lima academy is located, there have been many deaths due to problems related to gangs, revenge, and drugs. However, parents are open spiritually, and with your help we are serving them with holistic support.

## Lo de Reyes Neighborhood

The Naranja academy, which opened in 2020, serves this neighborhood where the muchachos abuse drugs and interact with various outside criminal groups. This has resulted in both deaths and injured families. However, families understand the value of love and are embracing attitudes of kindness toward one another.

## Lourdes Dos Neighborhood

The Mandarin Academy serves this neighborhood, where witchcraft is practiced to solve problems. Many muchachos begin drug use as teenagers, and very few live past 25 years of age. Psychologists actively called and visited families, and families responded by being more open, increasingly asking for help with individual and community struggles, and deepening trust more than ever before.

## 15 de Agosto Neighborhood

In this neighborhood there has been much family disintegration with several women being imprisoned due to extortion. There also are many health debts and lack of work. Yet families served by the Toronja academy are loyal, attending classes and sacrificing for the wellbeing of their children.





# Diana Overcomes Losing Her Vision

For more than two years, Guatemalan students have bravely battled the challenges of remote learning. But Diana was adapting how she learned even before the pandemic.

Diana was born blind in one eye. She didn't learn the extent of her vision impairment until a decade later, when she came to Vidas Plenas and was diagnosed with juvenile glaucoma. Because of Lemonade International sponsors, she received medical care and surgery. In spite of treatment, she completely lost her vision at age fifteen.

But Diana was determined to keep studying and learned Braille. "She's a great student, very disciplined," explains Tita Evertsz, Vidas Plenas' founder.

"When the Lima Academy was opened," says Diana, "they helped me in many areas: academically, emotionally, psychologically. They gave me the love I needed, the love I did not have, and endured my worst attitudes."

Diana's sponsor, Paul, remembers meeting Diana for the first time during a medical trip in 2017: "I recall seeing a young lady washing dishes in the academy and noticed how sweet her presence was. Then I realized she could not see. I inquired about her and was told the entire story—a simple cure in the US for glaucoma yet a sentence to be blind in Guatemala," says Paul.

Paul and his daughter, Blair, got to know Diana and her family. "It made me want to help those especially around my age like Diana," Blair says. "She made a major impact on me." Inspired by Diana, Blair has now joined a sorority that raises funds for children with vision impairment.

During the pandemic, Diana received her schoolwork via text message and her brothers read it out loud to her. She dreams of becoming a kindergarten teacher and serving the same neighborhoods she has grown up in. She will graduate with her degree next year and credits Vidas Plenas and her sponsors for helping her not give up on her studies.

"They trusted that even though I am blind I can be successful," Diana says. "I have been able to meet true friends and now I think differently about my disability than before. I thought that life was over and that I was going to be useless. I know that not seeing is not my impediment. I have many things that people who can see, don't have. I've developed other senses and I have more love of life."

Her sponsor, Paul, agrees. "We may never know the whys of life, but we sure know the whats—what we can do with what is given to us."







## Being Present in La Limonada through Sponsorship

*Guest post written by: Jenn Johnson Amatuzzo*

As the flight begins its descent into Guatemala City, I feel a wave of peace. I sense renewed life in a way I haven't since I last viewed the familiar trifecta of volcanoes. Everything about this small country captivates me, from the magical landscape views to the beauty of the people who inhabit it. Guatemala draws me back again and again.

And there's a barrio in the heart of the capital city that has particularly claimed a piece of my heart. While unsuspecting at first glance, La Limonada bursts with a thick sense of God's presence. It is a place containing deep brokenness but also unbounding hope.

All of my favorite memories include the kids laughing as they have fun or being silly with their friends. I treasure when they have opportunities to be kids in a neighborhood that, in many ways, forces them to grow up quickly. We've gotten to sing and dance together, do crafts, and talk about how much Jesus loves us. I've even accompanied the kids on field trips to a local amusement park and a children's science museum, getting to know the staff and teachers that attended with them. Building relationships with the kids and the staff in this way has been a gift that I continue to treasure.

I miss it. Like so many things from before Covid-19, time in Guatemala is something I pray will be feasible in the near future. Returning to La Limonada is something I long for once again.

I've sponsored a girl at Limon Academy for several years now. I look forward to every letter I get from my friend, Elena. I'm grateful the Lemonade staff has worked hard to make it possible for communication to continue with Elena through letters that transport me back, in spite of the pandemic.

While unable to travel to La Limonada, her letters have allowed me to continue to visit and be part of her community. Sponsorship has provided ongoing relationships and investment in this community I care deeply for in a time where everything else has come to a halt. Even when I can't be face to face with those in La Limonada, I have specific faces and names I can lift in prayer. I can call the Spirit of God to be present to and care for their needs in these difficult and isolating times.

Sponsorship has been a blessing to me in so many ways. I hope to soon return in person to Guatemala and La Limonada, but I will continue to be present there through my sponsorship relationship and lots of prayer.



# Community Relief



Through your support, Vidas Plenas packed and distributed over 12,000 bags of food provisions to 515 families. In 2021, these biweekly deliveries included rice, beans, milk, spaghetti, oatmeal, cooking oil and other important food staples. Since the pandemic began, together we have invested nearly \$160,000 in the food essentials program to nourish and strengthen struggling families.



To sustain this, we raised over \$30,000 through the “Brighter Days, Brighter Homes” campaign. We also faithfully reduced operating costs to remain consistent in our support of Vidas Plenas.

In addition to the Food Provision bags, together we distributed internet cards for children to study from home. We paid for utilities, like propane tanks for the cooking stoves used by many families in La Limonada. And for households facing severe economic distress, we provided bags of additional groceries and supplied personal hygiene items.





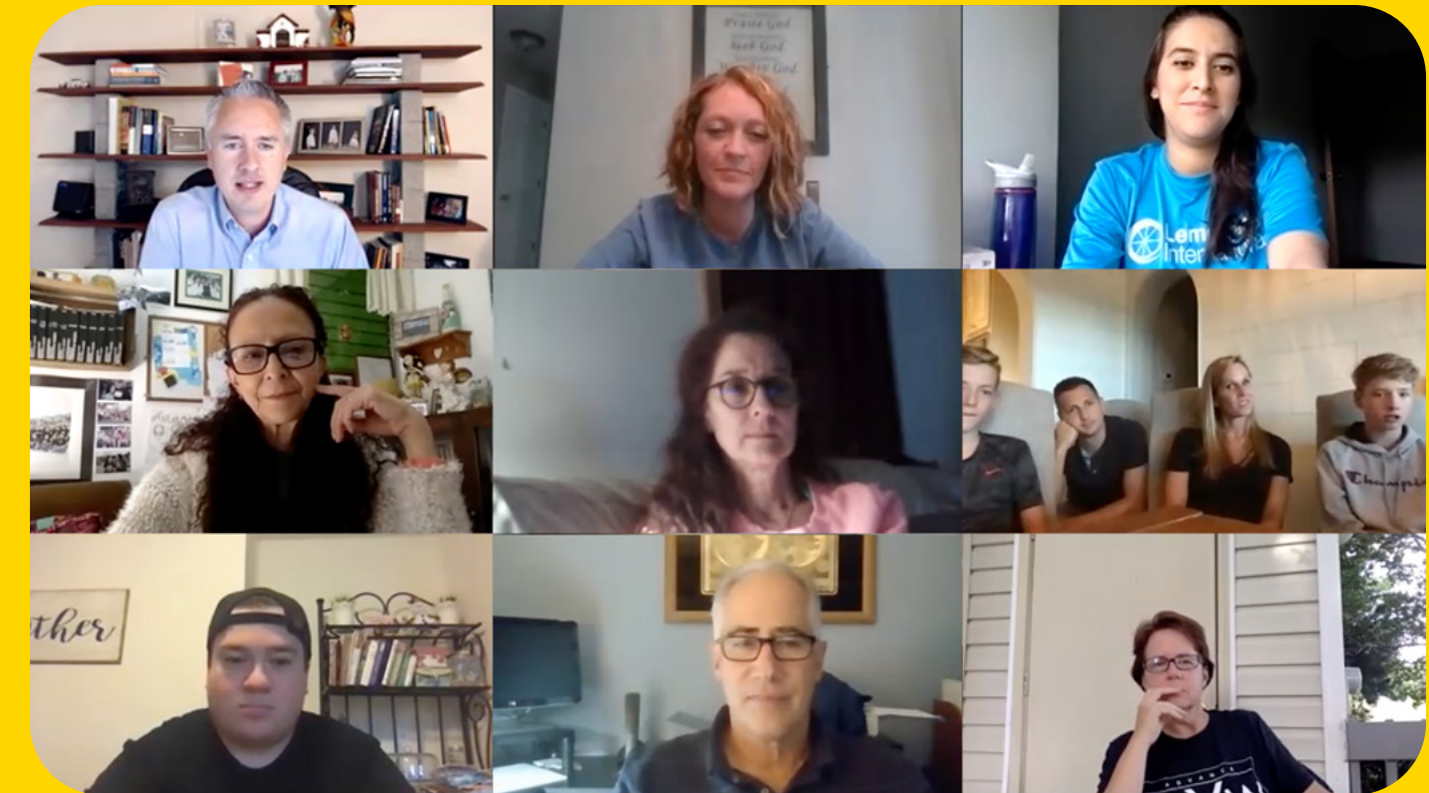
# Virtual Learning Trips

Deep relationships are the basis for our work in La Limonada and we want those relationships to include you. Whether or not you come in person to Guatemala, we are eager for you to experience the community and the team that serves there through a Virtual Learning Trip.

We offer you the opportunity to learn from and participate with the leaders of this special community, the people who live and serve in La Limonada. As we schedule your virtual experience, we will maximize opportunities for your group to interact with staff and community members. We invite you to listen to their stories and learn from their lives within La Limonada.

We seek to develop meaningful, ongoing relationships between church communities in the US and the people of La Limonada. We encourage both churches and individuals to schedule a Virtual Learning Trip. You will learn ways for groups to serve, how to sponsor children, and current ways to pray for the urgent needs of the community. You will also learn how to provide financial support to sustain and expand programs and to stand in solidarity with the ministry.

We invite you to schedule an exploratory virtual trip to meet the leaders and community members, and to see the ministry firsthand. Then, prayerfully discern how your church, school, business, or family can partner with us.



## Where is your La Limonada?

This is the most important question we ask every in-person team as they return from Guatemala—and now at the close of every Virtual Learning Trip. A short experience with the team of heroes serving in La Limonada challenges our perspectives and forces us out of our comfort zone. We challenge our supporters to make this experience practical by being present in every situation to serve the vulnerable and marginalized both globally and locally.



# 2021 Impact by the Numbers

44

Scholars continuing their education

45

Team Members serving in Guatemala

12,360

Meals provided through Community Relief

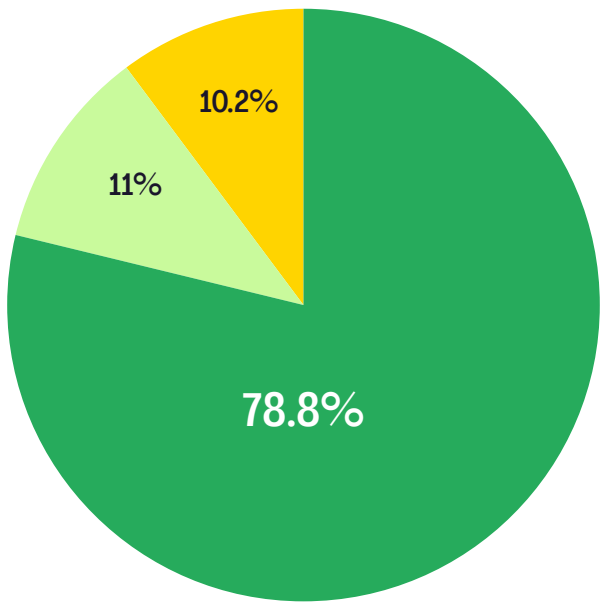
\$8,215,941.59

Total Donor Contributions Since 2008

2021 Revenue Distribution

Development	●	\$74,851.00
Management	●	\$80,804.00
Programming	●	\$579,304.00

Total \$734,959.00



## Give Christmas

Through our 2021 year-end giving campaign, you gave almost:

\$90,000

This provides shoes, school supplies, vitamins, and ongoing support for staff salaries to serve nearly 700 children and Scholars.





**“Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kissed each other.”**

**Psalms 85:10**

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