



May, 2016

## Maria Magdalena Martinez



Through the years the mission has ministered to hundreds of people in various capacities. One of these people is Maria Magdalena Martinez. Maria celebrated her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday last month. She has had an association with the mission since her mother, Blanca, started coming to Xela Community Church twelve years ago. Maria's mother doesn't have a job, so the only income the family has comes from begging, scheming, and "working the street".

Needless to say, as Maria rapidly approaches becoming a young woman we are more than a little concerned about what her future may bring. Attractive, poorly educated, unsophisticated girls like Maria are prime targets for human traffickers. They are told they can get a high paying job in another major Central American, Mexican, or U.S. city. Once they are separated from their homes and local support systems they are at the mercy of their captors.

Hopefully Maria will pass the sixth grade in October and graduate from primary school. She failed to pass last year and is retaking the grade again this year. If she passes she will essentially have two options. She can continue her education and go on to the seventh grade in secondary school, or leave school and try to find some type of work or vocational training. From a North American point of view it seems like a no-brainer that

she should continue on in to the seventh grade. As with most things when people are involved, the solution is not that simple. I'm sure we will have a significant influence on whatever Maria does. Please pray with us that we will have an extra measure of wisdom as we help Maria move forward in life.



Kathy and Maria in 2008 on a horsedrawn buggy ride.



Waiting in line at a dental clinic in Xela. The mission hosted a dental team from Tennessee in 2008 and they saved the folks who come to the mission



Maria still attends this school where she was going three years ago. A few weeks ago the director was removed from his position because he was embezzeling funds. Corruption is a major problem in the education system. Often success depends on your social status in the community and if you can afford to buy grades.



Although public education is free in Guatemala, kids have to provide their own uniforms, books, and supplies. Without help from the mission Maria would not be able to go to school.



A Sunday afternoon picnic at the Quetzal reserve.



Having fun with Edna at Lake Atitlan.



Together with your help and God's grace we are making a difference in Maria's life and others who come to the mission. Thank You!

In His Grip,

*David & Kathy*