

GENEROSITY KNOWS NO BORDERS

Gateway Senior Raises Thousands For Guatemalan School

(November 20, 2024) GEORGETOWN, TX —Rubber rain boots are a luxury for many little girls. Around Central Texas, they don't get pulled out of the closet very often. Not so for Rubi Eckert. Her boots have been required dress code since she was six years old. That's when she took her first trip to Guatemala.

"I really fell in love with the people," said the Georgetown native and senior at Gateway College Preparatory School. Even with a language barrier (the indigenous people speak Q'eqchi pronounced "Kek-chee"), Rubi could get by as a Spanish speaker. "I always liked to disconnect from the world of Wi-Fi and simply play with kids my age."

Her father works with a non-profit organization and has been making the trek to Guatemala since 1988. With a rainy season of up to six months, Rubi packed up her boots and saw firsthand the impact her father's projects had on the local community. Projects such as building clean water systems and dormitories.



A young Rubi Eckert on a visit to Guatemala.



Rubi making the walk to the village of Rio Blanco.

Earlier this year, she decided it was time to start her own project for the people of Rio Blanco. Having attended Gateway Prep since Kindergarten, Rubi is no stranger to watching a school grow up around her. Her chosen mission was a no-brainer: rebuild the local school.

"The village school was basically a hut with a concrete slab," Rubi said. "School is hard enough as it is, but when physical conditions are not ideal, it's even worse."



Rubi gets to enjoy a brand new high school annex this year at Gateway; next year, a brand new school for her friends in Guatemala.

So, Rubi set out with guidance from her father to collect donations to provide better shelter for her friends fifteen hundred miles away. She spoke to family, friends and churches, even developed a mailing list. As the President of Student Council and Secretary of the National Honor Society, Rubi has more than enough to keep her busy. But she has a heart for her friends so far away. In a matter of a few short months, she was able to raise \$15,000.

“Rubi goes above and beyond in all of her activities and for her fellow students,” said Coach Clifton Cryer, Gateway’s Student Council sponsor. “She always has ideas about ways to give back to our communities and she is genuine in everything she does.”

The new school should be complete in January and Rubi is excited about her next trip back to see the finished project. With a family heritage of service, it should surprise no one that her post-high school plans include majoring in International Business with a dream to operate a social enterprise non-profit.



Construction continues on a school made of cinder blocks and cements, a great improvement for the students in Rio Blanco.

“Rubi is not only one of the best human beings to play in our program, but one of the best people to come through our school,” said Gator Soccer Coach Jason Schram, Rubi’s coach for many years. “Raising money to build a school is just the tip of the iceberg for what I believe she will accomplish.”

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About Orenda Education

Orenda Education is the sponsoring entity for Orenda Charter School District, an “open-enrollment charter school district.” Fueled by educators and parents passionate about school choice, Orenda Charter School District operates four Central Texas campuses serving 2,000 students, providing innovative instructional methods to help students reach their academic and human potential. For more information, visit orendaeducation.org.