

# COVID-19 Special Double Edition

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# NEWSLETTER Cocal GRACIAS



## CONTENTS:

<i>Cocal News</i>	1,8
<i>Stranded in the Capi-</i>	1,7
<i>Juan's testimonies</i>	2
<i>Tesimonies</i>	3-4
<i>Mission Family</i>	6

## COCAL NEWS! Pages 1,8

Finally, a Newsletter! COVID-19 detained our missionary family in Arizona, but it has not put the ministry on hold. During this COVID time, we have been very active! From the beginning of the crisis, our sewing teacher and a few others have been making masks for people to wear and distributing them for free. Our MLV staff has stayed in close contact with the help of ZOOM, meeting weekly for bible study and to pray for one another. The staff have made short bible study videos and worship videos that are sent out bi-weekly to the student body for encouragement. Cesia and Brian have continued English classes, meeting with students

online and making videos for them. They are now three months into the semester and about to finish. We have some really good students in the classes who have made a huge sacrifice to connect and continue their studies over this new medium. Mario, our tool crib manager and artist, has been painting a new mural in MLV. He, Will, and Brayan have fixed up the floors in the workshops, built shelves for the shops and the sewing class, and are currently working on our master project to build a homemade elevator to give handicapped access to our second level. They have the car built, and ready. Will has engineered some safety breaks like the original Otis elevator in 1853.

This week they will purchase some wheels for the track and start safety tests on it before installation! It really is a work of engineering and craftsmanship and we are so impressed with them!

As many of you may know the Quarantine in Honduras has been brutal with 24 hour curfews that only allow people to circulate once ever ten days. No one is allowed to work, and most places have been shut down. People have not worked for three months. Most businesses sent their employees home without compensation, and there is no unemployment help by the Honduran govern-



**Mahogany**

## Stranded in the Capital! - by Mahogany Fox Pages 1, 7, 8

Hi, My name is Waleska. You might know me. My teacher calls me Fox or Mahogany. My family and I are trying to immigrate to Canada where my step-father lives. We have been in the process a long time and this year we needed to go to the embassy in Tegucigalpa to turn in papers. My mom, my sister, and I went. My brother stayed home in Puerto Cortes. I do not like Tegucigalpa. I have an aunt and uncle that live there, and a grandmother. I should tell you about my grandma because she gave my mom in adoption and when my mom was fifteen years old, she appeared. The relationship be-

tween my mom and her biological mom did not exist. My adopted grandmother was an excellent mom and when my biological grandma appeared, they had problems. My grandma never loved us, but we accepted it and now we can have a conversation with her. We arrived in Tegucigalpa March 3, 2020. My aunt and uncle let us stay at their house. It was small, but we had no choice. The hard thing in Tegucigalpa is the water (The water is rationed to different sections of the city during the week and people must collect it in cisterns.) and my aunt and uncle

did not have enough. Sunday, we thought it was the last days there. We went out with my aunt and uncle, and then quarantine started. We could not go home. Two weeks later, my biological grandma who lives with my aunt Judith invited us to her house. At the beginning we thought it would be great because my grandma's house is big, nice, and comfortable. I do not know my grandma well, even though we share the same date of birthday. She lives far from me. We went to the house with good vibes. In Tegucigalpa the quarantine is really strict. You cannot go outside the house. The first week was

good and I was happy to see my Aunt Judith. Then, we started to know her, and she was not so cute as we imagined. She lives like a military and likes to humiliate people. We began to not feel welcome. One day when the water car came, my aunt wanted my mom to buy water, but my mom did not have enough money. My mom said, "I cannot today." My aunt acted out and she yelled, "You do not have nothing! You are nothing. I do not want you here. You are poor..." She said too many words. I could see my mom's tears, and I felt terrible. The time passed by like a turtle.



## Pastor Juan's Testimonies

In 2015, Cocal Gracias helped us install electricity in Las Flores. At that time, Brian and I prayed for the electric project, thinking we would need \$2000. The community decided to save \$1000 between all the houses. Brian mentioned the need in an email and before we knew it, there was \$11,000 donated to Cocal Gracias! We didn't know it at the time, but after we got the project surveyed and bid on, the municipality said they would do it for \$12,000. We had all the funds the day they told us. We installed 2 Km of telephone poles and wire and the community for the first time ever, received electricity! A while back, a man came from another neighborhood on the other side of Las Flores with 14 houses that still have yet to receive electric service. He wanted me to help install electricity. I told him, "I don't know anything about electricity. In fact, I am scared to touch electric cables. "Then how did you install electricity in Las Flores?" He asked. I told him, "Well, that wasn't me. The one who installed electricity in Las Flores is named God. He can install electricity for you. We can talk to him." I asked them how much money they had for the project. They said, nothing. I said, "That is where we will start then. We will start to save and pray." At the same time in March, we began to dig and open the holes for posts." We have dug all the holes in this time, and received offerings from the community members, their families and neighbors. The distance is almost the same as in 2015, 2 km. We were able, with prayer and diligence, to connect service up to a transformer, but then COVID-19 started, and no one has been able to work. We are only four posts shy of reaching the village. We still need the last part of the cable, and the connections to each house. We still need \$1,200 to finish. It grieves me to see this community that has worked so hard and come so far not reach their goal. The houses are still dark, but God gave electricity to Las Flores and we believe he will give it to us here. These families have been living with candlelight for over 35 years. It has been difficult to even provide them with needed food because without a fridge, it gets ruined. Nothing keeps for the following day. We have done all we can and are so close. Please help us.

Another thing that happened to me while I have been working to help the community is I got really sick with a kidney infection. My body ached and I felt really bad. One day I told Brian about the infection and he said, "Let's pray. " He prayed over the phone, and God worked the miracle. And I was healed. A few days later, I was visiting a brother from the church, and I sat in his hammock. Suddenly, the lasso broke and I fell right on my tailbone on the ground. Over the next week the pain from the tailbone got worse and worse. It was like everything I did hurt it. I couldn't ride my motorcycle and I couldn't walk. I was reduced to sitting in my hammock. I told Brian that I was in bad shape again. I told him, "God healed my kidneys the other day when we prayed, but I fell out of a hammock and I can't stand the pain." Brian said, "Let's pray again." While he was praying, I had the feeling I should push on the spot that hurt. I pushed on it with a finger and it was excruciating, but I held my finger there and as he prayed the pain went down and down. I pushed harder as I thought I should and when we finished, I had no more pain. I am so thankful to God because he always heals me and grateful to Brian who always prays with me. The last thing I am so grateful to God for is Cocal Gracias who has supported us with food during this time. In Agua Caliente and in Las Flores, we have been able to give food to all the families thanks to Cocal. No one has been able to work and there are many families with nothing to eat. But thanks to God and the Cocal offerings, we have been able to help. Thank you so much Cocal Gracias, and may God continue blessing you. We always pray for you.—Pastor Juan Garza, Agua Caliente

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Hello, my name is Carlos Alberto Gomez Vargas. This epidemic of COVID -19 has really affected us because we have been on curfew in our houses. No one is allowed to work. It really affects me because I have a little three year old boy and my wife who depend on me. During this time we have been really bad because we haven't had any money to buy food with. We received some food that they handed out and that was good. Thank you. When we have food we eat, and when it is gone we starve because no one can leave their home. I really hope this quarantine ends soon and I can find work. -Carlos Vargas

## From The Ministry

Hi, My name is Eva Molina. I am a student in MLV in first level English. For me being a student has been a beautiful and pleasing new opportunity. Even though we are in a crisis with the pandemic in our country, we haven't needed to suspend classes because we receive them online virtually. I feel like I have learned a lot. I feel like I have taken advantage of this time. It is all a new experience for me and I feel satisfied by the effort that our teacher has made and his manner of sharing his knowledge with us. God bless my teacher. He has my admiration and respect. With the same enthusiasm I hope to advance to the second level. I would like to motivate others to decide to learn English in MLV. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and testimony. - Eva First level English



**Eva Molina**

My name is Ruth Bueso. I study English first level in Ministerio La Voz. A few weeks ago, I was feeling bad. My stomach hurt and I wanted to throw up. I was too sick to eat lunch. I had decided not to receive my class and just lay down and sleep, because my body was shaking. When I went to my room, they sent me the link to log into the class. I decided to connect. My teacher asked me how I was and I told him that I was sick. I told him what I had and he and my classmates prayed for me right then and there. In the moment after the prayer, I felt the same, but as the class progressed I felt better and when they asked me at the end of class how I felt, I didn't have anything. I was able to eat lunch and felt fine. The Lord says in his word, Again I tell you if two of you agree on anything on earth and ask for it, it will be done by my father in heaven. I firmly believe that the Lord heard our prayer.

With the pandemic, we have had our classes online. They have helped me a lot and I know I will advance with the help of God. It's like my teacher says: We all are in the

ministry with a purpose. I am so happy to be a part of the family in MLV. I hope someday soon we can return to classes in person. - Ruth, First level Eng.



**Ruth**

My name is Kimberly Menjivar and I am thankful to God for putting me and my family's path in the ministry. I like to think that a year before we came to Col.

Esperanza, God was already working in the place for us. He was putting in a place that would change me, and that would change others. It has changed everything we are and everything we do.

Thanks to God my children are also part of the ministry. They have such little time, yet I know they are learning a lot, especially they have learned who God is and how much he loves them. MLV to me is like a small city. Many people wake up and have to drive

to work, manage their time, drive to their studies, and then they go to church and then drive again to another place. I give thanks to God that my work, studies, and church are all in this one place. I love my work and I like to do it, because it allows me to do many things, new things. I learn and get to teach others. I loved I can learn English and one day talk with all the people who visit us. They have transformed our lives along with the Ministry. I love that I have a church and a place where the Lord always is and when we are in service, all the attention is on Him. There is so much more, but I give thanks to MLV and all the people who support it. May God bless the ministry to grow in influence and may he bless you. -Kimberly



**Kimberly**

## Stranded in the Capital! Cont.

Other days were fast. We could not go out anywhere. My routine was to wake up and go to the patio and feed a cat and her babies that I found and made friends with. I was depressed, and my hair was falling out. When my teacher Brian called me or wrote to me, it helped me, because it is not easy that your own family do not love you.

My uncle called my mom. He told us that he had a friend on

the road who would pick us up. My mom said, "Prepare everything. We will leave." I was happy. The problem was the police on the road too. If they did not believe us, or wanted to take us, we can go to jail. No one is to be outside. They stopped us three times, but thanks God we made it to my uncle's house. My aunt Ilsy received us really good.

We started to search how to

return home. We wrote the police, military police, and COPECO employees. Then an old friend of my mom who drives a trailer offered to help us. He said we had to wait his call. We waited one week and I was counting the days, minutes, and seconds. He finally called. He would smuggle us to Puerto Cortes in his truck. He said, "We will travel tomorrow at 4:00a.m." We needed to meet him at a mall in Tegucigalpa, at 4 a.m. to not

be seen by the police. This night I could not sleep. I was thinking about the danger. Thursday, April 30, 2020 we woke up early and were praying when my uncle drove us to the mall. We could not be able to explain the situation to the police if they saw us. We did not find any police on the road. At the mall we were scared because we had to wait for my mom's friend. We saw two "military" men on a motorcycle and were nervous, but realized they were not military, but



Thanks to many donors, we purchased food for needy families in Honduras. Funds were given to Kimberly in MLV, Pastor Juan in Agua Caliente, and six other pastors in Puerto Cortes and San Pedro Sula, who bought food and distributed it.

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION TESTIMONIES! Distributors and recipients

We are so grateful for the food that was sent by Cocal Gracias. We were able to help many families. We are living through a very difficult time. Many people have not worked in two months. There are many families without income and with children, who are struggling just to eat. These food donations have been a huge help! Many of the people were overcome with emotion when we showed up with food. Some wore big smiles and others began to cry. One family that received food was very thankful. The mother and the son are victims of HIV. The mother has an older son in the states that normally sends her money and supports her, but because of the pandemic, he has been unable to work. He has not sent money and the family did not have food. It was during this time that we arrived. We have so much need in our communities. My prayer is that God will multiply blessings for your families, ministries, and country. -Pastor Hector

We give thanks to God for this marvelous offering we have received. God has never abandoned us and he has sent this food at just the right time. We were able to show up and bless many families that were near the end of their provisions. Most of the members of our own church are people who



Nepitali

normally work for a day wage. They don't have salaries, but work and get paid. They have not worked in months now. It was amazing to be able to show up and see the reality of their necessity, and have a blessing in our hands to give them. One only had a pound of sugar on the shelf and we showed up. Thanks be to Cocal Gracias, may they be blessed by God for these donations. We pray for them and all who helped give. May God bless you as we pray for your lives. God bless, -Pastor Nepitali

I am Gerson Amaya. I live in Las Flores village. I want to say thank you to Cocal Gracias, because I am one of all the families that was blessed by you with food. I have received food three times now. The company where I work laid me off without any

pay. I haven't worked in three months. I started to run out of food, but thanks to COCAL GRACIAS my family and I have enough to eat. THANK YOU

Hi Cocal Gracias, may God bless you. I am writing you because I want to express my gratitude for blessing us, especially my family. We are not working right now because of the crisis. The provision you sent me is a big provision and a big help! It had everything we needed inside of it to make meals and cook. It even had chicken! I'm sure you don't know, but we haven't had chicken in a long time because we cannot afford it. I told Pastor Juan that I had even forgotten what chicken tasted like. During this time, the municipality brought food to the village, but nothing like this provision! So, thank you! I am so thankful to God and to Cocal Gracias. We have been truly blessed with these provisions. -Daniel Monje

Hi my name is Erick Javier Rivera. I am 24 years old. My son is almost 2. We live with my girlfriend, Ana's parents. Before COVID 19 came to Honduras I was working as a

welder. Thanks to MLV and the opportunities it gives, I studied and graduated, and got a job building roofs. Since graduating, I have been able to provide for my family. But since the pandemic started, I have not been able to work. Honduras is a poor country and worse during the quarantine. Since no one has been able to work, there is almost nothing to eat. We are very thankful with Brian and Rina and all the Americans because thanks to all of you, we have had enough to eat. You have provided food for our family this whole time. Thank you for worrying about our country and us. May God bless you always. My family and I are so thankful. -Erick Rivera

Hello, I would like to tell you my story of helping my father give out food, thanks to the generosity of COCAL GRACIAS. I am so happy that Cocal Gracias decided to do this for us. It was a very special time to be able to give food and see the thankfulness in each face, because so many no longer had food in their houses. I remember when we got to Las Flores, an older lady started to cry real tears out of

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION TESTIMONIES! Distributors and recipients Continued...

thankfulness for God and Cocal Gracias. The woman lives alone and her village is so far up the mountain that none of the governmental help goes that far. As she cried, she really touched our hearts. May God bless you Cocal Gracias. – Samia Garza

**Hello everyone.** I am Rosa Castro, the sewing teacher in MLV. We have been in quarantine three months now. This time has not been easy for my family, because we have been holed up at home without being able to go anywhere. Instead of feeling relaxed, I feel tense and anxious. I've had many headaches and I think it is because of being trapped. It has been hard. My husband worked in the same factory most of his life, and in the first few weeks of this epidemic, they deposited a check. It was for his vacation time, and did not include his normal salary. After that, they sent us a letter of suspension without pay. This was the worst for me, because I immediately thought, "What are we going to eat?" But the Lord has also showed me that we must trust in Him. For God, nothing is impossible and he never abandons his children. I would like to say thank you to Brian, my boss in MLV, who has never stopped paying us. I want to let you all know that this has been a huge blessing and a ton of help to me and my family. I am impressed with God because during this time we have never lacked. In the first weeks, I remember that God moved my heart to help a neighbor. I thought the neighbor had nothing to eat, because they were not working and they also had a newborn baby. One morning, a young man was selling fish he had caught. I bought 4 pounds and took 2 pounds to the neighbor. I returned home, but with a burden in my heart that



**Rosa and Jorge**

did not abate. I realized that something more needed to be done. I decided to share with the neighbor a little of whatever food I had. I gave him 3 pounds of everything I had and I said to the Lord, "Lord, now you provide!" These words were so powerful. A week later, Brian sent money to Kimberly, the secretary at MLV, and she brought us a bag of provisions! I was so surprised because everything I had given to my neighbor, God returned to me now multiplied. Wow, God is marvelous and will not be outdone. About two weeks later, Brian and Kimberly gave us another big bag of provisions. This bag I shared with another neighbor that God put on my heart and she was so happy! God has provided daily for us. Thank you Brian and Cocal Gracias for the salary you have given us even without working. It has been a huge blessing and help. Thank you and may God bless you. – Rosa

**My name is Denis.** I am the mechanic teacher in MLV. I have worked there for two years. My time in MLV has been one of big changes. I am a teacher, but I have learned so much about how to live and follow Jesus. The Ruark family has been a huge blessing for this place. I think all of us appreciate the friendship and brotherhood we have with Brian. He is a brother in Christ who encourages us and pushes us forward. Brian has always been by our side in difficult times. Last year he was with us when I was operated on to take my appendix out. I have a wife, Maria-

na, and two kids, Adiel and Sofia. Since the quarantine started, all business have closed. Companies closed their doors and sent employees home without pay. I was one of them. The government gave us a two week total curfew. Since then, we continue closed up in our houses, only allowed to circulate once every ten days according to our I.D. number. I worried and fretted mostly over how I would pay rent. My wife and I asked ourselves, what would we do if I wasn't working? I kept waiting to hear from my boss at the mechanic shop, but he never called. He never asked how we were, if we were ok. I finally got ahold of him and he told me to come to the shop. When I got there he gave me a few bucks. It would never cover what I needed because we still pay rent, electricity, water, and we have to eat. Besides that, we owe money and Honduras did not allow our debts to postpone. The truth is, this is a very difficult time. As a father and provider, I felt impotent. With my wife and kids, we prayed together and asked God to help us and help all of humanity because he upholds and sustains us. The experience of being home and having time with my family has been good. We have times when we get scared about everything that is happening, and times when we are happy with having each other. When they opened the curfew and let us circulate by number, I thought, what for? I got no money. What am I going to buy for my family? Thankfully, I also work in a ministry, MLV. I do not make the money I make at my full-time job, but they have never stopped paying us. Even though I cannot give mechanic classes, they have sent my salary, and sent us bags of food. The help they have given has always come just in time and with it we have made it this far. God has

never left us. My family and I are very grateful to MLV and to Cocal Gracias for the unconditional support you have given us. And thank you to everyone who makes it possible. Only people who have the love of Christ in their hearts could help without expecting anything in return. I'll say goodbye now, but always with a thankful heart. – Denis Fuentes

**Hi, my name is Brayan Avilez.** It was my first time to to distribute food and I was nervous and a little scared. I was scared because the news had shown other places that tried to distribute food, and the people mobbed the car. They climbed up onto it, trying to grab the food themselves. The people were desperate and uncontrollable. When Kimberly told us to help distribute food, I thought, "That could be me!" I may get mobbed and what would I do in a situation like that? My second thought was, "but God is with me and he will protect me."

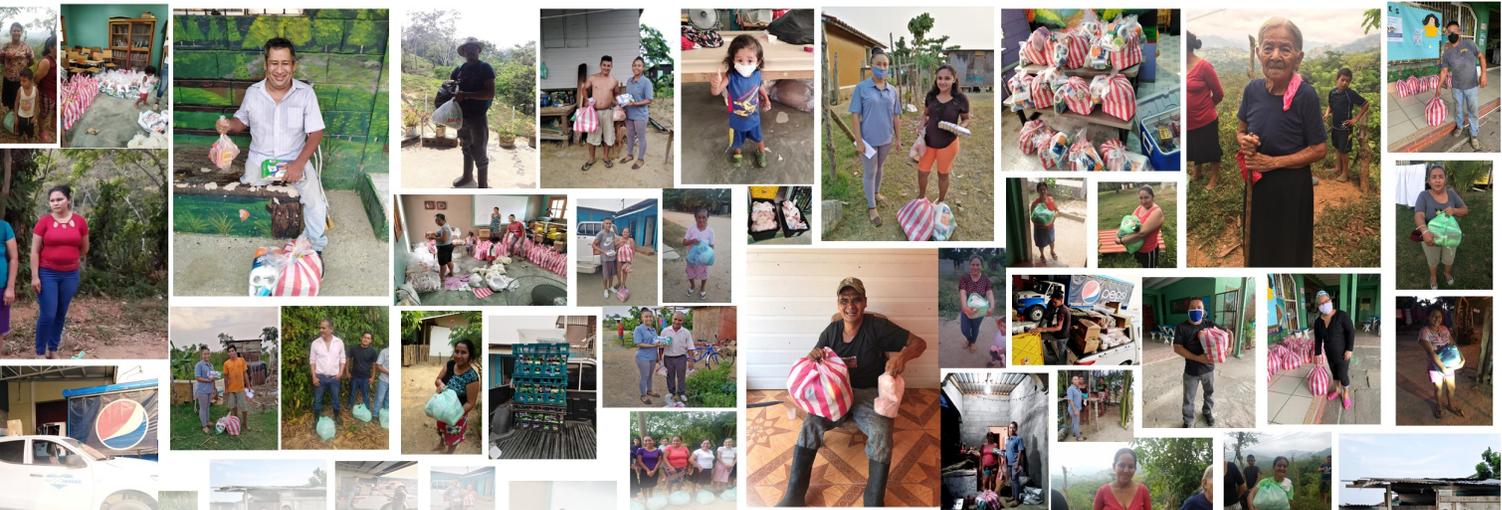
When we went to help Kimberly, it was nothing like I expected. In fact, it was the exact opposite! The people were so kind. They asked for food and we went to their house to leave it. I felt really good when the people received the food and I could see their happiness and joy. It filled me with joy to be the one giving the gifts. There were several families that cried when they received the food. There were families that that said God had answered their prayers, because they were not working. I saw how God took care of them through us. To be a part of it made me feel good about helping. It was a great experience and something that I am happy I did. – Brayan Aviles



# COVID-19

# LOV

**We reached our goal! \$14,500 worth of food distribution. We have 100 families in need. Thank you!**



# Can't Stop WE

500 were raised in May for  
delivered food to over 500  
Thank you Cocal Gracias!



## Cocal News Cont...

ment. Many people are day workers in construction or in stores or with street sales, and have not been allowed to work. Back in April, Cocal Gracias did two campaigns, to raise money to provide food donations to needy families. We did the first campaign and exactly what we budgeted was what we received. Then the Lord said, let's help 500 families! We did another campaign, twice as large on the tail end of the first one, and again raised beyond our goal! Our team and 6 pastors have since purchased thousands of pounds of food and distributed to over 500 families! Many of these funds came from new donors, and much came from our Cocal family. We are so excited to see new people get involved in sharing love! You know who you are and we thank you! This newsletter is a special thank you to all of you and our regular supporters who make our work possible. Thank you for loving Honduras.

## Stranded Cont...

people dressed like military on a normal motorcycle. Then we saw the black truck. We hid in the back of the man's cabin. I was tired, but I could not sleep. I was too excited. I had never traveled in a semi before. We needed to be careful. It seemed like an impossible mission because police were everywhere. We passed so many check points. Every time we saw the police we had to hide in the back. It was like a game. We made it to Puerto Cortes, and had to wait until night when my brother could come and pick us up at a gas station. We were nervous about the police here too, but they did not stop us. We made it home, thanks to God.

I learned a few things in this whole experience. Family is the people who love you, like my adopted grandma's family. I need to appreciate every moment, every hug. Life is one and we need to live it without fear. I feel stronger now after all I have seen. I am a human who makes mistakes, but God is always teaching me. -Waleska Fox Eng, Student Level 4

## Mission Family News

I must say, we are so thankful for the way the Lord has taken care of us in this time. We had originally planned to return to Honduras March 15, the day after my brother's wedding. At the time, COVID was just starting but airlines were already changing flight tickets at no cost. Our mission team that was due to come March 18<sup>th</sup> was canceled. All of us had some kind of cold, cough, or runny nose and Rina felt like we should change the flight for a week later and get over whatever we had. When we did, we found out that Honduras had closed their borders at the time we would have been arriving in Miami International for a connection flight that wasn't going to happen. We stayed a few weeks in San Diego at my brother's house, and then came to Tucson. This time has been a blessing for us. We hear about the struggle and difficulties in

Honduras and it is really hard. We are so thankful not to be in that situation and to be here. We also see that God's providence was on us, because by being here, we have been able to do the online classes, which we would not have done being in Honduras. We also were able to do the food campaigns. Danny was able to get vaccinated here, while vaccines in Honduras have been postponed and now there are additional outbreaks from those diseases. Angie and Nathanael have loved being here. They have a play kitchen that we found abandoned and took home. The hardest part for us is not having Braylan and Heidy with us at this time. They miss us too, and we hope to be reunited soon. Thankfully we can call and video chat. Pray for us to know when the right time to go home is.

## Needs and Opportunities

**\*DONATIONS:** \$1200 to install electricity. Pg. 2

**\*COCAL PARTNERS :** Please visit [www.cocalgracias.org/donate](http://www.cocalgracias.org/donate)

**For more needs visit:** [www.cocalgracias.org/help-us](http://www.cocalgracias.org/help-us)

## Cocal GRACIAS



The Ruarks

Visit the website!

[www.cocalgracias.org](http://www.cocalgracias.org)

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*Cocal Gracias is a non-profit organization organized in Maryland under the 501(c)3 chapter of the federal tax code, with Nazarene Compassionate Ministry Status. Our mission is to serve and meet needs in Honduras, sharing with the people the good news of Jesus Christ. We do this through our technical school, Ministerio La Voz, where we teach viable trades and skills in areas such as, English, Welding, Auto Mechanics, Sewing, and Computers. We don't want to just give fish, but teach men and women how to fish. The vision is one of transformation. With God's help, we will transform Puerto Cortes, winning it for the kingdom and to be a light on all of Honduras, Central America, and beyond. It is a big task, but we believe in a big God and we have seen his hand with us. Join with us in praying for the children, the youth, and all the leaders of tomorrow in Honduras, that they will grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in the knowledge of who they are in him and who they are meant to be.*

