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Holland nonprofit Hope For Kids Mexico supports education for children in border town

Residents of both Holland and Ciudad Miguel Alemán in Mexico are united in a mission to change lives and bring hope to the children of Ciudad Miguel Alemán.

Ciudad Miguel Alemán, located in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, is a border town. A 10-minute trip over the Rio Grande is all it takes to get to the nearby city of Roma, Texas. Because of this close proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border, Ciudad Miguel Alemán is a hotbed for drug trafficking and cartel activity and suffers from high rates of poverty.

Many young people, feeling they lack options, get involved with the cartels in order to make a living and are often victims of the violence.

“We’re losing a generation of young people,” said Pastor Ramón Solís of Ciudad Miguel Alemán’s Iglesia Templo Belen (House of Bread Church).

Solís and fellow pastor David Martinez had a vision of a better life for the people there. Their hope was to create a school where children could receive a quality Christian education and learn English, which would create more opportunities for them. For over 20 years, they prayed and sought a way to make their vision a reality.

Help came from Michigan. Nearly 10 years ago, Holland residents Ron and Jane Brouwer were on a mission trip to the general area of Ciudad Miguel Alemán and learned about the project. The Brouwers said the passion behind the project resonated with them.

“We talked it over with a few individuals and felt we needed to do something,” Ron said.

The school, dubbed Eagle College, started having classes in Templo Belen in August 2007 and served preschool through sixth grade. A year later, the Brouwers and other West Michigan Christians registered the nonprofit organization Hope For Kids Mexico in order to support the school. Jane said knowing they have friends in Michigan broadens the children’s horizons.

“They have a choice, there’s options, they have to think outside their walls,” she said.

It quickly became clear that the school would need more room. About 38 students had registered for classes in Eagle College’s first year, but 75 ended up attending there. Classrooms were added onto the church and the search began to find a site for a new school building. By the time property for the building was purchased in 2009, Eagle College had 175 students enrolled.

“(Ramón Solís) doesn’t want to turn any kids away,” said Caroline Werner, teacher and director of English at Eagle College.

Groundbreaking for the new school began in 2010. Local people were hired to complete the construction. [Hope for Kids Mexico](#) also organized groups from Michigan and Indiana who went down and helped. Construction was completed in 2014 and the new school year started in the new building. Seventh grade was added this year and they are expanding to eighth grade next year.

Since it started, those involved in the Eagle College project have noticed how much the kids of Ciudad Miguel Alemán have come to love and trust the school.

In 2010, a cartel war broke out around Ciudad Miguel Alemán. Many people either kept their children at home or fled the city and attendance at Eagle College dropped dramatically. The Brouwers visited for six weeks during that year and 500 people lost their lives in those six weeks alone.

However, Ron says, it’s different now. When violence breaks out, the children ask their parents to let them go to school instead of keeping them at home.

“It takes their mind off the issues and the violence in the city,” Ron said.

The parents appreciate the school as well. Many parents take an interest in the school and what their children are learning. Solís said they want their children to have an education and a better life.

“The school is becoming a way for families to come together and grow together,” he said.

The faculty of Eagle College hope educating the children will make them future leaders in the community and the area as a whole will improve.

“A lot of these kids will be hoping to stay in this community and look for jobs,” Werner said.

Another future goal is to expand Eagle College to cover high school. Solís and his wife Leticia had to send their daughter Lucero, who graduates this year, to



Two boys read in their classroom at Eagle College. Contributed

Holland Christian to get the high school education they wanted for her.

Ron said the kids welcome all expansions because they want to stay at Eagle College for their entire education.

“During construction, they kept asking me, ‘When are you going to finish the new school?,’” he said. “When I asked them why it was important, they said ‘Because this is where I learned about Jesus.’”

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