



A Season of Quiet Transformation



This May's reflection draws us into what we witnessed throughout April: "The fruit of surrender is peace and presence." During Easter — or Semana Santa — in Guatemala, surrender is not something spoken about lightly. It is seen in the quiet devotion of processions, in the intentional slowing of life, and in the willingness to sit with both sorrow and hope. It feels different than what many of us are used to in the United States, where Easter can often pass quickly, marked more by celebration than reflection. Here, it invites a deeper pause — a laying down before a rising.

We hope to see that same posture take shape in the lives of those in our community. Not as something forced or assumed, but as something that can grow over time — a gradual releasing of fear, of control, of what has been carried for far too long. And in that releasing, perhaps something begins to open — space for presence, for being seen, for being known, and for being loved.

Peace does not arrive with force. It grows quietly where surrender has made room for it. We are grateful to be part of a community where this kind of transformation is possible, even if it unfolds slowly and often unseen.

Thank you for being part of this with us.

With gratitude,

Eugene Gicheru

Dream Center Updates

from Julio Galindo & Jemima Barrera

Book Day: Opening New Worlds

During May, we celebrated the Book Day, a day filled with imagination, creativity, and discovery. For our students, this was more than a themed activity — it was an invitation into a different kind of world. A world where stories are not just read, but experienced. Where characters are not distant, but felt. Where imagination is not limited by surroundings.



This year, the celebration became even more meaningful as we received a visit from an author whose book our students are currently reading. Meeting someone who has written a story — someone real, someone within reach — helped bridge the gap between reading and creating. It made the idea of authorship feel possible. And for one of our students, that possibility is already taking shape. He is writing his own book — a story he will enter into a competition in the upcoming months.



For many of our students, books were not always accessible. Before GCO, there was little to no access to books in the community. Today, that is beginning to change.

Through the generosity and vision of Beverly White, and the support of many others who have donated books, our students now have access to a growing library — the Beverly White Library.

A space filled with stories.

A space where curiosity is welcomed.

A space where a child can sit, open a book, and begin to imagine something beyond what they have known.



We have also started a reading club, where students gather to read together, share ideas, and grow in their love for stories. But what has been most meaningful is what happens beyond those moments. Every chance they get, students choose to come, sit, and read. What once felt distant is now something they actively seek.

Many of them are also beginning to take books home — carrying stories with them into their daily lives, into their homes, and into spaces where books were not present before.

Salad Day



Another special moment this month was Salad Day.

For many of our students, this was more than just a fun activity — it was an opportunity to experience fresh, healthy food in a new way. Together, they prepared their own salads, learned about nutrition, and shared a meal they created with their own hands.

But there was a deeper reason behind this day, many of our students come from families who grow vegetables — broccoli, peas, and other crops — yet they rarely eat them. Not because they don't value them, but because access works differently. What is grown is often sold to generate income, allowing families to buy staples like corn, which remains the foundation of their daily meals.

As a result, it is not uncommon for a student to have helped harvest broccoli, yet never tasted it. Or to have picked peas, but never sat down to eat them. Salad Day was an invitation to reconnect with what is already in their hands — to learn not only how to grow food, but how to prepare it, enjoy it, and understand its value for their own health.

In a community where access to balanced meals is often limited, moments like this matter deeply. They are simple, but they begin to shape habits, awareness, and dignity. They remind students that nourishment is not only about filling a need, but about caring for themselves because caring for the body is part of restoring the whole person.

In rural Guatemala, agriculture is a central part of daily life. Families often depend on farming not only as a source of food, but as their primary form of work. From a young age, children frequently help their families in the fields — planting, harvesting, carrying, and working long hours alongside adults. This work is physically demanding and often poorly paid, reflecting broader systemic challenges that limit opportunity and economic mobility.

It was with this understanding that we approached Salad Day — with respect. Respect for their reality, for their effort, and for the role food already plays in their lives. This was not about introducing something foreign, but about building on what is already part of their world, in a way that affirms their dignity and opens new possibilities.



10K: More Than A Race

This month, one of our students, Walder, ran his very first 10 Kilometers.

Last year, during our Independence Day celebrations at the school, we organized a simple race. It was meant to be fun — a moment of joy in the middle of the festivities. But something unexpected happened.

Walder didn't just win. He won easily. From that moment, we noticed something in him — a natural ability, a kind of talent that had never been named before. We told him that one day we would take him to run in a real race in the city and he believed us. He began to prepare with excitement.

Months later, we found a 10K race where more than 10,000 people would be participating. We decided to register him. Alongside Julio and Isaí — a volunteer from the Guate team that some of you may know — Walder would run his very first formal race. As we drove into the city, we asked him how many times he had been there before. He said maybe three or four times. And every time had been with GCO — for medical follow-ups. This would be different.



Walder arrived on Friday to be ready for the race on Saturday night. That day, we took some time to show him parts of the city — places he had never seen before. By 4 PM, we were getting ready.

We had modest expectations. For a first race, a time around 1 hour and 15 minutes would have been good. Anything below that would have been a great accomplishment. We lent him running clothes, but he chose to run in his hiking shoes. He said he felt comfortable in them — that he ran better that way. At 7 PM, the race began.

Walder started in the last corral — the group reserved for first-time runners but then, something incredible happened.

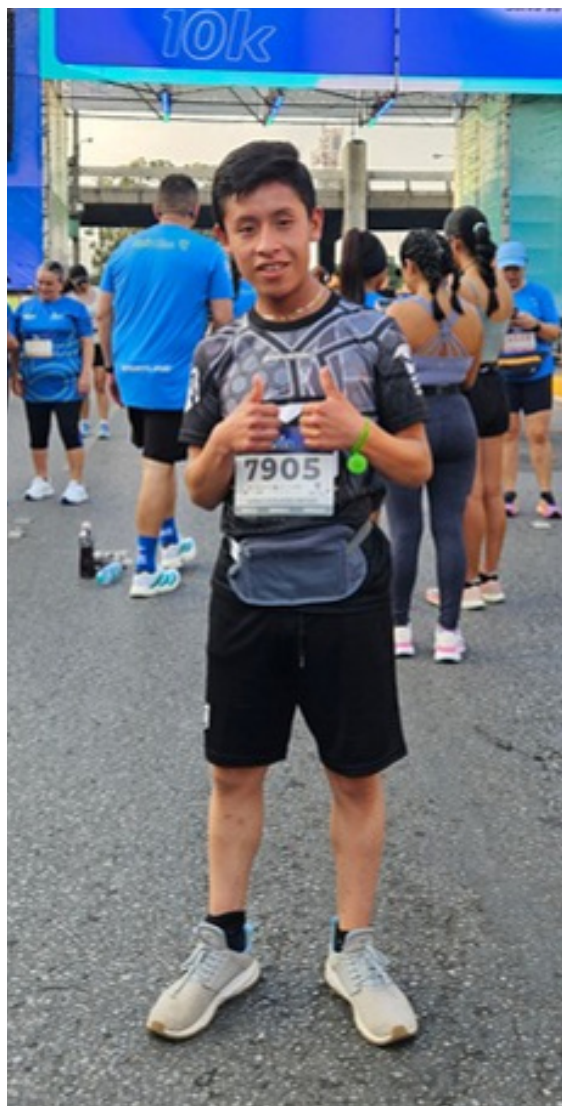


Against all expectations, Walder didn't just finish — he ran past them. He crossed the finish line in 48 minutes, placing 395th out of over 10,000 runners. In his very first race. In a race divided into five starting groups, anyone finishing under 49 minutes is considered part of the elite category.

Walder — a first-time runner, from a rural community, running in hiking shoes — placed among them.

He received his medal with a smile that said everything. Later, we celebrated him in front of his classmates. He stood there, proud. His family, too, is deeply proud and grateful. And already, he is training for his next 10K this May.

This is not only about a race. It is about what happens when a young person is seen. Moments like this give our students something powerful: a reason to dream, a reason to believe in themselves,



FINISHER

WJ

WALDER JOEL BUCH MARTIN 7905
Categoría Menores de 18 años Masculino
BLOQUE 5 GRIS

395 Posición oficial
00:48:02 Tiempo oficial

19 Posición en categoría	349 Posición en género	04m 48s / km Ritmo oficial
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Dream Center Spotlight



Reading Teacher

Heidy Marroquín

This month, we are excited to highlight Heidy, our Reading Teacher.

Originally from Guatemala City, Heidy is married and enjoys watching and listening to interviews, as well as reading and writing. She is also an author of published books read in Guatemala and across Latin America, bringing a unique perspective into her classroom. For Heidy, teaching at GCO is more than a job: "Through sharing life with the students in La Pila, I found a new purpose in life."

Through reading, she helps students not only build skills, but also expand their imagination and begin to see themselves as part of a larger story. We are truly grateful to have Heidy on our team — for her compassion, her excellence, and her deep love for both the work we do at GCO and the students we serve.



Looking ahead - walking together

As we continue into the coming months, we remain committed to walking alongside each student — not only in their education, but in their growth as whole individuals because what we are building goes beyond classrooms.

It is found in the moments where imagination begins to expand through a book. In the small but meaningful decisions to care for their bodies. In the discipline it takes to train, to persevere, and to finish what they start. From imagination, to nutrition, to perseverance — every piece matters. We have learned that transformation does not happen all at once. It grows slowly, often quietly, through consistent presence, care, and opportunity. And yet, within these small moments, something deeper is taking place.

If you would like to support this work during 2026 —whether by continuing or increasing your giving or by joining us for the first time—you can do so here: [Donate here](https://www.greatcommissionoutreach.org/donate)