



[onlyachild@aol.com](mailto:onlyachild@aol.com)

PO Box 990885 Boston, MA 02199

<http://www.onlyachild.org>

Spring 2019

To the many who have cared,

Giovaný's day officially begins between 6:15 and 6:30, as does the day of his house mates. Coming to life at dawn is not a gradual process in our home, for each of our residents quickly tackles whatever cleaning chore they have been assigned on any given week. It's their home and they work to care for it. As such, our house quickly transitions from the stillness of night to the low-key bustle characterizing early morning.

One young man sweeps and mops the floor of our dining room, another, our equally generous living room. The upstairs patio, hall, as well as the stairs connecting the first and second floor are swept and, together, form one of the more time-consuming chores. The sweeping of the first-floor patio, garage and sidewalk fronting the house forms another. Each of the two bathrooms are cleaned daily. Safe to say, it's not an especially popular task. Two additional chores are reserved for after dinner and involve the kitchen. One requires the washing of the dinner dishes for a family of twelve, as well as all the pots and pans used to prepare the meal. Its counterpart involves drying what has been washed, cleaning the stove and, the final chore of the day, mopping the floor.

Breakfast is served at 7:25, sharp. Giovaný and his companions can shower before gathering at the table if they so choose. They also have the option to wait and shower in the evening, if they prefer. Giovaný and his companions leave home promptly at 8:00 in the company of house parent Roberto, and walk the dozen or so blocks to our carpentry shop. Work commences at 8:30. As you've likely guessed, the designated hour is not flexible. A morning break is taken, 15 minutes at 10:30. Thirty minutes is given for lunch, which is prepared at home by Roberto's wife Betty, then delivered, usually by yours truly, just before or after 1 PM. The workday concludes at 5 PM. As is generally the custom in Guatemala, we work a half day on Saturday, ending early in the afternoon.

The level of education varies among our residents, based on age, the length of time spent within the program and the degree of studies completed before joining Only A Child. Therefore, we must be flexible with their schedules, as defined by the needs of their academic careers. Several of our young men attend classes on the weekend and are absent from our carpentry shop on Saturday. One also studies on Friday mornings at an accounting institution. Another resident came to us as the 4-year-old son of an adult resident and studies in a traditional weekday program. He is now 17 and will graduate from high school this year. We currently have 2 youths taking morning classes, Monday through Friday, at the University of San Carlos or USAC. The first, who joined us recently, participates in a course designed to prepare students to take the first round of entry exams at USAC. He arrives for work mid-to-late-morning. The second youth earned a place at USAC in November and began full time studies in January. He joins his co-workers at the carpentry shop just in time for lunch.



Giovary also began full time studies at USAC earlier this year. His classes are held in the evening, from 5.00 to 8:30 and so, his work day ends at 3:45. USAC is located on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Getting there by public transportation at the beginning of the evening rush hour is a slow and patience testing endeavor. He arrives home not long before 9.00, rushes through dinner, then retreats to his room to begin the considerable homework he has been given.

Shortly after midnight Giovary turns in but then awakens well before dawn to finish his assignments in the tranquility of the early morning hours. Quiet time is a precious commodity in Guatemala City, nearly impossible to find. He continues until 6:15, at which time our house officially awakens, and another day begins. As he has no weekend classes, on Saturday morning Giovary is hard at work in our carpentry shop. Much of the rest of the weekend is given to his studies although, whenever possible, he finds time to visit with a sister who also lives in the city. On average they get together twice a month. The rest of their family lives in Nebaj, an 8-to-10-hour journey by public transportation. Given the distance, Giovary travels home only on select occasions.

As previously stated, among our residents, no two schedules replicate another. Even so I can safely assert that, without exception, regarding their education, Giovary's housemates are every bit as dedicated as he. Upon completing a demanding day in our carpentry shop, they return home and quickly turn their attention to school related work, breaking only for dinner and to complete kitchen related chores, should it be their week to do so. Like Giovary, our other residents spend much of the weekend making the most of the education we provide them, busy at work either at their desks or in our computer lab.

As exhausting as Giovary's schedule surely is, and as intimidating as it likely must be, it is the goal and hope of each of his house mates to one day face such a schedule by earning a place at USAC. The fact that USAC is a public university and tuition free enables us to encourage them to pursue such goals, as our financial responsibility will be too pay minimal administrative costs while providing each of our college students with all required supplies and books, as well as transportation.

The rural areas from which our youths predominantly come are anything but lands of opportunity. Impoverished, lacking in resources, offering minimal education and employment, they all but guarantee that their residents will be channeled into lives mirroring those of the generations that preceded them. Progress is painstakingly slow in such communities. Hardship is to be expected and choice is seldom an option. The concept of having a career and engaging in work that is fulfilling is a luxury seldom within the grasp of those who call such places home.

Delinquency remains a major issue and a serious concern in Guatemala. There is a consensus that lack of opportunity fuels much of the problem, ultimately causing fundamentally solid young men and women to succumb to desperation and follow paths they would normally stay clear of under preferable circumstances.

Only A Child continues to respond to significant social concerns in present day Guatemala by providing up-to-and-through-university level education, as well as spiritual and moral guidance to underprivileged youths. Our work seeks to break the cycle of critical economic need and the resulting peril afflicting much of the country's population, while creating role models who will carry on with our mission after graduating from our program.

This year mark's Only A Child's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our work unofficially began during the summer of 1994, which I spent watching over a group of roughly 15 children living in an inner Guatemala City park. The park is named Concordia. I paid my own way and, once again, *unofficially* served as a volunteer. Returning to Boston at the conclusion of my first extended Guatemalan stay, as my flight crossed the Gulf Of Mexico in route to Houston, I decided to found Only A Child. Lost in thought, I casually crafted a list of 12 names, friends and family, who I thought would be willing to become \$20 sponsors. Everyone consented to do so, and we were off and running, our original budget \$240 a month. It was a meager budget to be sure, and although it has grown significantly during the past 25 years our budget remains impossibly modest, given our present-day mission.

Our spring fundraiser, which itself is 23 years old, is once again at hand. It remains a vital and necessary source of income for our work. Many of our donors focus their yearly giving in support of the fundraiser, compelled by the event and the need for it. If you have traditionally supported the event in past years, I ask that you take a moment to recall what previously inspired you to do so. If by chance, making a springtime donation to Only A Child has been something you've intended to do, but somehow never got around to, I ask that, in honor of a quarter century's dedication and service, this year's event be the one with which you follow through.

For those of you who live within driving distance of west suburban Boston, I'd love to spend the first Sunday afternoon in April in your presence, sharing your company, recognizing Only A Child's work ministering to a worthwhile cause.

Thank you.

May God bless.

*George*

George

PS. This year's fundraiser will once again take place on a Sunday (April 7<sup>th</sup>) and be held in the afternoon (2 PM). For more information, to purchase tickets in advance or simply support the event, please view the attached donation card or visit our web site at [www.onlyachild.org](http://www.onlyachild.org)