

# Mission UpReach Newsletter

## Espero program: Giving hope a voice

The word “Espero” in Spanish means I hope. We use it as the name of our school for the deaf. Not only does it mean I hope but it is also an acronym for Escuela de los Sordos para la Educación Regional de Occidente, or in English: Western Regional School for the Deaf.

The dream for such an outreach began a few years back when Dennis Wilson challenged Phil Waldron to consider reaching out to the deaf population of Honduras. Just after that challenge, Phil and Donna were having dinner with some friends and supporters in N. Richland Hills, Texas. One of those friends was Renee Fleming, who has passionately served the deaf since age 12. She shared her story of how she became intrigued by the deaf ministry at an early age and learned how to interpret for the deaf despite being so young.

Having just retired from a career as a teacher, Phil challenged Renee to consider coming to Honduras for a month to teach our team sign language to reach out to the deaf community. Renee accepted the challenge and in 2015 she spent a month teaching sign language to the Mission UpReach staff. As a result, we were able to attract the attention of a few in the deaf community. Two of our missionary apprentices, both participants in the AIM (Adventures in Missions) program out of Lubbock, Texas, knew American Sign Language (ASL) and became a vital part of this outreach.

One of those missionary apprentices was Matt Bridges who later married another young missionary, Hannah, and together they effectively advanced that ministry until their return to the US this year.



Abbie Wilson, the other missionary apprentice and the daughter of Dennis Wilson, grew up signing and became passionate about touching the lives of the deaf in Honduras.

As the outreach grew, we learned many things about the deaf community in Honduras. To start with, most of them do not have a common language and have spent most of their lives with limited ability to communicate or learn. In Honduras, the common sign language is called LESHO and differs some from ASL.

A big part of our outreach involves teaching LESHO (Lengua de Señas Hondureñas) to the deaf and their families. The second thing we learned was that there are no accommodations in the educational system for educating

deaf children. As a result, the deaf adult community we are working in consists of uneducated individuals. From this realization, ESEPERO was born.

This year, we began our school with one classroom of 9 deaf adults, all starting with the first grade. We utilize a government program designed for adult learners. The greatest challenge we faced was adapting this program for a deaf population who had no common language. We currently have one licensed teacher and two assistants, who also serve as interpreters. Abbie Wilson serves as one of the interpreters and continues to passionately serve in our ongoing outreach to others, who will hopefully be a part of our dream to

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## Meet Carlos

Imagine what it would be like to not have the ability to communicate the many thoughts, feelings, and questions you have. Imagine what it would be like to live in a community that mistook your behaviors due to your inability to hear or talk as being a “crazy drunk.” Then, imagine the day when you encounter a group of people just like you, with a common language. A language that you could easily grasp and understand. What if you didn’t even know you had a name until you learned through this common language that you did?

In July of 2016, three members of the MUR team were on a mission to find more deaf individuals in the community for our fledgling deaf ministry. While door knocking, they were told about Carlos but warned that he was just a crazy drunk. A few weeks later, Hugo, another member of the deaf community, brought all his deaf friends to church, including Carlos, the “crazy drunk”.

What we soon found out is that Carlos is in fact loving, caring, and intelligent, and works extremely hard as a shoe repairman. Carlos is 57-year-old and is originally from El Salvador. He was born hearing but became deaf after an accident when he was 5. When Carlos first came to us, he didn’t speak sign language, and had been communicating his whole life through gestures that he made up. Sadly, Carlos didn’t even know he had a name.

Now, Carlos, along with eight other deaf people, has enrolled in ESPERO, our school for the deaf, and is making progress every day. Carlos is constantly showing off his new mastery of the alphabet in sign language. He is especially talented in mathematics, and can do large sum multiplication in his head!

Carlos now knows he has a name, is being shown that he has the capacity to learn and grow, and most



importantly he knows he is loved and accepted. Carlos is just one of the many enrolled in ESPERO and just one of the hundreds of deaf we dream of reaching through ESPERO.

## Espero program...continued from page 1

grow the deaf school and one day soon include a school for deaf children.

It has been amazing to watch God grow this ministry. Choosing to reach out to the deaf by opening the school has proven to be a great tool in God’s working to draw them to Him. The school environment, along with our local church incorporating the deaf into our worship by providing interpreters, has provided the community and acceptance this underserved population has never had. In the past few months, 5 of the deaf have been baptized and the one couple

that was living in a free union were married.

As we dream about the future of this ministry, we trust that God has only just begun. We began this ministry in faith, having no funding for the school. As we stepped out in faith, God provided not only the funding for the school for 2017, but also the funds to hire a full time missionary to serve with us. (See Enrique’s story on page 3.) As 2018 is fast approaching, we are praying for and seeking support to continue funding this ministry.

# Enrique Gonzalez—minister to the deaf

Enrique is a Mexican national who is originally from the Distrito Federal more commonly known as Mexico City. He is deaf and he has spent the last three years training in the Sunset International Biblical Institute to become an evangelist to the deaf. He is an excellent evangelist and Bible teacher. He is very animated when preaching and teaching and makes good use of visuals in order to communicate the message.

In July of this year, Enrique moved to Santa Rosa de Copán to begin working with Mission UpReach to reach more of the deaf population that lives here. He has made a 5-year commitment to Mission UpReach. We pray that God will prosper his ministry with us to the point that we make a major, lasting impact in the deaf community.

We estimate that there are 1,500 deaf people in our town including adults and children. Reaching out to these people is challenging because in this culture these people do not attend school and often are confined to the “back room” at home. With the work that has already been done by Matt and Hannah Bridges, Abbie Wilson and others, we have a good base of people in the ministry through which Enrique will be networking to get to know others.

The excitement that Enrique brings to this group of people is contagious. You cannot be around them long before you too are excited about what God is doing in this ministry. Please keep Enrique and the deaf community of Santa Rosa in your prayers.



## Belton group blesses MUR



We wrapped up our 2017 brigade season with a trip from the Belton Church of Christ. During their week, the Belton group did a fantastic VBS in five different schools and spent their afternoons working on the Moses Project.

This year was the first of hopefully many trips from the Belton Church of Christ, and we are so happy they decided to come. Over the course of this year's brigade season we had over 300 short term volunteers come to partner with us for a week-long trip. Through all the different groups, we were able to serve 6500 people with general medical consults, medications, eye glasses and dental care. In addition to that, we served 3000 school aged children with Bible lessons, skits and crafts and 600 people were served with hot chicken soup at the public hospital. If you are interested in bringing your own group, or being a part of a group, email us at [brigades@missionupreach.org](mailto:brigades@missionupreach.org).

## Word of the Month

### “Homegrown”

The dictionary definition of Homegrown is: grown or produced at home or in a particular region for local consumption. While Mission UpReach's efforts do not result in something being consumed like vegetables grown in a garden we do believe in homegrown leaders. One of our core values is raising up leaders who will lead self-led, self-sustaining and self-replicating churches.





## A note from Donna



I am admittedly NOT a visionary, but fortunately I am married to one. Sometimes his vision makes me panic and at the least it creates stress for me, as a

plotting, methodical person. One would think that after 35 years of marriage, 13 of those years on the mission field, I would grow more confident in jumping on board as Phil dreams. I suppose I am improving, but I still tend to push on the brakes, much like a back seat driver would.

Phil's vision and dream for ESPERO and our deaf outreach was no different than many of his other dreams that have come to fruition. Even while we were only getting a brief introduction to sign language, Phil was planning to open a school for the deaf. And today, thanks

to his vision and the sacrificial work and donations of many, that dream is a reality. I have learned, and continue to learn that when we make plans that are focused on others and bringing the Kingdom to earth, God gives the increase. He wants us to dream big and work hard, and above all else, trust Him.

Neither Phil, nor anyone else involved in launching ESPERO and the deaf outreach is tempted to take credit for what God has done and is doing. He always does exceedingly more than we ask or imagine. Our reward is being able to watch the joy on the faces of the deaf individuals as they capture the truth that God loves them, He has saved them, and He wants to have fellowship with them. We invite you to pray for the deaf community of Santa Rosa, for Enrique as he begins his ministry here, for Carlos, Hugo, Flavia, Digna, Carmen, Jeovani, Darlin, Daisy and Blanca. They all have names and now they know that they have a loving Heavenly Father who knows them by name and calls them into His eternal blessings.

## 2017 Brigades/Visiting Teams

February 11-18 .....	Tusculum CofC.....	Medical and Construction
February 25-March 4 ....	LA Tech Student Ministry...	Construction
March 11-18 .....	Southside CofC.....	Medical/VBS/Construction
April 8-15 .....	VCOM.....	Medical
May 27-June 3.....	North Atlanta CofC.....	Marriage Seminar/ Preacher Training
June 17-24 .....	Pinetree CofC.....	Medical/VBS/Construction
June 24-July 1.....	Burnt Hickory CofC.....	Medical/Construction
July 1-8 .....	Lexington CofC .....	Medical
July 8-15 .....	Disciple Trips .....	VBS/Construction
July 15-22 .....	University CofC Youth .....	VBS
July 22-29.....	University CofC Youth .....	Medical
July 29-August 5.....	Belton CofC .....	Construction
<b>Sept. 30-Oct. 7th .....</b>	<b>Open Group .....</b>	<b>Surgical Brigade</b>

## Mission UpReach Board Members

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## Other Giving

*Mission UpReach is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. We can assist you to designate MUR in a corporations' matching gifts program, or giving through a United Way campaign, or as you prepare wills for your estate.*

## Please contact us:

*Our mailing address is as follows:*

**Mission UpReach, Inc.**  
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**Longview, TX 75604**

*Please send all checks, donations and correspondence to this address.*

*You can correspond directly with Phil and Donna at:*

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