

# Sponsorship Visit Information for San Rafael

## What to expect:

Be prepared to see families that live totally different than we usually see.

Sponsored students will react differently when meeting their sponsor(s). Some children are very outgoing and talkative, while others are shy. If the child is shy there may be awkward moments of silence. This is normal in Guatemalan conversation; try not to worry about the silences. Try not to give your gift to your sponsored child in the first few minutes of the visit. It is best to try to establish a relationship with the child before giving material goods. However, if there are uncomfortable moments you could give the gift as a way of breaking the tension and providing something to do. Follow the lead of the social worker and translator - they both have experience dealing with the sponsorship visits.

In the Guatemalan culture, sponsors are treated with great respect and their comments or suggestions are taken to heart by both the parents and the child. You may wish to take advantage of this by encouraging your sponsored child to study and to stay in school.

## A little Spanish lesson:

When entering the house of the family, you can say "**Con Permiso**" (asking for permission to enter) and then greet the family with either "**Buenos Días**" (good morning) or "**Buenas tardes**" (good afternoon). If you are meeting the family for the first time, after the introductions you can say "**Mucho gusto**" (please to meet you). You can never be too gracious or too formal.

## What should we talk about?

- Animals - There are many families that have dogs, cats, chickens, turkeys, pigs or other animals. You can ask who looks after the animals, what the animals eat, etc. Please remember to not feed dogs or other animals.
- School – Since many students struggle with attendance, please feel free to ask about this or why they are not attending. It will be good for the students to know that you care about their attendance and are checking in. You can ask what they learned that day, what their favorite subject is, who their friends are, etc.
- Family - It is normal in Guatemala for extended family members to live together or live in close proximity of each other. You can ask who lives in the house, where relatives live, jobs that people do in the family, or how they help with chores.
- Make sure to ask the sponsored student and their family if they have any questions for you!

## What if food is offered?

Please do not eat any food that is offered, unless otherwise directed by the social worker.

## Gifts:

There are cultural differences in San Rafael when it comes to gifts. In San Rafael people don't open gifts in front of others. A person leaves a gift for the other to open at a different time. When giving the child or family a gift please give them one gift at a time. You may be asked to leave the gifts (for the family to open at a later time). The family also may be embarrassed because they are not able to give anything back. The social worker or staff person will guide you with this, so please don't hesitate to ask them.

In order to promote a safe environment for our visitors and to attempt to have a more equitable gift system for the San Rafael families, we have instituted the following gift guidelines.

Permitted gifts in San Rafael:

- Food baskets (prepared through our Sponsorship staff in Guatemala)
- Board games like Memory, Bingo, or puzzles (age-appropriate for sponsored students)
- Picture books or story books (age-appropriate to sponsored students)
- Hair accessories like ponytail holders, brushes, barrettes
- Oral hygiene products like toothpaste and toothbrushes
- Backpack or T-Shirt for older students

These gift suggestions are intended to help the families with personal hygiene and stimulation of the children's education development in the home.

Please remember that giving candy, food and money is not allowed.

**Photographs:**

Ask permission before taking any pictures. If you take photographs of the family only say that you will send them copies if you intend to do so. You can send photographs to the St Paul office and we will make sure they are delivered to the family. If you have one or two photos to send to the family, you can also email them to [sponsorship@commonhope.org](mailto:sponsorship@commonhope.org) - please remember to include the student's ID number in the subject line.

Please don't hesitate to ask the social worker questions about the family either before or after the visit.

Note: Whenever possible, families in San Rafael will host the sponsorship visits in their homes. If a community security risk is identified, the visit may take place in the Faro clinic or occasionally outside the community.

***Thank you for taking the time to visit Guatemala and for visiting the student you sponsor! Enjoy the visit!***