

# SPONSORSHIP HANDBOOK



**ENGLISH**



## OUR MISSION

Safe Passage works to transform lives by providing students in the Guatemala City garbage dump community with an excellent education, a higher quality of life, and pathways to a job with dignity so they can achieve a better future for themselves and their families.



# WELCOME TO OUR GLOBAL SAFE PASSAGE COMMUNITY!



Dear Sponsor,

*Bienvenidos a la Familia Camino Seguro* - welcome to the Safe Passage family!

As the Sponsorship Coordinator, I'd like to personally thank you for joining as a Safe Passage student sponsor! You've just joined a growing community of sponsors, both around the world and in Guatemala, who support our students in so many valuable ways.

The relationship that you will build with your sponsored student will help to motivate them to stay in school despite the enormous external pressures in the garbage dump community.

Beyond that, your financial contributions will be an investment in our students' success, both academically and socially. Thanks to you, Safe Passage can provide all of our students with a comprehensive, hands-on education, as well as access to nutrition, healthcare, and social services.

We want both you and your sponsored student to have the best experience possible, so please read through this Sponsorship Handbook carefully. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions -- I look forward to working with you!

On behalf of everyone at Safe Passage, especially your sponsored student, thank you! You have just started the journey to change a life in Guatemala City.

Sincerely,

Ana Beatriz Morales  
Sponsorship Coordinator  
[sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org)

“

You are changing a life  
in Guatemala City.  
Thank you.”

**BEATRIZ**  
**SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR**



# INTRODUCTION TO SPONSORSHIP



## Why Safe Passage?

More than 60,000 people live in extreme poverty around the Guatemala City garbage dump. It's one of the largest open landfills in all of Central America. Here, thousands of people make a living harvesting the garbage for recyclables, clothing, and household items that they can sell. Until recently, children were allowed to work alongside their parents.

This community struggles daily with violence, discrimination, and lack of access to education, social support, and critical resources such as healthcare.

**Safe Passage helps the children and their families who live in one of the poorest communities near the Guatemala City garbage dump.**

In the garbage dump community<sup>1</sup>:

- 1 in 3 residents have never been to school
- The average parent education is 4th grade
- Families of 6 live on less than \$4 a day

As a sponsor, you play a key role in helping us provide *all* Safe Passage students with:

- Progressive, holistic, full-day education
- Personal encouragement and support
- Daily nourishing meals and snacks
- Healthcare (through our partner, Shared Beat)
- School supplies, books and uniforms
- Family and community wellness services
- Adult Education for parents

- *Creamos* employment opportunities for mothers
- Teacher training and professional development
- Classroom materials, technology, and books
- Enrichment programs (music, art, sports)

## How do my donations help?

When you add up the annual cost of all the services we provide our students, the total spent per student per year equals \$3,000. Sponsors donate any amount between \$50 and \$250 per month toward a student's participation at Safe Passage. Each student may have up to 4 sponsors. The more support for each student, the more students we can add to our holistic program!

## Where do my donations go?

At Safe Passage, all of our students receive equal treatment and have the same access to all of our services, regardless of their sponsorship status. To help us invest in every student, sponsorship contributions are pooled in our Sponsorship Fund and go directly to cover program costs.



**By sponsoring a student, you are actually supporting all 500 students at Safe Passage!**

In addition to helping offset the cost of their Safe Passage participation, sponsorship is an opportunity to develop a special connection with your student. Our students come from difficult backgrounds and many do not receive positive encouragement at home; motivation and care from you provides a real boost in self-esteem and self-worth.



# WHY SPONSORS MATTER

## Why now?

We're a full-day, accredited school serving students from kindergarten to 7th grade, and expanding throughout 9th grade to better meet the needs of our students. We're hiring and training more qualified teachers, implementing progressive curricula based on Expeditionary Learning, and growing our community impact. Our full-day program offers the opportunity for us to address extreme poverty at a much deeper level. **Your donations as a sponsor are critical resources that help us meet our growing needs and keep our program thriving.**

Guatemalan public schools offer schooling only 4 hours each day. We give students a full-day of education and enrichment.



**For a full breakdown of how Safe Passage uses your donations, visit our website at: [www.safepassage.org/financials](http://www.safepassage.org/financials)**

# COMMUNICATION

## How often will I hear from my student?

Each year, you will receive at least two greetings via postal mail and/or digitally from your sponsored student. These greetings are all unique and may include an update on your student's life, a new photo of your student, a handwritten note, or a drawing.

## How can I keep in touch?

If you write to your student, you will hear back! Writing to your student is easy: simply send a message (in English or Spanish) via email to our Sponsorship Team in Guatemala at [sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org).

## What does the process look like?

Once we receive your message, we'll translate it to Spanish, deliver it to your sponsored student and assist him or her in writing a response. We'll then translate the response and mail it back to you.

If you prefer to send a card or physical letter, please send it to our U.S. office (address on page 11 of this handbook), as there is no postal service in Guatemala. Instead of using expensive couriers, we gather batches of correspondence to be hand-delivered to our Sponsorship Team by a staff member, volunteer, or visitor traveling to Guatemala. As travel can be sporadic, we cannot guarantee a specific delivery date.



**We take great care of your messages and hand-deliver batches of correspondence to all of our students.**

## When will I receive a response?

Due to the large quantity of sponsor correspondence we receive and the realities of sending items back and forth from the U.S. to Guatemala, it can take up to 3 months to receive a response from your sponsored student. Thank you for your patience as we process your messages with care!

Safe Passage takes student security and privacy seriously. Please see page 9 for details.

# COMMUNICATION AND GIFTS



## What should I write to my student about?

Your sponsored student will be excited to hear from you, regardless of what you write about! Here are a few suggestions to keep in mind as you write to your student:

- Ask your student about his or her interests, favorite classes, hobbies, sports, animals, colors, etc.
- Ask about Guatemalan culture, customs, climate, family traditions, etc.
- Send encouraging thoughts to help motivate your student in school and in their personal interests
- Tell your student general facts about yourself, family, pets, etc.
- Encourage other members of your family to write to your student and, if you have young children, consider sending their drawings

You can also send photos to our students of yourself, your family, and pets. Putting a face to your name reminds your student that there's a real, live person supporting them. You may include 3 photos attached to each of your messages.

## Cultural Considerations

Please keep in mind the lifestyle and living conditions of our students and their families as you're writing to your sponsored student. Please do not mention material possessions or money in your correspondence. Instead, focus on building a friendship based on common ground. Simply receiving a letter from you will make your sponsored student feel special!

## Gifts

We strive for equality and provide gifts for all students on their birthday and at the holidays, regardless of whether or not they have a sponsor. We're able to purchase these gifts thanks to donations to our Gift Fund from sponsors like you.

## What is the Gift Fund?

The Gift Fund ensures that we're able to provide a gift for all students on their birthday and at the holidays. We'll invite you to contribute to the Gift Fund when your sponsored student's birthday is coming up, and then again around the holidays, but you can donate anytime!

For example, two donations of \$30 to the Gift Fund each year help cover the cost of new clothing we provide twice a year for our students. Donations to the Gift Fund are used to purchase gifts for our students and are a great alternative gift idea for your friends and family members!

Donating to the Gift Fund is the easiest and fastest way to make your sponsored student feel special, without the hassle of the costs and timeline associated with transportation.



**Do you have specific questions about gifts and communication? Please contact us:**  
[sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org)

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It's easy to see the appeal of a program like Safe Passage, and I thought I "got it" pretty well. But what you understand in your head and feel in your heart goes to a whole new place when you have the opportunity to spend time with the child you sponsor.

**COLLEEN, STUDENT SPONSOR MAINE (USA)**





# SPECIAL GIFTS AND VISITS



## May I send a special gift?

We understand that you may want to send something special to your sponsored student. Please send small gifts that can fit in a padded 5" x 7" envelope and be shared by your student's whole class, such as a pack of stickers, coloring books, crayons, etc.

**Please send all gifts to our U.S. office** for transport to Guatemala by a staff member, volunteer or visitor traveling to Guatemala City. As there is no mail in Guatemala, all gifts must be brought down, which can be costly due to baggage fees. So please make sure that your gifts are **lightweight, unwrapped, clearly labeled, and won't take up too much room in a duffel bag.**

While we realize it can be tempting to provide your sponsored student with special gifts, we ask that you keep in mind why certain gifts such as electronics, expensive clothes, gifts of cash, etc. would be inappropriate due to several reasons:

- Extortion is a very real, ongoing problem within our community. Receiving large or expensive gifts can put our students and their family at risk for being targets.
- Many students do not have sponsors. While all of our students receive gifts on their birthday and the holidays through our Gift Fund, we want to minimize hurt feelings and create an environment of equality amongst all students, regardless of their sponsorship status.
- We want our students to understand that the most important things their sponsors provide are not material possessions but support and encouragement for their educational and emotional development.

When selecting gifts for your student, please send small items such as coloring books or story books that can fit in an envelope and be easily shared by your student's whole class.

## May I visit my sponsored student?

Yes! Meeting your sponsored student helps make the connection much more real for both of you. Seeing our programs (and your impact!) in action is also an extremely powerful experience.

## What will my visit consist of?

Most sponsors take their student out to lunch. Some add a trip to a museum, the zoo, or bowling. You will be accompanied at all times by a member of our Sponsorship staff, who will help with translation and logistics. In some cases, a social worker from our Integral Health Services team will also attend.

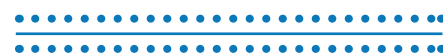
## Setting up your visit

To set up a visit, email: [sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org) **at least 2 weeks in advance** so that we can ensure that your visit is as successful and positive as possible. For more information about visit, please request a copy of our Sponsor Visit Guide by e-mailing [sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org).



**Please don't mention potential plans to visit to your sponsored student in case travel plans and arrangements fall through.**

# WHEN STUDENTS LEAVE OUR CARE



## Things to be mindful of

Our students and their families live in a very high-risk environment, and these risk factors can cause some of our students to transition out of our program before reaching high school graduation.

The community we work with is particularly vulnerable and faces major challenges each day, such as:

- Dangers in the garbage dump, such as landslides, fires, and exposure to hazardous chemicals
- Prevalent substance abuse and addiction
- Gang violence, discrimination and corruption
- Lack of access to quality education, healthcare, and proper nutrition

## Graduation

When your sponsored student graduates from Safe Passage, your sponsorship relationship with that student will come to a close. Some sponsors choose to attend their sponsored student's graduation, which is always a very special, emotional, and celebratory visit! Safe Passage graduates have the opportunity to continue their participation at Safe Passage through our *Próximo Paso* (Next Step) program, which assists graduates in preparing for interviews and university entrance exams, as well as connecting them with local companies for internships and jobs.



**Please note: in some cases it may not be possible to communicate with your sponsored child after he/she leaves Safe Passage.**

## Pre-graduation Exit

There are many reasons a student might leave Safe Passage before high school graduation. In addition to the risk factors already mentioned, our students are faced with a multitude of challenges that can make staying in school feel impossible:

- Lack of support and motivation at home
- Unstable family circumstances
- Pressure to contribute to the family income
- Unmotivated, under-qualified teachers at public schools
- Unplanned pregnancy or unexpected health issues

## How our social workers help

Each student is assigned to one of our Safe Passage social workers, who monitors his/her case, visits his/her home on a regular basis, and takes immediate notice when there is a change in his/her attendance.

We work closely with our social workers to keep students safe, healthy, and in school.

The social work team, in collaboration with Safe Passage psychologists and teachers, works tirelessly to ensure that our students and their families receive the support they need.

Occasionally, despite much effort, other factors in a student's life are too significant, and he or she permanently leaves Safe Passage. Although it's difficult to say good-bye, please know that your commitment as a sponsor provided hope and opportunity to your sponsored student that will have a lasting positive impact in his/her life.

## What happens next?

Once a student leaves Safe Passage, whether before or after graduation, we will transfer your sponsorship to another student. This way, you can continue to have a lasting impact and help us work toward our mission of breaking the cycle of poverty in the Guatemala City garbage dump community. Transferring your sponsorship is critical to our ongoing work and support of all 500 of our students.



# PRIVACY AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION



## Our guidelines

We take the safety and privacy of both our students and sponsors very seriously. **Please do not communicate with your sponsored student through social media, email, or any other channel outside of Safe Passage.**

We cannot be responsible for communication not facilitated by Safe Passage Sponsorship staff. We care about your privacy, too. Please don't share your last name, address, phone number, or any other type of contact information with your sponsored student. We want to ensure that you're never put in the position of receiving a request that could strain your relationship.

Our staff work directly with our students and families, and are therefore best equipped to provide the proper care and support needed. Please alert us if your sponsored student does request that you contact them outside of our official channels.



**For privacy and security, all communication with your sponsored student must go through Safe Passage Sponsorship staff.**

## May I share my sponsor story with others?

We would love for you to share stories about your sponsorship experience with your friends and family! For the privacy and security of both you and your student, please use only your sponsored student's first name, especially if using social media.

## Can I stay in touch with my student after he or she graduates?

If you would like to communicate with your sponsored student after graduation, we will pass along your contact information, then it's up to the student to take the next step. Keep in mind, we cannot be held responsible for communication after graduation. We appreciate your understanding as our graduates make a life-changing shift after graduation into university studies or the workforce and may not be able to write as often as before.

## Ending your sponsorship

Sponsorship is both a special relationship with your sponsored student and a financial commitment to Safe Passage. We rely on support from our donors to keep our program thriving! Because of this, if your sponsorship payments fall 3 consecutive months behind, we will need to cancel your sponsorship.

Many sponsors agree that one of the best benefits of sponsorship is personal communication with your sponsored student. If your sponsorship comes to an end, you will no longer have access to sponsorship benefits. This means you will not receive updates from your sponsored student, and you will no longer be able to communicate with your sponsored student personally. We understand that this can be a very difficult transition, and we're here to help! Please contact us if you have questions or concerns about our policies.



Thank you for being a sponsor!





Top left, bottom right: Alexandria Harrison-Cripps

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS ABOUT SPONSORSHIP?

You matter to us and we want to hear from you! If you would like to visit our U.S. office in New Gloucester, Maine or our program site in Guatemala City, please contact us in advance so that we can welcome you when you arrive.

### HOURS

8AM – 5PM (GMT)  
9AM – 5PM (EST, USA)

### PHONE

207-846-1188 (U.S. Office)  
502-2440-4388 (Guatemala)

### EMAIL

[sponsorship@safepassage.org](mailto:sponsorship@safepassage.org)

### Camino Seguro/Safe Passage Offices

#### GUATEMALA CITY

6a. Avenida 11-95 Zona 7  
Colonia Landivar, Ciudad de Guatemala

#### USA

49 Farm View Dr, Suite 302  
New Gloucester, ME 04260

“

Over the past 5 years, it has been a real joy to watch Charly mature from a little boy into a young man. He has endured challenges in his life and - with the help of Safe Passage - he has overcome these difficulties with grace and courage.”



**BRUCE AND LINDA, STUDENT SPONSORS MAINE (USA)**





**HOPE. EDUCATION. OPPORTUNITY.**

[www.safepassage.org](http://www.safepassage.org)

