

## **The Story of Erasmios Hernandez**

Erasmios was born in Monte de los Negros, a village in the municipality of Copan Ruins, Department of Copan, Honduras on April 15th, 1986. His parents were very poor and they had many children. For that reason, they sent young Erasmios to Guatemala to live with his grandmother at the tender age of 10.

In his community, he had not gone to school, but when he arrived at his grandmother's he told her that he wanted to go to school. She, however, sent him to harvest coffee, which was the main way a young person could earn some money. With his earnings, he bought a notebook. During the day he would work and at night he would go to the local school teacher's house. Erasmios explained it this way, "She helped me and gave me classes until I could read and write". He lived with his grandmother until he was 15 years old. His parents asked that he return home to Monte de los Negros. Almost immediately upon returning home, he got married, marrying Rosalina Ramirez who was a year older than Erasmios. She now is 36 years of age and Erasmios is 35, and they have been married for 20 years.

They have four children: Danilo Hernandez, 19 years old; Abner Adulid Hernandez, 14 years old; Karen Hernandez, 13 years old; and Elida Joseline Hernandez, 15 years old.

Erasmios plants beans and corn but he doesn't have his own land so he has to rent land to plant on. He pays Lp. 500.00 (\$20.00 USD) to plant ½ manzana (about 0.85 acres) and normally he harvests 3,500 pounds of corn and 2,000 pounds of beans.

About three years ago when he was very poor, Erasmios, his wife, and his children all slept in the same room, many in the same bed, one on top of another. Some slept on the floor. At this time an idea came to Erasmios, "Why not start a small store called a pulpería?" He knew this would not be easy but the idea stuck with him. He used about Lp. 100.00 (\$4.00 USD) as his initial capital. With this amount he bought several small packages of snack food and two packages of cookies. Little by little, he was able to save - first to have Lp. 200.00 (\$8) and then Lp. 500.00 (\$20). That is how his capital grew. When he built his house with the help of the groups from the Presbyterian Church, he decided to get a refrigerator on credit and some shelves. When he looks back to those times, he remembers that he only had two changes of clothes and one pair of shoes.

"When the housing Project started our lives changed", he said. "I was elected to be the leader of the project. At first the project was just for 6 houses, but we were able to expand it to build 18 houses. At first I was very afraid but we all learned how to make the block, to pour foundations and floors, put on the roofs and lay block. We learned how to use some electric tools. Now we have electricity in our houses." The houses have 3 bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen and a porch. After the new house was complete, Erasmios was able to get a cow through Heifer International.

Erasmios' hope for the future for his family is that his children will study and that they do not get married at a young age, so that they may have a better quality of life. Two of his children take part in the scholarship program supported by Orangewood Presbyterian Church. During the pandemic, he has made sure that their studies continue. He gets the assignments on a cell phone and they do their homework on laptops also provided by the church.

For his community, Erasmios hopes that they are able to have another housing project for 18 families that were not part of the first project, so that they can have the opportunity to improve their lives.

Erasmus and His Family



The New House Rises Next to the Old

Two Scholarship Students



Diplomas on the Wall



Cow from Heifer Project



Doing Homework on the Porch

