

Brillo de Sol

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2017
Annual Report
Brillo de Sol USA



Dear Friends and Supporters of Brillo de Sol,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Brillo de Sol, USA I am pleased to offer to you our 2017 annual report.

This year marks the end of my term as President of Brillo de Sol, USA and I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of you for the support, encouragement, and generosity that has been instrumental in making Brillo de So the success story it is today. When I was introduced to Brillo de Sol 6 years ago, I saw Letty and her team doing amazing work to educate and transform the lives of the school's 35 special needs children, yet struggling to make ends meet. Since then, we've worked very hard to place Brillo de Sol on a solid foundation and sustainable path.

Over the past 5 years, we've formalized our management and accounting practices, added new therapeutic and educational programs, and substantially increased our pool of volunteers. We've relocated to a much larger building, improved facilities and added computers, classroom furnishings and instructional equipment. Our student body has grown to 82 children and Brillo de Sol has become known as the model program for special education in Guatemala. None of this would have been possible without your generosity and the arduous work of our board members and volunteers.

While I'll continue as a board member and volunteer, our new president, Christiane Dechert, brings a wealth of experience and skills to the position. With her background in speech therapy in an educational setting, her experience as a BDS volunteer and Brillo de Sol USA board member, and her work with other non-profits, I'm confident that Christiane is right person to lead Brillo de Sol USA and continue to build on the work we've been doing together.

Thank you for all that you are doing to ensure Brillo de Sol continues to be a safe space for some of Guatemala's most vulnerable children.

Joe Phebus
President, Brillo de Sol USA





Dear Friends and Brillo de Sol Family,

Thank you, Joe, for this generous introduction. Thank you, from all of us, the children, the teachers and administrators, the parents and volunteers, the board members of Brillo de Sol USA and Brillo de Sol Guatemala, and on behalf of our committed sponsors, for your leadership, devotion, and love for these children and families at Brillo de Sol. Without your guidance, never-ending enthusiasm and many (often late night) hours of work, we would not have come this far. And on a personal note, thank you for your friendship during these past 5 years! The Brillo de Sol family looks forward to your new role on the Brillo de Sol USA board.

As 2017 comes to an end, we are reflecting on the amazing support that we have received from you, the sponsors of our children and teachers, and the donors of projects and educational materials, over the course of this year and in previous years. Your love for our children also deserves our utmost gratitude! Thank you, on behalf of the Brillo de Sol family, for your kindness and love and persistence and, yes, for your financial resources, that helps us provide the support that the school needs to provide an education for our children.

I come to this new responsibility with a career in speech-language pathology and volunteer experience in many educational and non-profit organizations. I am an advocate for people with disabilities, here in the United States *and* in the developing world. The right to an education is a human right, as codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I strongly believe that children with disabilities have this right, just as typically developing children do. In Guatemala, the financial resources that the state provides for the education of children in public schools is insufficient all together. Class sizes are large, often up to 50 children, and teachers don't receive the necessary training or appropriate salaries. Children with disabilities do not receive special services that tailor to their needs and cannot make it in such a system. When, they are poor, as 90% of the children at Brillo de Sol are, they may never get a formal education and may never have the chance to live a life with some level of independence.

Which is why this little school in San Gaspar, Guatemala, is such a special place.

Thank you for making this school possible for the 82 children this year!

Christiane Dechert

Christiane Dechert
President, Brillo de Sol USA





Dear Friends and Supporters of Brillo de Sol:

In Guatemala we are finishing the school year, and it's time to look back to evaluate our achievements and to look forward with new goals and plans. In doing so, I've been reflecting on how every student is a very special being with a history and a mission in this world.

I think of Luis, who arrived at our school in January, when we no longer had space and no funds for more children. When I interviewed him, he told me that his biggest dream was to have a friend because he had never had one; that in the previous school they all made jokes about him. The response of my brain was: no more space, the answer of my heart was, "Welcome dear, here you will have friends". I asked permission to his mother to publish his story on the networks and that same day my friend Ana Maria told me: "Relax, Letty. I am going to support his studies." At the end of the school year, Luis now has many friends who respect him. With his diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, he is an expert in aquatic animals and life in the sea, so he was chosen to give a talk on this topic on graduation day.

I think of Brian, a very tall and strong boy with the sweetest heart I have ever met. He gave very strong hugs! At 15 years old, he had not learned to read. We welcomed him into the Brillo de Sol family as well. Brian sometimes scared people with his hugs and we needed to teach him to be aware of other people's feelings, respect boundaries and give more gentle hugs. In giving him this special training, we discovered his great capacity for service. Every day he attends to his friend with cerebral palsy, helping her eat and ensuring she is included in school activities. This year at graduation, Brian gave a talk about the importance of protecting and helping those with disabilities.

Like Luis and Brian, all the other students have wonderful stories. Every day, through their actions and their progress, they show us the importance of the work we do. Every year, thanks to the support of each one of you, there are new stories to tell and new transformations to celebrate.

Come together to continue changing lives, tell your friends and family, all may help in many ways.

Blessings,

Alma Leticia López Contreras
Foundress, Executive Director





Brillo de Sol's core values of unconditional love, acceptance and respect for individual differences provides the children with a learning environment of mutual support where self-esteem and individual talents flourish.



Our Mission

To transform lives of children through education and rehabilitation by attending to the humanity of each child in a way that respects their individuality and unique learning needs. By adapting to their needs, Brillo de Sol strives to promote the recovery of self-esteem, discovery of talents and abilities, and the development of thinking skills in each student. Acting within the guidelines of the education laws, our trained staff adapts the curriculum and evaluation guidelines to the specialized needs of individual students. We strive to place each student on the road to success in life through education, socialization and by teaching them the values necessary to lead productive lives.

This year, the **MuralArte Guate** volunteer team decorated the school with beautiful new murals in our classrooms and hallways.





La Fiesta de Cowboys, October 2017

Our vision is to utilize integration and inclusion, serving as a model school for Guatemala and through the success of our students, we will motivate other schools to prepare for and promote diversity. By doing this, we will contribute to decreasing the number of children in Guatemala that do not have the opportunity to study and improve, which deprives them of a dignified and independent life. We envision having the necessary financial resources to receive every child that knocks on our doors, without leaving anyone outside, regardless of their age, economic capacity, religion, or place of residence.

Brillo de Sol, Antigua, Guatemala





Brillo de Sol USA - 2017 Highlights

Sponsorship Program: Through the generosity of our donors and sponsors, 42 children, whose families could not otherwise afford the full cost of tuition, received partial or full-year sponsorship through the Brillo de Sol USA Sponsorship Program. An additional 33 children received full or partial scholarships from our partner programs.

Networking: The mission of Brillo de Sol USA is not only to support the school with fundraising efforts for scholarships and capital expenditures, but also to provide expertise in educational matters. This July, Board members Christiane Dechert and Joe Phebus organized site visits of Brillo de Sol Director Letty Lopez and Psychologist Diana Alvarez at other Guatemalan agencies that serve children with disabilities. Our team of four and translator Alejandro went to Centro Maya in San Juan la Laguna and Adisa in Santiago Atitlan to establish contacts and learn from each other – to improve the services for children with disabilities in the country as a whole.

Staff Education: On the following day, Christiane led a workshop with Brillo de Sol faculty and staff, discussing indicators of educational quality in Guatemalan schools, how to design transparent systems for individualized education at the school, and how to implement a quantitative and qualitative progress monitoring system.





Brillo de Sol Guatemala - 2017 Highlights

Education and Therapy: This year our enrollment grew to 83 students and we provided therapy, reinforcement (extracurricular tutoring) and placement assistance to an additional 14 children and their families.

Expanded teacher and parent education programs: The teachers received special training in autism and how to integrate student therapy and behavior modification strategies into a classroom setting. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's educational program. At parent meetings, they receive information and instruction on reinforcing learning and therapy at home.

Community Outreach: Letty has been sharing the Brillo de Sol model, experience, and expertise with other educators in Guatemala. In September, Letty and Brillo de Sol were featured on the national television station TVA Guatemala. In her interview as "Person of the Week," Letty described the educational methods and services provided at Brillo de Sol and how it is giving our children a chance to succeed in life. She also spoke of the lack of services and resources available for special needs children in Guatemala and how that disproportionately affects poor and indigenous families and children.

Facility Improvements: Through the generosity of the volunteers from the University of Washington, our partner program Uno Mas and other donors, the playground received a major upgrade and new bookcases and furnishings were installed in the classrooms.

Technology: Thanks to the talents of volunteer Amilkar Reyna, the school is rolling out a new online platform that enables collaboration between teachers, therapists and staff in setting individual student goals and monitoring progress against those goals. The automation of recordkeeping tasks and centralization of student data will facilitate a multidisciplinary approach to address the needs of our students.



Sponsorship

There are no schools in the Guatemalan Public Education System for special needs children. These children have no place to go and often face lives of extreme poverty and neglect. When you sponsor a child, you are not just changing the life of that child and securing his or her future, you are helping the entire family and community at large.

The children take great pride in having a sponsor. They feel special, knowing someone cares for them.

Many of our sponsors have regular contact with their children through visits, letters or email.

Why Sponsor a Child at Brillo de Sol?

- Education
- Therapy & Rehabilitation
- Life Skills & Self Sufficiency



"I spent time at Brillo De Sol in May 2016 and I never imagined the impact it would have on my life. I fell instantly in love with the school and the special work that Letty and her fantastic team are doing there. I was fortunate enough to meet Rudy and we worked on a art project together. When I returned home, I knew I needed to do more. He is such a terrific boy who is thriving at Brillo de Sol, and I am so thankful and proud to be able to help him with sponsorship."

Brian Nocella, Volunteer
Philadelphia, PA

"As soon as you enter the school, it becomes obvious how special a place that Brillo really is. Letty, Dianita, and Evelyn...these 3 women work tirelessly for Brillo and the children....and its obvious that the children adore them. This loving attitude is present in all of the staff and children. The mission is for the children to be happy, and both the children and adults at Brillo embody this; everyone smiles, acts with kindness, and takes care of each other. It is a beautiful place, doing amazing work to empower and improve the lives of the children and families involved."

*Carly Reiser, Speech & Language
Pathologist*
Washington State, USA



Acknowledgements

Sponsors | There are no programs for special needs children in the Guatemalan public education system. Special needs children from poor families have no place to go and little opportunity to become literate independent adults. Sponsors give our children the gift of an education and a chance in life. We gratefully thank each of you.

Full Year Sponsorship (\$700/year)

Irny Amin
Maryann Bullett
John Dayton
David Cruz
Christiane Dechert
Chris English
Amy Fox
Francis Gray
Heidi Harm & Abby Wolford
Nessa and Martin Hefferon (3 Students)
Barbara Hunter
Ian Raizi Johari
Ellen Maxfield
Gary Nagel
Brian Nocella
Bishop William Newman
Janice Peck
Brian & Colleen Phebus
Joe Phebus (3 Students)
Patricia Phebus
Elisa Udaskin
Kathy White
Robert and Mallory Zeilstra and Oscar

Half Year Sponsorship (\$350/year)

Alberto Aghion
Frank Caruso
Ellen Christenson
Jean-Sebastien Clement (2 Students)
Julia Navarro Espinal
Miriam Goldstein
Mary Jo Hidecker
Alan & Ann Marenburg
Jennifer Mellizo
Melissa Murphy
Alberto Perlman
Nancy Pajak
Jennifer Perry
Joe Phebus (2 Students)
Carly Reiser
Irene Saletan
Jenny Simms

Group Sponsorship

Kathy Belzer
Francis Espavier & Paula Messamer
Jennifer Fisher
Julianne Ghiglieri
Almudena Carrascosa Pérez (2 Students)
Sanjay Jolly
Maria Encarna Martinez
Karen Petersen Ramirez
Nur Sharpe
Kevin Shiplett
Payton Thompson
Jessica Waldron
Theresa Williams



Acknowledgements

Donors | We are grateful to all of those who support us through their contributions and support. Your donations and support help us to purchase instructional materials and equipment, maintain our facilities and help provide uniforms and other assistance to children whose families could not otherwise afford them.



Through the generosity of Cathy Bentley, a long time Brillo de Sol volunteer, sponsor and supporter, we dedicated Javier's garden in memory of one of our "little angles." We lost Javier to a progressive genetic disease last year. Here, the children can talk, read, listen to the water run and remember their fellow classmate and friend.



Donors \$1000 +

Cathy Bentley
Joe Phebus

Donors \$500 to \$1000

Patricia Phebus

Donors \$100 to \$499

Maxine Blais
Karen Carlson
Chastity Driver
Kara Faraclas
Christine Jau
Douglas Jarquin
Nina Lorch
Bill Mackey
Caroline Price
Kenan M. Behzad Sharpe
Karen Stewart

Donors \$10 to \$99

Christiane Dechert
Jennifer Rowe

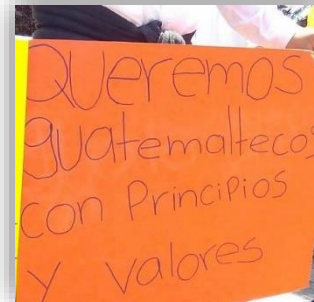


In our community



The children are active participants in parades and civic events such as Independence Day and Día de Santiago (Antigua's patron saint). They show the community that in spite of their disabilities, they are caring, thoughtful and creative persons with much to offer the community and world at large.

"We want Guatemalans with principles and values"



In September, Guatemalan citizens staged a "Paro Nacional"; a day of action and general strike to protest corruption in the country. In solidarity with their fellow citizens, the children of Brillo de Sol set up an exhibit outdoors in plaza San Gaspar to make clear that they also want government leaders with values and integrity.



Brian describes how BDS students support their deaf, physically disabled, and sensitive classmates.

Our students explained to community members the values they practice in school and at home. Personal responsibility, empathy, honesty, diligence, solidarity and non-violence are integral parts of the curriculum and a part of their daily interaction with teachers and classmates.



The "La Honestidad" (honesty) table



"My actions, my responsibility."



Volunteers

Volunteers are at the core of our educational program. Not only do they bring professional expertise across a wide range of disciplines, the one-on-one tutoring many of our volunteers provide allows us to tailor our program to each child's unique strengths and needs.



This year, Brillo de Sol has developed a manual for volunteers who are proficient in Spanish and who can work with students one-on-one, as a consequence. The manual instructs volunteers to target specific tasks that support the curriculum, such as teaching vocabulary or practicing reading.





“There is so much love at Brillo de Sol. We volunteered with our teenagers, participating in many activities with the children. It was such a fulfilling experience.”

Elisa Udaskin, Canada & Sandra Olper, Mexico





What classes are offered at Brillo de Sol?

The curriculum at Brillo de Sol follows the Guatemalan Ministry of Education standards. Students receive formal classroom instruction in math, Spanish language, which includes reading and writing, natural science, social studies, citizenship, artistic expression, which encompasses art, music and dance, physical education, and English.

Each student receives individualized services and instruction based on their specific needs and learning styles and according to their individual potential.

Additionally, Brillo offers vocational development programs, such as cooking, gardening, agronomy, electricity, and carpentry. Computer instruction is used to augment classroom learning.

Academics

Brillo de Sol serves students with a variety of disabilities, including learning disabilities, emotional problems, autism, blindness, deafness, and speech language impairments. The educational base of Brillo de Sol is the national curriculum. We also provide non-traditional classes that focus on developing socialization and cognitive and motor skills.





At the beginning of the school year, each child's learning needs are assessed and an education plan is developed. Teachers accommodate the traditional classroom curriculum to meet the individual student's needs. Students receive one-on-one therapy, tutoring, and other instruction to allow them to meet the requirements of the Guatemalan Ministry of Education.



World-Class Training & Expertise

In coordination with the Guatemalan Institute of Language and Communication, Brillo de Sol collaborated with several institutions of higher education and practitioners learning this year.

We received support from 10 practicum students from **Rafael Landivar University**, Guatemala, who provided *speech/ language therapy* for 30 of our students once a week. These students are continuing to provide these services throughout the winter break. Furthermore, the students gave a workshop to teachers and administrators on language development and language stimulation methods for children birth to 7 years. We collaborated with *speech therapists* from **Complete Speech**, who generously worked with 6 of our students twice a week this year.

80% of our children need *counseling and mental health* support. During the year, several volunteer psychologists from Spain and the United States have collaborated with our own psychologist Diana Alvarez. We continue to need more help to consistently meet the emotional needs of 4/5 of the children.

Professors, practitioners, and students from *speech-language pathology* programs at **Western Washington University** and the **University of North Carolina** evaluated all children in the areas of oral language skills, reading, writing, calculation, and logic. **Sacred Heart University** in Connecticut gave workshops about physical and occupational therapies and provided teachers with ideas to work on in the classroom. Sacred Heart also brought audiology students and supervisors, who evaluated the hearing status of some students and provided a desperately needed hearing aid. Professors and students from **Southern Connecticut State University** with expertise in special education provided expertise with the many students with autism at Brillo, as well as conducted a workshop for managing children with behavior difficulties. With a collaborative effort by many volunteers with expertise in special education and therapies, Brillo de Sol teachers and administrators are learning new methods for quantitative progress monitoring of learning in the classroom and in therapies, as well as developing individualized educational plans for each student.



Therapy

To become fully engaged in the school and to benefit from the curriculum, as well as to develop self help skills and independence for activities of daily living, Brillo de Sol provides special needs students with the therapies they need to succeed. In addition to a comprehensive speech, language, and hearing therapy programs, we also offer services in mental health and occupational therapies.



Primary school teacher **Ruth Galindo** has been teaching 14 and 15 year-old children in the 5th and 6th grades at Brillo de Sol for three years. She is very involved in the lives of her students. She feels that she is also mother, father, nurse, psychologist, and friend to her students. Ruth knows that her passion is to work with her students, giving them her love, and setting a good example in preparing them for their life ahead.



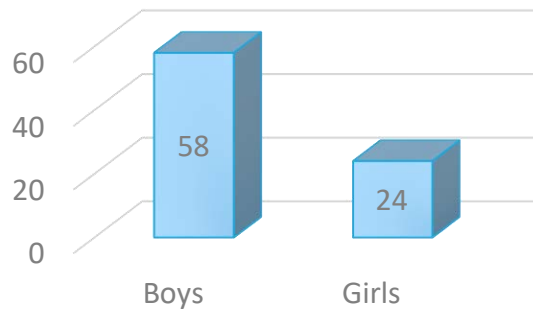
“Every day I have new challenges, because I am very interested in the academic training of my students, but I am also interested in being able to face the challenges of life. In these 3 years I have learned to enjoy their joys and triumphs and to support them with their frustrations and family problems, in addition to supporting them with the challenges they face according to their different sensory, motor, or emotional difficulties.”

Miss Ruth, Teacher



About Our Students

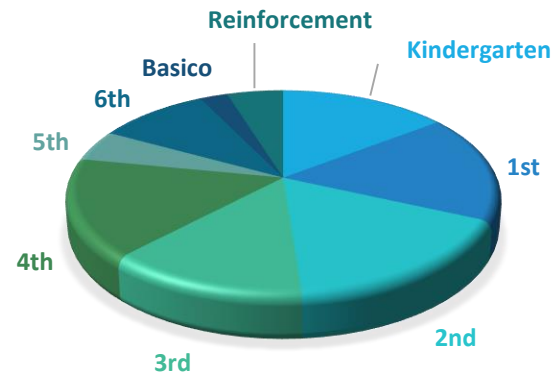
By Gender



We serve children from Kindergarten to the equivalent of middle-school in the United States. Grade and classroom placement is not age dependent. Instead, we assess skills levels and assign children to particular classrooms to optimize individual learning needs. This way we can group children of similar skills level together, while allowing the children to leverage instruction and benefit from their collective strength and talents.

Special “reinforcement” classes serve children who have completed the Guatemalan elementary school requirements, but are unable to find placement in a traditional public school after completing their primary education.

BY GRADE



Grade

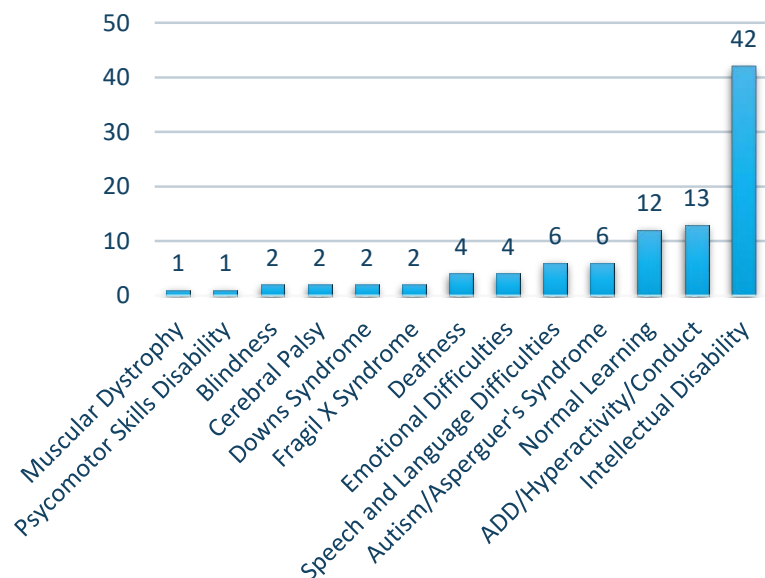
Kindergarten	12
1st	14
2nd	14
3rd	11
4th	13
5th	4
6th	8
Basico	2
Reinforcement	4



About Our Students

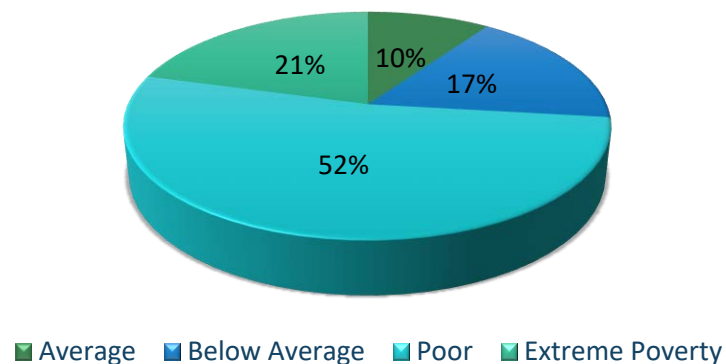
The students at Brillo de Sol have a variety of medical and educational diagnoses, and many have more than one. Our population represents a broad spectrum of cognitive, physical, and emotional disabilities - all requiring specialized teaching methodologies. Many children have cognitive skills within the normal range, but nutritional deficits, or delays in starting school due to family situations have prevented them from learning in traditional classroom settings. Teachers in public schools are not trained to identify children in need of special education in the Guatemalan public education system and they are often teaching classes of 50 students.

Diagnosis



90% of the children attending Brillo de Sol are from economically disadvantaged families, and the vast majority of them live in poverty or extreme poverty. Without sponsorship or other financial assistance, these children would be unable to attend school and receive the therapies and specialized education needed to overcome their learning difficulties.

Economic Situation





Class of 2017

MADELYN VANESSA CAC LAJ

LEONARDO FRANCISCO GARCÍA FAJARDO

RUDY COLINDRES GUTIÉRREZ

KEVIN DANIEL HERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA

HILDA MARIBEL ICHICH

SELVIN ALEJANDRO LOPEZ CAL

LUIS ROBERTO LÒPEZ MELGAR



Congratulations
Graduates!



Learning skills for life



To prepare our children for the working world, Brillo de Sol offers instruction in carpentry – through a partnership with Proyecto de Carpenteria in Alotenango. Children also participate in gardening, cooking, arts and crafts, and other enrichment opportunities. Often the regular curriculum integrates these learning experiences with academic skills such as language and math and sciences.





Brillo de Sol, USA

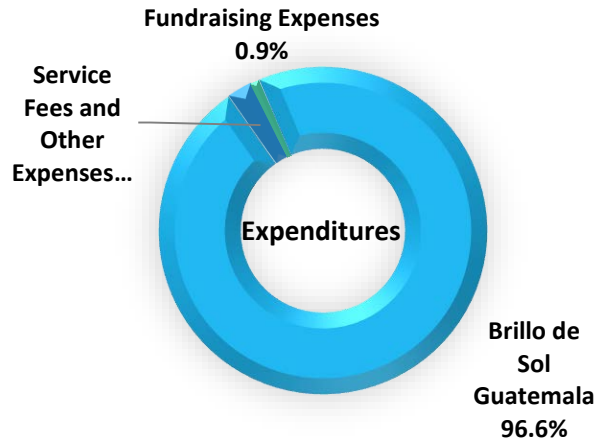
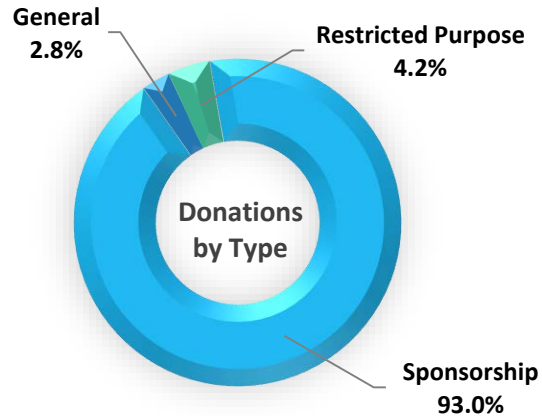
Brillo de Sol, USA, Inc. is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, supporting and advancing the education, health and quality of life of children with special needs and disabilities in Guatemala, including:

- 1) Fundraising, educational and other support to:
 - Provide scholarships and other direct tuition assistance to children attending Asociación Brillo de Sol School, a registered Guatemalan non-governmental organization operating a school for children with special needs located in San Gaspar Vivar, in the municipality of La Antigua, Sacatepéquez, Guatemala.
 - Provide funding to Asociación Brillo de Sol for capital expenditures, instructional expenses of the school, and for administration of other programs designed to promote and foster special education teacher training and services.
 - Educate and provide information to the general public about the educational, social, and health needs of families and children in Guatemala.
- 2) To recruit and coordinate the efforts of volunteers and professionals from the USA and Canada to assist Asociación Brillo de Sol and its partner organizations in providing educational and health services to children and families in Guatemala.
- 3) To promote and improve the Education and Health of indigenous communities in Guatemala and to cooperate with other agencies or groups delivering education and health services that augment or support Asociación Brillo de Sol's programs.



We are always in need of talented, passionate individuals to help us in our work. If you are interested in working as a board member, volunteer or professional advisor, please email us at: brillodesolusa@brillodesol.org.





96.6 % of our income went directly to Brillo de Sol Guatemala

Brillo de Sol USA Profit and Loss Statement

Fiscal Year Ending 6/30/2017 (Cash Basis)

INCOME

General	\$ 741	2.8%
Restricted Purpose	1,115	4.2%
Sponsorship	24,673	93.0%
TOTAL INCOME	26,529	100.0%

EXPENDITURES

Disbursement to BDS Guatemala:

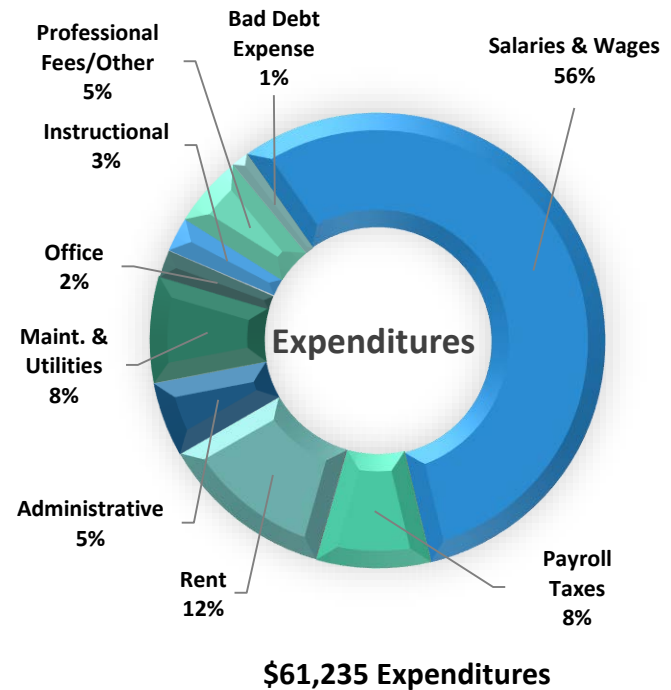
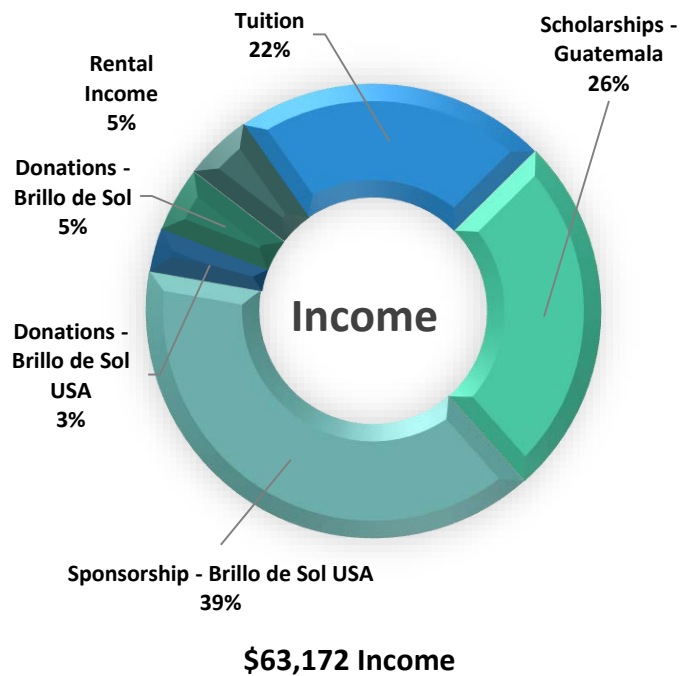
Discretionary Funds	710	2.7%
Designated Purpose - Computers & Other	391	1.5%
Sponsored Students - Tuition and Fees	24,748	92.5%
Total Disbursements to Brillo de Sol Guatemala	25,849	96.6%

Fundraising Expenses	241	0.9%
Service Fees and Other Expenses	660	2.5%

TOTAL EXPENDITURES	26,751	100.0%
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NET INCOME(LOSS)	\$ (222)	100%
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Brillo de Sol Guatemala 2017 Projected Income & Expenditures



The average state spending per child on special education in the United States is \$18,000+

At \$740 per child, Brillo de Sol educates and provides specialized therapies to 82 children for the same amount of money.

Foundations & NGO Partners | In addition to individual sponsors and donors, we are fortunate to have the support of several foundations and NGOs that provide direct tuition assistance and other financial support to Brillo de Sol Guatemala.



In addition to sponsoring 14 students in 2017, Uno Más has provided furnishing for classrooms and other financial support.



Letty and Ana-Maria Ackermans, Founder of Uno Más.

Proyecto Mimariposa focuses on at-risk children and adolescents living in extreme poverty.



Madelyn demonstrates her computer skills to Mieke Blankers of Proyecto Mimariposa.





2017 Brillo de Sol USA Board

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President

Joseph Phebus Consulting, LLC

Colleen Phebus

Vice President

Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership

Christiane Dechert

Treasurer

Washington State University

Jaime Trujillo

Secretary

GOBI Library Solutions from EBSCO

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Board Member

Executive Director, Brillo de Sol Guatemala

Cristina Sazo-Schurr

Board Member

Doctor PC

Elisa Udaskin

Board Member

Marketing (Kraft Foods, Mondelez)



www.brillodesol.org

2017 Brillo de Sol Guatemala Board

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Board President & Executive Director

Brillo de Sol Guatemala

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Director, Colegio Interamericano

Joseph Phebus

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Industrial Psychologist

Jorge Alejandro Arriola Benitez

Board Member

Municipality of La Antigua, Guatemala

Cristian Reyna

Professional announcer

"La Que Buena" Giorgia USA

Carlos Alberto López

Board Member

General Manager, BOMASA S.A.

Luis Fernando Sipaqué Roman

Board Member

MENSA, Guatemala

Contact

Brillo de Sol USA, Inc.

1429-C Providence Road

Towson, MD 21286

603-715-8989

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