



### To the Friends & Stakeholders of Open Arms...

**Seneca Bowers, Educational Coordinator**

My first day at summer camp two years ago, I was immediately paired to work with a first grader who was struggling with reading. We sat down and read through a few sentences that she immediately forgot as soon as we got to the next page. Together we focused on the word "the" and tried to work on remembering this sight word from one sentence to the next, and even that was a challenge. Even though the 15 minutes I spent with her that day didn't magically help her learn to read, the amount I've watched her grow in the last two years is nothing short of incredible. This year, I've watched Caty become more and more confident in her reading, and even try to read in front of our story time group at the library. Now wrapping up third grade, she has been meeting with her wonderful tutor twice a week for several years. Watching Caty grow in her confidence and abilities has been an incredible honor and I cherish all of the time I get to spend with her. We were able to celebrate an achievement she earned in school by going and getting bubble tea, something that has now turned into a tradition for us. Looking back on that first summer meeting Caty, I'm so grateful for the time I spent with her, so I can celebrate each accomplishment alongside her.

As we wrap another successful school year of tutoring, the kids have been excitedly asking when they get to come to summer camp. Each Wednesday in June and July we'll have lots of activities that the students look forward to each year. Their days are filled with games, crafts, cooking, gardening, and more. This year, the students will be learning a little more about our planet as we travel through Earth's biomes. The games and activities will take them through the tundra, rainforests, savanna's and more! Our summer camp is made possible by our generous volunteers that give their time to invest in our students.



*Caty received her first library card this year*



*Caty and I getting bubble tea, one of her favorite treats*

**Nate Scott, OA Board of Directors**

In 2019, I was pastoring a small church and supplementing my income by providing human resources at a manufacturing company in Wayne County. That summer we were approached by a group of students and faculty from the College of Wooster who were interested in implementing an employee resource model within local businesses. Businesses who chose to participate in the program would allow time and space at their facilities for local service agencies to be available for confidential meetings with employees. These "resource coordinators" would help employees with non-work issues that impacted their work - things like domestic issues, substance abuse, mental health, and financial literacy. The idea was that employees would be more likely to be transparent with people who weren't their bosses and, in turn, be more reliable and productive because their needs were being addressed in constructive ways.

At the time, the company workforce was roughly 60% Latino with men and women from a number of Central American countries. My role included sitting in on potential new hire interviews, onboarding new hires, communicating company policies and regularly answering tax-related questions. As such, I interacted with our Latino employees daily and saw (or heard) first-hand the challenges that a majority of them faced as United States immigrants.

One of the resource coordinators assigned to our company was Haroldo Nunes, the Executive Director of an organization called Open Arms. Every week, Haroldo would show up to walk the floor, shake hands, and meet with people privately. We began talking regularly after his visits and, eventually, grabbed a few lunches together. At one of those lunches, he asked me to consider serving on the board of Open Arms. I understood the need for supporting Latino immigrants and saw the impact he was having at our company, so I decided to pursue the opportunity. I've been on the board for Open Arms for almost five years now, and the experience has been rewarding, challenging (in good ways), and fun. The work of Open Arms exists where the divide between heaven and earth is thin. We partner with God in the name of Jesus to serve and bless, but so often I am the one feeling served and blessed by the One who is rescuing and reconciling the world to himself.



### Interview with Justiniano

**Q:** How long have you been in the USA?

**A:** 11 years since 2012

**Q:** Why did you come to the USA?

**A:** I came to the USA to make money to pay off a debt. Also, to get money for my family.

**Q:** Have you been able to pay off your debt yet?

**A:** Thank God, I have paid the debt already. I was able to buy a car in Guatemala and buy some pieces of property. I am not worried about my sons anymore. I am ready to go back.

**Q:** Why is holding you back from going back?

**A:** Right now I have cancer and I am getting treatment so that when I am healthy I can go back to Guatemala to spend the rest of my life with my wife and children at home.



**Q:** What will you do when you go back home?

**A:** I want to change the community there and serve like I have been served. Before I came I was already making huge changes in my community. I was part of the city council in my town and I was able to get them a nixtamal mill (how Guatemalans process the corn in order to make tortillas and tamales). The closest one is an hour and a half walk from the town. It was ok for regular everyday life but it became a problem whenever there was a wedding or a funeral. So I went to the capital city of Guatemala to represent my town to petition for one to be brought to our town. I was successful. I want to keep making a difference in my community. I want to see my wife again.

**Q:** How has Open Arms partnered with you?

**A:** One of our most difficult hurdles is the language barrier. I can always count on you [Open Arms] to bring me to the hospital and explain what is happening. I am very grateful for the blessing you are in our lives.

## Banquet Update & Bright Light Players

On March 27th, we held the Open Arms Banquet—and it was a resounding success! In fact, we had to set up additional tables because we ran out of space, which is a great problem to have. Gloria Miller planned and coordinated a delicious buffet of Hispanic food that everyone enjoyed. We also heard from Seneca Bowers, who spoke about the tutoring program. She invited several students and their parents to share how the program has been instrumental in their academic success. Pablo shared powerful stories about individuals impacted by our community outreach efforts. He also spoke about the current fears and concerns within the Latino community in light of recent government decisions, and how Open Arms has been working to provide support and hope.

We also heard from Rollin Mukanza, who shared about the impactful work being done at the Akron branch. He invited a couple to speak about the help they have received, offering a moving testimony of how the support they found through Open Arms has made a real difference in their lives.

We also were able to worship together in various different languages. Representatives of both branches of our Open Arms organization represented their



cultures with beautiful songs of worship. Even though we were not able to join in song, we all could feel the atmosphere of worship that they shared with us.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who attended, volunteered, and supported this special evening. The energy in the room was filled with warmth, unity, and a shared commitment to making a difference. Events like this remind us why we do what we do—and how much more we can accomplish together.

At the beginning of April, Bright Light Players put on a fantastic performance of *The Jungle Book* and generously selected Open Arms as the recipient of the proceeds from the show. The cast and crew poured their hearts into the production, and it showed in every detail—from the creative costumes and sets to the lively music and engaging performances. The audience was captivated from beginning to end. We are so thankful to Bright Light Players for their generosity and for choosing to support our mission. If you didn't get a chance to attend, make sure to watch for their future shows. Their talent, heart, and commitment to the community truly raised the bar!



## Ways to Support Open Arms:

**Transportation Need:** As kids programs are gearing up for the summer, transporting them to and from programs is a BIG need. We are looking for a van or mini bus that can be borrowed, purchased or donated. We are also looking for volunteers willing to help drive.

Contact Seneca or Pablo (pablo@open-arms.us) if you have vehicle leads or are willing to volunteer to drive.



**Summer Volunteers Needed:** If you would be interested in spending time helping make our kids' summer memorable, please reach out to me! We are also looking for individuals or organizations to sponsor meals for our students and volunteers throughout the summer. We're excited for another year of summer camp that will be impactful for students and volunteers alike!

**Seneca Bowers -Education Coordinator**  
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