



# READING VILLAGE FUNDRAISING TOOLKIT LEARNING JOURNEY ALUMNI





# NETWORKING GUIDE FOR ALUMNI

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Dear Learning Journey Alumni,

When you traveled with us to Guatemala, your life was changed. From the cobblestone streets of Antigua to the dirt floors and banana trees around Lake Atitlan, you experienced a world that very few have. Do you remember the smell of the city soot when you stepped off the plane in Guatemala City? The darkness of night out by the lake? The depth of gratitude expressed by our students? The smiles on the faces of their parents as we were welcomed into their homes? I, for one, cannot forget those moments.

In our days together, we laughed and cried, shared and listened. Over buses and boat rides we contemplated not only our privilege, but how we might use our good fortune to improve the lot of others. To that end, the Learning Journeys have been designed to be an experience in humility, gratitude, and inspiration. I am convinced that the world would be better off if we each walked in another's shoes, but an opportunity is lost if we don't return home to share the insights gained and lessons learned with those who couldn't be there to experience them for themselves.

We have designed a networking toolkit to help you share your experience and encourage others to join us on their own Learning Journey. On the following pages you will find everything from email scripts to photos. Spread these materials amongst your friends and family. Share them with your colleagues. Invite your personal networks on a Learning Journey of their own, so that they too can change and be changed.

Whether it has been minutes or months since you returned from Guatemala with us, don't lose the inspiration that the experience sparked. Remember how you are better off for all that you have seen, and now invite your friends to share that good fortune.

Thank you, in advance, for helping us share the Learning Journey experience with a wide audience. Don't hesitate to let me know if there is any way I can help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LD' or 'Larry Dressler'.

Larry Dressler  
Board Member & Trip Leader, Reading Village





## **1. STAY CONNECTED TO READING VILLAGE**

**You're part of the Reading Village team now, and we hope it will stay that way. Are you in the loop?**

# Here are the easiest ways to stay connected with Reading Village & our work in Guatemala:

## 1. Follow our Social Media Feeds

For better or worse, every “like” on Facebook or Twitter makes a big difference.

In addition to our monthly newsletter, following our social media feeds (and asking your friends to do the same) is a great way to stay up to date with our work. Go to <http://readingvillage.org/take-action/contact/> to find links to our Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram accounts.

## 2. Attend our Local Events & Presentations

Reading Village personnel are often invited to present at local businesses, schools, and community organizations. All events are advertised through social media and newsletters, but don't hesitate to ask if we have anything coming up in your area. Please email our Director of Communications at [kassia@readingvillage.org](mailto:kassia@readingvillage.org) if you are willing to make a presentation yourself.

## 3. Guest Blog

Do you love to write, but need an audience? Now that you've been to Guatemala we'd love to feature you as a guest blogger. We'll work with you to identify a topic and edit a final piece for publication. All of our blogs are announced through social media and e-newsletters to reach a wide international audience. Blogs are roughly 500 words in length and can be viewed at: <http://readingvillage.org/about-us/blog/>.

## 4. Collect Spanish Language Books

As you saw, our scholars are constantly in need of new Spanish language books. The need is greater than ever before now that three communities are trying to open and/or maintain public libraries. To that end, we encourage you to volunteer for our book bank team. If you have an idea for a new outlet for books, email our Executive Director at [linda@readingvillage.org](mailto:linda@readingvillage.org) and she'll work with you to select appropriate topics and titles and then coordinate shipping to Guatemala.

## 5. Start Your Own Fundraising Page

It's also important that we continue to translate this passion into dollars that can be invested in the well-being of the students you met. Reading Village has recently invested in a great new online platform that makes it easy for you to reach out to your family and friends. Email [kassia@readingvillage.org](mailto:kassia@readingvillage.org) and she will help you set up your own online fundraising page to make collecting donations easier than ever before. Details can be found at: <http://readingvillage.org/take-action/fundraise/>.



# How to Start Your Very Own Stay Classy Fundraising Page:

Stay Classy is an online platform that our supporters can use to fundraise for Reading Village. It's easy to use and makes collecting donations a cinch! Follow these steps below or give us a call to walk you through the process (Director of Communications, Kassia Binkowski: 608.335.5233). We're happy to help and thrilled to have you fundraising on our behalf!

## 1. REGISTER

Go to <http://readingvillage.org/take-action/fundraise/> and click "Start Your Own Campaign". Fill in your name, email address, password, and birthday to register for a Stay Classy account.

## 2. PICK A TITLE & A FUNDRAISING GOAL

Pick a title for your page as well as a fundraising goal. When you do this, consider a specific project you are raising money for, or perhaps a specific scholar you'd like to support through high school. Use a clear title that will inspire your friends and family to give. Titles like "Let's Help Angelica Finish High School" or "Give the Gift of Literacy to Guatemala" are clear and concise. You'll have a chance to describe your fundraising campaign with more detail later, so stick to something short for the title. You can also change the fundraising goal later if you end up surpassing your target.

## 3. CREATE CONTENT FOR YOUR PAGE

At this point, you should receive an email confirming that your page is all set up. Click the link "View My Page" to edit the content for your fundraising site. Once there, half way down the page on the left click "Edit My Page". This is where you can add a picture of yourself, change the title or the fundraising target, and edit the copy so that it tells your own personal pitch. You can also edit the email text that will automatically be sent to your friends and family when they make a donation. At the bottom, click "Update My Page" to save these changes.

## 4. ADD PHOTOS & VIDEO

Once back on the main page, you'll see a large black box in the middle of the screen where you can upload photos and video. We've got plenty of both that we'd be happy to send you, so don't hesitate to ask!

## 5. SEND AN EMAIL TO FAMILY & FRIENDS

Now you're all set to go! Just copy and paste the url for the page and drop this in an email to family and friends. Explain what you're trying to raise money for, why it's important, and how much you hope they will give. You'll likely get a wave of donations right away, followed by a lull. We recommend sending another reminder email to friends and family who haven't already given after a week or two (depending on the duration of your campaign). Personal phone calls are also very effective!

## 6. THANK YOUR DONORS

Last but not least, even though your donors are getting an automatic thank you email generated by Stay Classy, we recommend you reach out to them directly with a more personal note or call.



## **2. CONNECT YOUR NETWORK TO READING VILLAGE**

**If you give them the opportunity, your friends and family will be as excited by this work as you are. Are you ready to ask for their support?**

# Here's the easiest way to connect others:

## 1. Bridge the Gap

It's time to tell all of the stories that you have from your trip. Invite a friend out to coffee, throw a dinner party, or send some emails. Find a way to connect with the people in your network who care about education, global literacy, and you!

## 2. Find Common Ground

It's important that you identify why other people should care about your experience. Do they care about literacy, Guatemala, or you? Each of these is a good reason to reach out, but you'll need to find some common ground for this new phase of your relationship together.

## 3. Identify Opportunities

Not everyone is going to want to go on their own Learning Journey, and that's fine! There are plenty of ways for folks to get involved in global literacy, but it's up to you to identify an opportunity that is going to be feasible and enjoyable for each person.

## 4. Extend an Invitation

Whether you want them to collect books, buy a plane ticket, or write a check, you need to explicitly invite your friends and family to join you in supporting Reading Village's work.

## 5. Make a Connection

Whether it means sending fresh photography, making a quick phone call, or sending a thank you note, feel free to connect us to your friends and family so that they, too, feel part of the Reading Village community.

*These are just the highlights. If this process looks helpful, then there are plenty of details on the following pages to help you move from passion to action. What are you waiting for?*



# 1. BRIDGE THE GAP

## It's Story Time!

This is the fun part. Get your friends one on one or in a group to share stories and photographs from your time in Guatemala. This is your opportunity to provide some context for the next steps. Let them see the faces of the children you met, set a table with the cloth that you brought home from Guatemala, share the story of your favorite scholar. The idea is to engage their mind, their heart, and their imagination.

While it's really important to make this personal connection with folks you haven't seen in a long time, the family and friends who are part of your daily life are going to be curious too. Let them ask questions, share your experience, but don't feel like you have to ask anything of them just yet. Just enjoy the opportunity to connect over Guatemala.

## Here's a phone call script you could use to get the ball rolling:

*Hi [Friend]! As you might know, I just got back from a great trip to Guatemala. While I was there, I thought of you as we were [tasting coffee, learning to cook tortillas, reading to children, etc.]. I've got some wonderful stories and photographs that I'm sure you'd love. Can we find some time for coffee or dinner? I want to hear about your recent [job/trip/life event, etc], too. Do you have time to get together soon?*

## RESOURCES:

### Reading Village Blog

If your friends or family live too far to connect in person, in addition to a longer email with stories from the trip send them a link to the blog so they can read in more detail if they'd like.

<http://readingvillage.org/about-us/blog/>

### Learning Journey Photography

By now you should have received a library of photos from your own Learning Journey. Well we've got lots more where there those came from. Let us know if there's something specific you'd like to be able to share.

If you'd rather make a phone call, here are some talking points to remember:

- Why did you go to Guatemala?
- What did you do in Guatemala?
- What did you learn in Guatemala?

# EMAIL SCRIPT FOR OUR PERSONAL NETWORK

Dear *[Name of Friend, Family Member, or Colleague]*,

As you may remember, I recently traveled to Guatemala with Reading Village - a non-profit organization that provides innovative literacy and education programs for indigenous youth.

Over the course of the eight day trip, my life was changed for the better. Alongside international travelers who were as eager and interested to see the world as I was, I explored the colonial town of Antigua, saw ancient Mayan ruins, and toured a coffee plantation on the shores of Lake Atitlan. I also witnessed first hand the impact that Reading Village's innovative programs were having on these Mayan communities. We spoke with staff, toured the sites, and met with the students and their families to learn exactly how their lives had been changed by this organization.

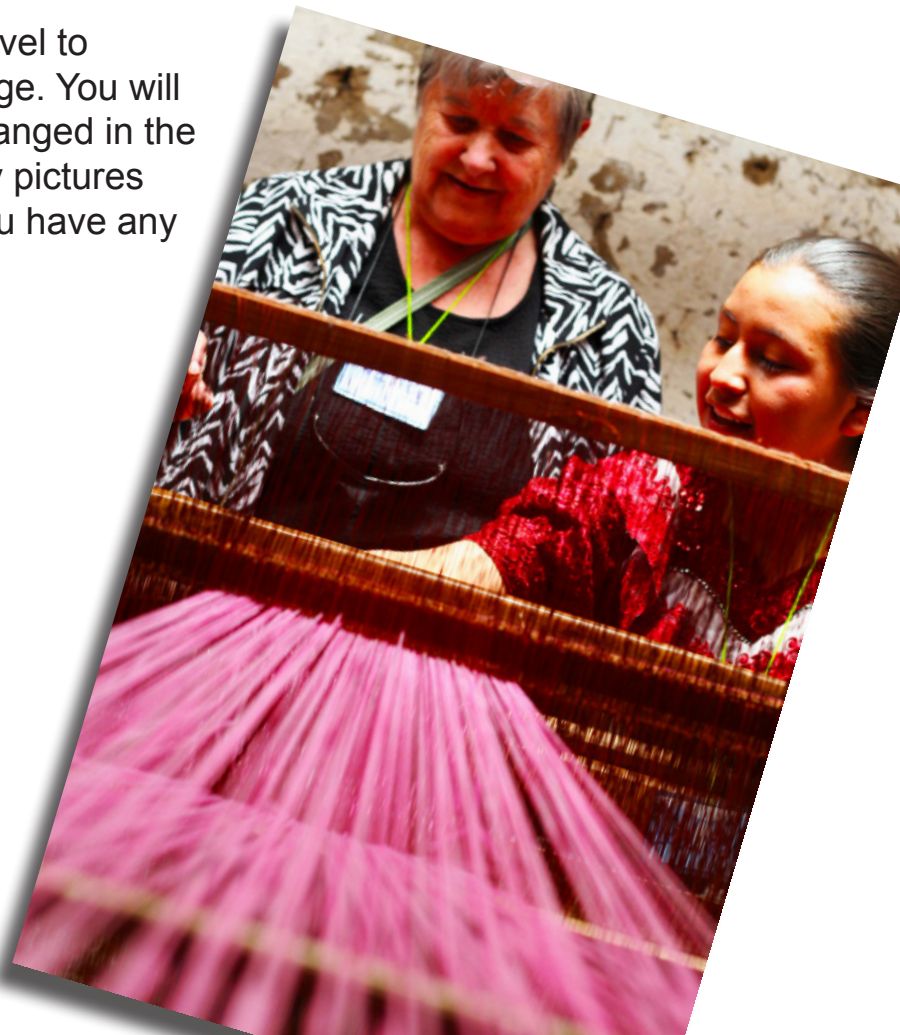
A Learning Journey trip transcends tourism. It is an intimate cultural experience that made me a world citizen, a better professional, a more effective philanthropist.

This November, I encourage you to travel to Guatemala yourself with Reading Village. You will make friends, change lives, and be changed in the process. Likewise, I'd love to share my pictures and tell you more about my trip. Do you have any time to get together soon?

Sincerely,

*[Your name]*

*Consider attaching the Learning Journey information packet which is available on our website, or even some photos from your own trip. Remember - a picture is worth a thousand words!*



## 2. FIND COMMON GROUND

### What do you have in common?

There are a lot of reasons to care about Reading Village's work in Guatemala. Here are a few reasons why folks might care:

- They've been to **Guatemala**, too. Maybe it's been a while since they were last there, but odds are they'll want to reminisce with you about what you saw and how it felt. You now share that country with each other, so build a new bond over Guatemala.
- They believe in **education** to change the world. Maybe they are lifelong educators or are professionals with advanced degrees, but either way they will be eager to hear how education is changing the lives of the students you met.
- They have **traveled around the world** themselves and understand how important it is to alleviate poverty in all its forms. In this case they may be interested in learning how literacy can impact rural communities.
- They just really **care about you**. Each of us is lucky enough to have a few folks in our life who are willing to rally behind a cause just because it's something we believe in. You just need to convince them how passionate you are.



For each friend, colleague, or family member you need to figure out what it is that interests them about your experience, and then work that angle to inspire their participation. Maybe you know this person really well and the connection is easy. In other cases, you can use your initial conversation as a chance to get to know somebody better. In this case, **take the opportunity to ask questions like these:**

Have you ever traveled outside the United States?  
Or remind me again, have you ever been to Guatemala?

You've worked in education a long time,  
how do you think education changes a person's life?

Do you remember who taught you how to read?  
Or, can you imagine how different our lives would be without our educations?



# 3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

## Here's How They Can Help

After you've piqued their interest, there are so many ways that your friends and family can help support Reading Village's work. Every person has different strengths and you'll need to figure out what they are and make suggestions accordingly. Most important, we want to match each person with an activity that they can enjoy! Here are some of the easiest ways for your friends and family to get involved in our work:

1. **Make a donation in your honor**
2. **Set up an online fundraiser of their own**
3. **Collect Spanish language books**
4. **Travel with us to Guatemala on the next Learning Journey** - November 2-9, 2013
5. **Convene an audience that we (or you) can present to**
6. **Introduce us to a grant-making foundation**
7. **Sign up for our newsletter & follow our social media feeds**
8. **Make an in-kind donation (airline miles, printing, office supplies)**
9. **Publish an article about Reading Village**



Need more ideas of how your friends and family could help? Shoot us an email and we'll brainstorm together!  
[learningjourney@readingvillage.org](mailto:learningjourney@readingvillage.org)

# 4. EXTEND AN INVITATION

## Make the Ask

Even after you've identified a great opportunity for your friend/family/colleague to help support Reading Village, you're going to need to be explicit about asking for their help. Ask them to join you in supporting Reading Village and suggest some of the ways you think they might enjoy participating. If you're asking for a financial contribution, consider what they are capable of giving, what they have given to other organizations, or what size donations they have asked from you in the past. Turn the page for information about how various size gifts will be spent.

Lastly, it's important for your friends to know that you have some skin in the game, too. Tell them what you are doing to support Reading Village since you've returned home, offer to make the first donation to their fundraising page, invite them to write thank you notes with you to friends who have donated books, etc. Let Reading Village - and global literacy at large - be something you share together. Let this enrich your relationship.



\* We've got lots of great resources for how to ask for money from friends. Let us know if you'd like more information!

# Exactly how far does a dollar go?

Before your friends and family invest, they're probably going to want to know exactly how far their gift will go. Here's what you can tell them:

\$20

Provides five new storybooks for a reading promoter to use in his/her activities with local children.

\$50

Pays for one teen to participate in a two-day leadership retreat where he/she will learn the skills to be an effective change-maker in the community.

\$100

Pays for a teen's bus fare to and from school for a whole year. Our teens live in small villages far from the city where the high school is located so transportation is paramount!

\$500

Puts one teenager through one year of high school. This \$500 pays for annual registration fees, supplies, uniforms, and transportation. This amount is half of what a teen's parents may earn in an entire year.

\$1000

Pays to keep a teen in school for a year in addition to paying for their training by Reading Village to be a dynamic reading promoter and community leader.

\$10,000

Funds a village reading program that reaches hundreds of children through literacy & leadership activities. This donation will benefit an entire community in Guatemala.



# 5. MAKE A CONNECTION

## We're All In This Together

Don't forget that everyone here at Reading Village is happy to help you help your network. Here are a handful of the ways we can help, but don't hesitate to ask if you don't see something on this list:

- Photographs
- Powerpoint Presentations
- Thank You Notes & Phone Calls
- Statistics about Guatemala & Global Literacy
- Reading Village Brochures
- Newsletter sign-up
- Organizational Letterhead



At some point you'll also want to introduce your friend/family/colleague directly to Reading Village, so that you don't have to serve as a middle man. Reaching this point could take weeks, months, or years depending on that individual's enthusiasm. Regardless, here's all of the contact information you could need to make the most appropriate introduction:

**Linda Smith, Founder & Executive Director**

[linda@readingvillage.org](mailto:linda@readingvillage.org)  
303-883-2822

**Kassia Binkowski, Director of Development & Communications**

[kassia@readingvillage.org](mailto:kassia@readingvillage.org)

**Larry Dressler, Founding Board Member & Learning Journey Sherpa**

[larry@bluewingconsulting.com](mailto:larry@bluewingconsulting.com)



### **3. CONNECT A NEW AUDIENCE TO READING VILLAGE**

**We invite you to share the Learning Journey  
love with a much wider audience.  
Are you up for the challenge?**





## Public Networking

### HERE'S HOW TO GET STARTED

#### 1. Identify the prospective places to present

- Consider which locations will attract crowds who can not only afford to participate on a Learning Journey, but also are interested in international travel, social innovation, and philanthropy. Send them the email template and schedule a time to present.

#### 2. Email us for a presentation powerpoint and script

- We have everything you need to give a presentation including a powerpoint, script, and hand outs. Just email us at [learningjourney@readingvillage.org](mailto:learningjourney@readingvillage.org).
- As an alumni you should also have photography from your Learning Journey, these can be shown instead of a presentation if that's more comfortable.

#### 3. Deliver the presentation

- There's no need to be nervous, just give the presentation like you're talking to a group of old friends. Leave plenty of time for questions & don't forget, practice makes perfect.

#### 4. Direct folks our way

- After you've given the presentation feel free to pass out our contact information to anyone who is interested in learning more about the trip.



# PLACES TO PRESENT

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Sometimes the hardest part about giving a presentation is figuring out where to present! It's easy to think that no one wants to hear your story or see your photos, but in our experience that's just not true. If given the chance, most people want to learn about an exciting new adventure, they want to hear how it changed your life, and they want to daydream about how it could change theirs. Below is a short list of ideas to get the ball rolling, but if you want help brainstorming just ask! We're always happy to help our alumni network on our behalf - just email [learningjourney@readingvillage.org](mailto:learningjourney@readingvillage.org).



**YOUR CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE**

**A UNIVERSITY GROUP**

**YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL**

**RETAIL STORES WITH SOCIAL MISSIONS**

**YOUR LOCAL ROTARY CLUB**

**A SOCIAL GROUP**

**THROW A HOUSE PARTY**

**YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ON LUNCH BREAK AT YOUR OFFICE**

**BOOK CLUB**

# EMAIL SCRIPT TO SCHEDULE PRESENTATIONS

Dear [Contact at Presentation Location],

I'm writing on behalf of Reading Village – a non-profit organization that promotes literacy and educational achievement in rural Guatemala. Twice a year, Reading Village takes 10 travelers on the trip of a lifetime, traveling into the heart of rural communities to learn more about the indigenous cultural, experience innovative social programs, and meet the staff and students whose lives are being changed.

I traveled with Reading Village in [*the year of your Learning Journey*] and I would like to come tell my story. Furthermore, the next Learning Journey is November 2-9, and I'm helping promote the trip to a wide audience.

I am confident that an intimate cultural experience like that provided by Reading Village would appeal to the [*name of presentation location*] community. To that end, I'm wondering if I might be able to schedule a time to come present in your community. I've attached a flyer with additional details, but please let me know if this is something you would consider.

Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

*Don't forget to attach the Learning Journey Overview. You can download it from our website - <http://readingvillage.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Reading-Village-Learning-Journey-Packet.pdf>*



**GRACIAS**



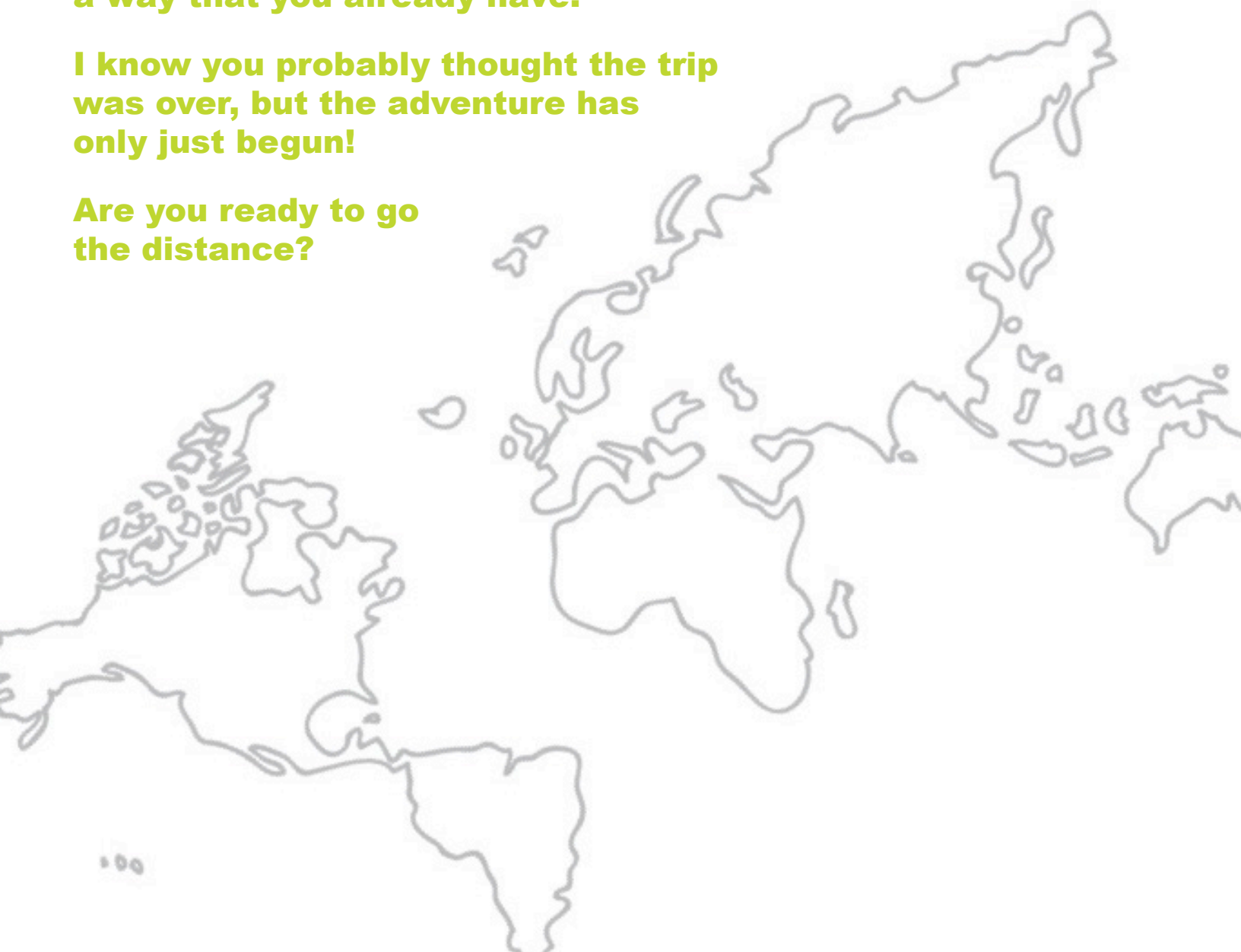
**The hardest part of a Learning Journey is coming home. Your friends and family weren't there to experience the highs and lows of the adventure. They didn't get to meet the staff, share meals with the students, or look into the eyes of those children. They didn't travel to Guatemala, walk down dirt roads or eat too many tortillas, and they may not understand why you did.**

**Bottom line: it's not easy being awesome.**

**The good news is, we're here to help! We hope that this toolkit will help you share the Learning Journey experience with your friends, family, and colleagues. We have the words and photos that you can use to convey the complexity and impact of Reading Village's work, and we've put together the resources you'll need to help these individuals invest in global literacy in a way that you already have.**

**I know you probably thought the trip was over, but the adventure has only just begun!**

**Are you ready to go the distance?**





**Thank you for continuing to transform  
lives through literacy.**

**We could not do what we do,  
if it weren't for you.**

**READING VILLAGE  
3210 15th Street, Boulder CO 80304  
[www.readingvillage.org](http://www.readingvillage.org)**