

At present Golden Avatar operate out of a bamboo hut with a concrete floor but in order to take the next step; to become a 'certified' school with Government registration and the ability to hold state recognised exams they must build a proper school with classrooms. This of course will take a lot of money and there will be many bureaucratic hurdles to overcome.

Shyam is just starting his third 6-month stint – and has no immediate plan to move on. He has rented a more 'up-market' rental property for his wife who he says is a bit of a 'clean-freak' – and they will continue to do what they can to give a chance to these disadvantaged children.

If you would like to assist Shyam and Golden Avatar in this project or you would like more information please contact him at [accounts@goldenavatarfoundation.com](mailto:accounts@goldenavatarfoundation.com)

## Luke: Transforming children's lives

A trip to India in 2015 consolidated thoughts Luke Owen (2007-08) had harboured ever since visiting Vietnam/Cambodia in his final year at school. Now that he had a couple of years' work experience under his belt – and some much-needed funds, it was time for a change; time to give something back; time to make a difference.

He consequently left behind his teaching job at Perth College and headed off to Mexico to take up a position at Misión Mexico. And after just his first week there:



*"I am loving it. Even though it is a big change; going from working with children from privileged backgrounds to working with those who have had really traumatic and tough upbringings, I am really enjoying it. The kids are amazing! Extremely positive, resilient and grateful. And - working in boarding at Hale really helped prepare me for this experience, which has made the transition a lot easier."*

Misión México provides a loving, secure home for children of all ages who have been abused, neglected, orphaned or abandoned. The refuge resembles a family home rather than an institution, and the children definitely feel loved and secure. They attend school; something most of them had not experienced before - and have access to tutors who help with their studies. The children are also learning to swim and surf and are the only surfers in Tapachula! Surfing is a previously unknown activity in the area, yet it has become a uniquely transforming sporting activity for these children.

The founders of the orphanage, Pam and Alan Skuse are actually Australian, having moved to Mexico 15 years ago to care for the kids. There is a definite Australian vibe: the children celebrated Australia Day this year with a sausage sizzle on the beach and Luke even taught some of the boys how to make a pavlova!



## Fast forward four months ...

It can be challenging at times, but it is extremely rewarding! His role has changed a lot from the first month. Luke initially spent most of his time doing general volunteer duties like getting the kids ready for school, helping with homework, cooking and running activities. Now his focus is mainly on coordinating the Youth Transition Programme.

He meets with all the older boys once a week to recap, talk about the week's successes - and any challenges. They work through a personal development curriculum created by Luke which involves such things as goal-setting, health and nutrition issues. He teaches cooking and helps with skills like budgeting which will help them move into a transition house - and eventually to become fully independent adults.

Luke's photography skills have also been put to good use. In his spare time he has been acting as photographer/videographer helping with promotional material for Misión Mexico, as well as teaching the older children how to edit their own videos. With it being a small refuge and organisation - it really is all hands on deck!

Misión Mexico definitely has a huge impact on these children's lives, and there are so many success stories - but there is always a need for volunteers and funding. Luke knows that other Old Haleians would make great candidates thanks to their service learning experiences at school and he is happy to pass on any information.

Otherwise, you can find out more about volunteering - and about how to make donations to Misión Mexico here - [www.lovelifehope.com](http://www.lovelifehope.com)