

Graduating Student Pays Tribute to Jóvenes Adelante

A final-year student surprised Jóvenes Adelante with a moving tribute at the annual Posada event in December. Luis Fernando Briseño Cruz, who will graduate with a degree in Mechatronics in June 2019, took advantage of the gathering to say a public ‘thank you’ to the staff, board and volunteers. To mark the occasion, he presented board member Esther Rocha with a plaque and in a very moving speech, he told the gathering, “Jóvenes Adelante gave me so much more than scholarship money. You provided the human touch. You cared about me as an individual and supported me while I grew as a person.”

Last week I met with Luis for coffee and he explained what motivated him to make this special effort. “I wanted to do more than simply say ‘thank you’ because I have been given so much. I had encouragement every step of the way, for five whole years. Especially from my mentor – he had faith in me and taught me how to have faith in myself.”

In near-perfect English, Luis recalls first meeting his mentor, Frank Thoms, where they bonded in spite of a profound language barrier. At that initial meeting, Luis remembers consciously deciding “to not be shy, in spite of my errors.” Taking his cue from Frank’s genuine desire to be helpful, Luis embraced the opportunity to learn English with a patient and encouraging native speaker – and the rest is history! Frank now mentors a new Spanish-speaking student and Luis is helping them to get established.

Luis’ relationships in the Jóvenes family inspired him to push every boundary to broaden his university experience. After meeting the older students and learning of their experiences, he began actively pursuing prospects that would expand his horizons, especially to travel. He competed for a position with a university robotics team which eventually took him to a competition in Brazil. His face lights up as he tells me, “Representing Mexico at an international competition — and placing third — was a dream come true for me. It has motivated me to set my sights even higher...”

And Luis credits JA with his success. He believes he speaks for all the students when he says, “Jóvenes Adelante expects you to reach for the stars, and if you make the effort to reach for your dream, they will come on board with any extra support you need.” He adds, “That’s also why I like being around other Jóvenes students. They don’t just talk about the things they want — they have targets and dreams, and they pursue them!”

Luis has just completed his final practicum with Whirlpool in Celaya where he interned with the Innovation and Design team. He’s excited about his job prospects, especially because his degree has prepared him to serve as the interlocutor between four engineering specialties: mechanical,



electrical, computer, and systems engineering. “I’m a kind of interpreter,” he laughs, “It’s my job to help them understand each other, and that’s exactly what I love to do!”

Jóvenes Adelante unlocks a radically more expansive future for the youth of San Miguel by easing financial barriers to higher education. To be a sponsor, mentor or volunteer, or to join our mailing list, please visit website jovenesadelante.org or call 415-150-0030 or email us at info@jovenesadelante.org.