

WOMEN'S HOOPS: THE MUSKETEERS MAKE AN NCAA RUN TO REMEMBER

# XAVIER

SPRING 2001



## Stepping Up

Alumni deliver schoolbooks  
and hope, to impoverished  
children in Guatemala

# a culture of | service

MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS IS MORE THAN JUST A CATCHPHRASE AT XAVIER. IT'S A WAY OF LIFE FOR MANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY—STUDENTS, ALUMNI, EVEN A VARIETY OF FACULTY AND STAFF



*Brian Harrity and Helmut Roebig, Jr. (opposite, left and center) spent their money and a week of vacation helping children in the Guatemalan highlands*

**T**he Guatemalan highlands are peppered with volcanic peaks, Mayan ruins and Spanish architecture dating back hundreds of years. The roads are nothing more than rugged dirt paths. Against this backdrop, a converted school bus rumbles toward its latest destination, the rural village of Parramos. As Joe and Jeff Berninger and 17 others pull into town, they head for the school, where rows of children line the entranceway awaiting their arrival. A band begins playing. A chicken is sacrificed. Freshly cut pine needles are sprinkled over the school's dirt floor. These are no ordinary visitors. They're honored guests.

The group—12 of whom are Xavier graduates—are with Cooperative for Education, a 5-year-old organization that delivers schoolbooks to impoverished villages throughout this Third World country. In reality, though, they're delivering much more—they're bringing hope for a better life to the children of these farming communities, where the illiteracy rate is 75 percent and the average daily income just \$3. "Breaking the cycle of poverty through education" is the organization's mantra.

The Berninger brothers, Joe, a 1989 graduate, and Jeff, a '91 graduate, started

*Kathi Lawrenz, a 1989 graduate, and 11 other alumni spent a week delivering 10,000 books—and several Xavier basketballs and soccer balls—to children in 11 Guatemalan villages.*

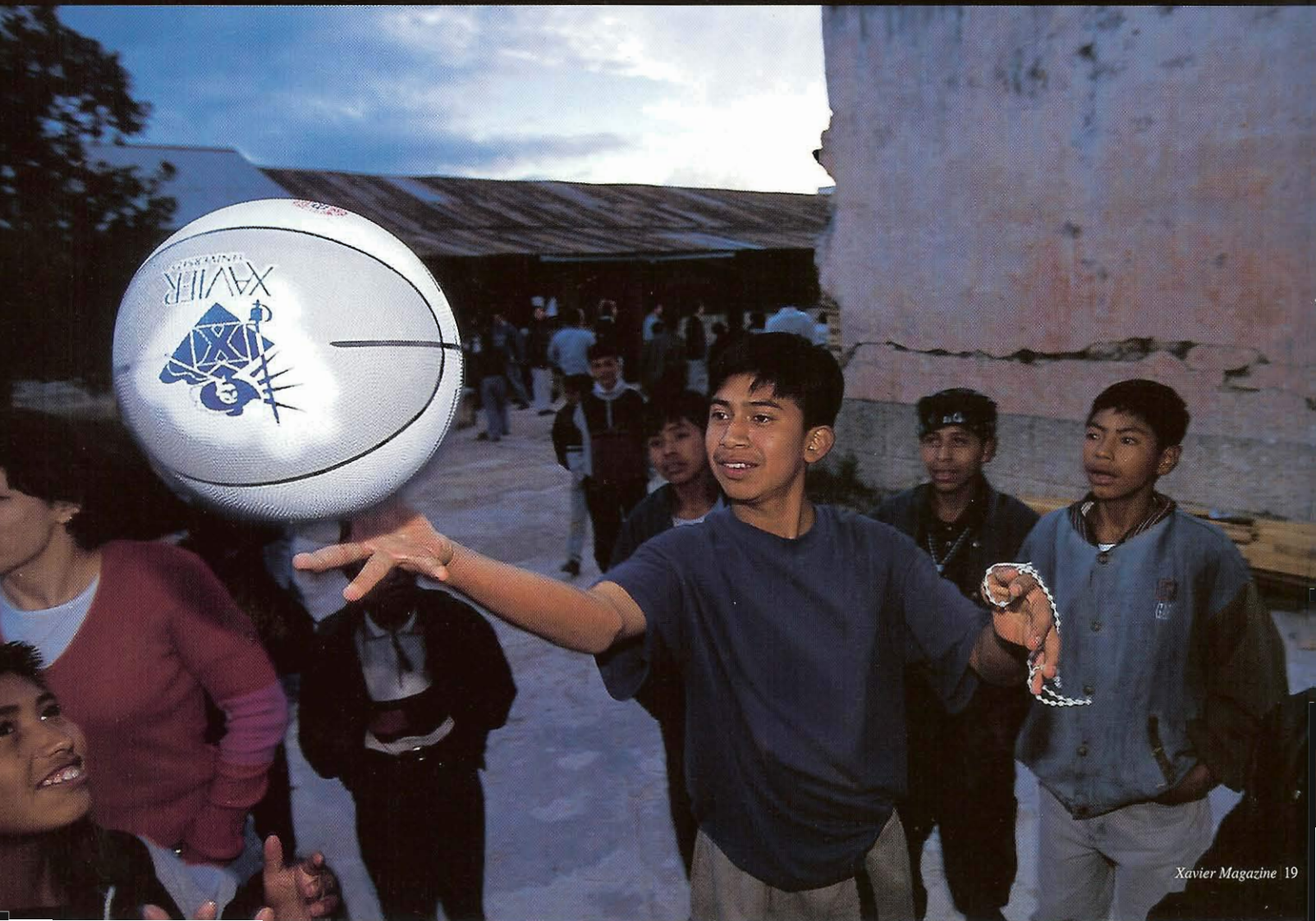
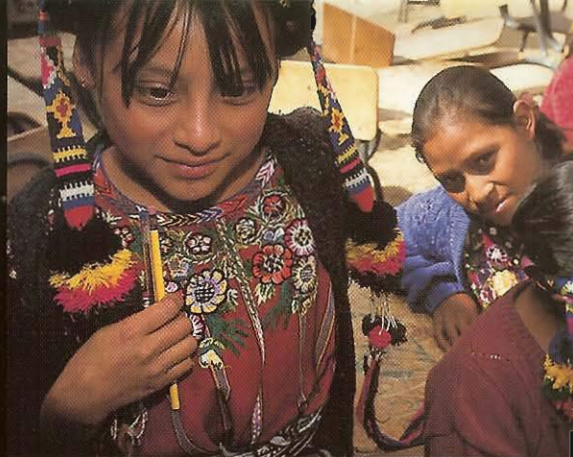


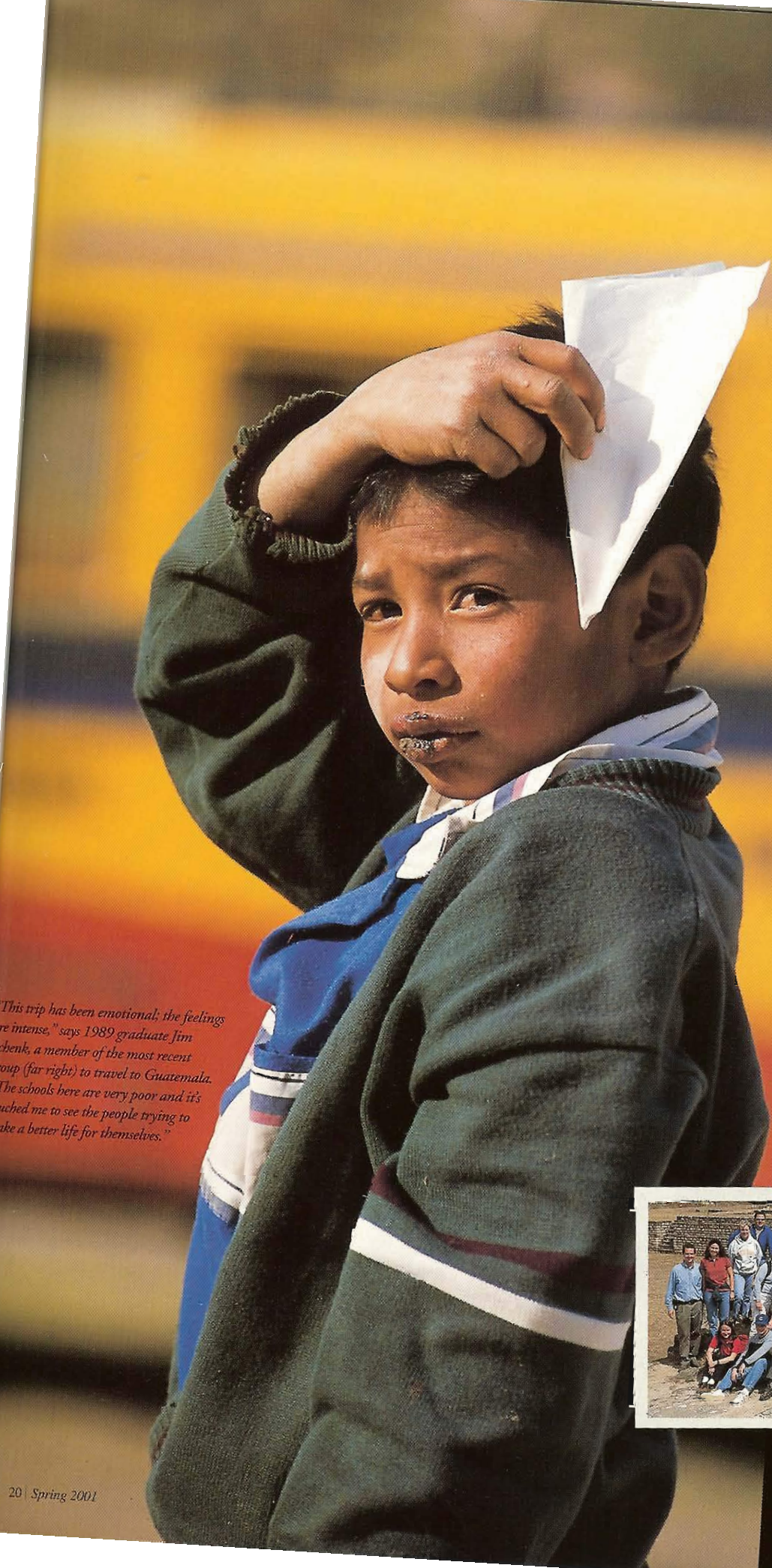
"FOR EVERY SACRIFICE

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the Cincinnati-based organization after visiting the country and falling in love with the people. They gathered sponsorship money from Coke, Microsoft and Rotary Clubs to purchase the initial outlay of books and supplies. Each year they find volunteers willing to give up their luxury vacations in exchange for spending their own money and 10 days delivering books throughout Guatemala—despite the U.S. government’s safety advisory against traveling to the Central American country. “Joe did a hard sell, and I’m glad he pushed me into making this trip,” says Jim Schenk, Joe’s former roommate and a 1989 graduate. “The trip has been emotional; the feelings are intense. The schools are very poor and it’s touched me to see the people trying to make a better life for themselves.”

Thus far, the organization has delivered 73,000 books to 65 schools; this trip alone provided 10,000 books to 11 schools. The program is designed to be self-sustaining. The students rent the donated books—a huge commitment considering the poverty. After five years, the rental income is enough to purchase more books. In addition, the group also gives each school something extra—a soccer ball and basketball. In the United States, they tell the kids, we play as hard as we work. After some playtime, the group climbs back into the bus and heads off to the next village. “For every sacrifice you make for these kids down here, you’re rewarded a hundredfold,” says Joe. “Jeff and I have seen this in our lives. Come down and help us out. The people of Guatemala will benefit, and so will you.”

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*For information on becoming involved with or supporting the Cooperative for Education, please call 513 731-2595.*