



FALL 2013

# NEWSLETTER

AMIGOS DE SANTA CRUZ FOUNDATION

COMMITTED TO HELPING IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF SANTA CRUZ THROUGH SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION, BETTER HEALTH CARE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



## Changing the world, one community at a time...



Pat Torpie, Director

*Dear Friends,*

What has always made Amigos unique is that we have chosen to focus on one small corner of the world, Santa Cruz la Laguna, Guatemala, and the 6 indigenous communities that it encompasses. For the past 15 years, we have been working to help break the generational cycle of poverty in these communities. Each year we see the results of our efforts increase. We see it in the faces of the women who participate in our nutrition programs, and the level of improved health of their children. Mothers are actively engaged in providing their families and themselves with a chance for a healthier life. We see it in the achievements of the young people who participate in our scholarship program, working to break their own barriers by pursuing higher goals and working hard to achieve them. Through their participation in our youth leadership programs, they are empowered to become responsible citizens, actively engaged in improving their communities.

Sex Education in the schools is a critical component to providing information and resources to young people so that they can make responsible decisions and enjoy healthy relationships throughout their adolescence and adult life. We see young people eager for information that will help them in make better decisions in their lives.



*Our nutrition centers provide more than just healthy meals for children. Women have the opportunity to come together to learn important themes that will help transform thier lives and the lives of thier families.*

This year we have expanded our efforts in the area of early education, giving our youngest children a positive and nurturing first-time learning experience. The success of these efforts is obvious when we visit our model classrooms and see the happy faces of children actively engaged in learning.

Our efforts to provide skills training and economic empowerment through support for CECAP, our vocational education center, have gotten off to a strong beginning. This past year we have seen the economic impact that CECAP programs can have on the community. Some CECAP graduates are even starting their own businesses. Women who have completed artesenia training are now earning income, making products that are marketed by CECAP both locally and internationally.

These women are beginning to earn their own income for the first time in their lives, a very empowering experience.

Our student-run café and retail craft shop in CECAP are both successful in providing jobs and income to CECAP graduates as well as sustainability of these businesses through generated income. This is a great accomplishment for such a young program. We are as proud as our graduates and we credit their enthusiasm for today's success.

### Seeds of hope

I am very proud to share with you the accomplishments of our mutual efforts over this past year. Everything we do is made possible because of your support. Together we are help-

ing to transform lives. We have planted the seeds of hope and these roots have deepened over the years. With your help, they will continue to deepen. As you read about our progress this year, I hope you will share my pride in our mutual achievements.



*Planting seeds of hope begins with our children.*

# Key to nutrition program sustainability: educating mothers, local food production and goats



Women in our nutrition programs participate in weekly training on themes including nutrition, hygiene, women's right and self esteem.



Community gardens provide healthy organic food for the nutrition centers and for families.

This year has been a very exciting year for our young, but growing, Sustainable Food Production Program. In addition to the community and family gardens that have been established in the four rural communities we serve, we have also launched a local youth apprenticeship program and a pilot dairy goat project to continue to help enable local indigenous people to improve their nutritional, educational, and economic living standards.

In our four large community gardens, women are not only producing healthy organic food for the nutrition centers and for

their families, but Agricultural Specialist, Shad Qudsi, is also using these gardens as a training ground for the women to learn and adopt these organic practices for use in their own homes. Furthermore, our community gardens have become a living seed bank, producing seeds that can be used by the women in their homes and for future years. Now, that's sustainable!

*Special thanks to Feed the Dream, and Miracles In Action, our partner organizations, that make these rural nutrition and agriculture programs possible.*

## Goats come to Pajomel!

Amigos is proud to announce our Dairy Goat Pilot Project. In June Amigos provided 8 families who participate in our Nutrition Centers with a pregnant dairy goat. Our Agricultural Specialist, Shad, has been providing training on how to care for goats and what to do with the milk. Within the community, the project has already been a great and exciting success. Aside from the nutritional value of the milk, there is a secondary economic goal: generating income from the sale



of young goats and meat. All 8 families have agreed to give the first female that is born back to the project, so that more families can participate in this new opportunity in the future.

## Focus on early education for children



Twenty-two 3 and 4 year olds participate in Amigos model preschool classroom. Mothers take turns helping out in the classroom.

Public education in Guatemala leaves much to be desired. The system is wrought with problems that create barriers to success for children to learn. The youngest children enter school for the first time eager to learn and often by the end of their first year they have lost that enthusiasm and have been dulled by the poor experiences in the classroom. This sets the tone for the rest of their school experience, unfortunately.

This year, Amigos sponsored a model preschool classroom

in our local public school. This classroom was modeled after our Milagros School in Tzanzomel, an Amigos-funded preschool that is headed by an experienced Montessori school teacher from Austria. She has helped us to set up and operate a wonderful school in the remote village of Tzanzomel, the first school this village has ever had. Our model class encourages mothers' participation, consistency, and joy of learning in a clean and positive environment. We hope to see this effort expand in the year to come.

# CECAP gets down to business



*42 women actively producing products and earning income from CECAP*

*320 participate in various classes in CECAP in the first half of 2013*

*Café and Craft Shop both show a profit in first half of 2013*



*"Barberia" is one of the classes offered this year in CECAP*

The goal of CECAP has always been to promote economic development through teaching hands-on skills in areas that will lead to real-life jobs and income for the people of Santa Cruz. What started out as a dream in 2008 is now a reality. CECAP offers a full array of classes in skills areas, such as carpentry, welding, culinary arts and artesania. This year we are putting CECAP graduates to work through two small businesses that provide a means to sustainability for our CECAP programs as well as income for our graduates.

quality service and local cuisine all made by our culinary program graduates who run the café. The quality of the food served, the incredible view of the lake and volcanoes, and the fact that this is a student-run, not-for-profit small business has made Café Sabor Cruceño a popular lunch destination for visitors to Lake Atitlan. It has recently been rate #1 restaurant in Santa Cruz by TripAdvisor®. Not only



Our small artesania shop, Manos Cruceños, located in CECAP, sells retail and wholesale products made in CECAP by our students and graduates. These "made in Santa Cruz" products include aprons, bags, beaded jewelry and wood and metal products such as children's puzzles, puppets and candlestick holders. Our staff is learning how to run this small business. We are very proud to have made a profit in the first half of 2013, a remarkable achievement for such a young business.

## Café rated "Best in Santa Cruz"!!

Another area of great pride for CECAP is our yearlong Culinary Arts program and Café Sabor Cruceño. The café is in its first year of full operation, open 6 days a week, providing

does the café serve daily meals, it also provides a line of products, including baked goods, peanut butter and dried fruit treats that are sold in local markets. Income from this young business pays for itself, providing employment for 3 culinary program graduates as well as helping to pay the cost of the on-going training program. It is a huge accomplishment for which we are all very proud!

These two businesses are only just beginning. We envision them both growing over the years to come. Our dream is to add a rooftop restaurant and bakery in the next few years and turn the current restaurant into a larger Manos Cruceños retail shop, making Santa Cruz one of the top tourist attractions in the Lake Atitlan area. In this way, CECAP helps to provide a source of economic growth for all of Santa Cruz.

## Highlights of the Year 2013

A new classroom for Escuela Milagros welcomes 1st & 2nd graders this year

Amigos establishes Model Classroom for preschool children in Santa Cruz

CECAP artesania store and Café Sabor Cruceño earn a profit for first half of 2013!

CECAP artesania product sales provides income to 42 women artesans.

Tzanjmel program expands to include a children's garden, and healthy snacks program.

320 students and adults participate in CECAP classes in first half of 2013

Solar power system installed on their roof of Escuela Milagros in Tzanjmel, thanks to Alternative Technologies Collaborative

Amigos is honored as recipient of the Washington Women's Foundation Annual International Grant.

Sex education program provides yearlong class for 165 students grades 6th -9th in 5 Santa Cruz communities.

Amigos sponsors 4 Youth Conferences in 2013 with 65 active participants

Dairy Goat Pilot Project provides first goats to 8 families in Pajomel

32 students participate in secondary and university scholarship program.

100% of Culinary Program find employment in local businesses

*We need your support to keep our programs going. Your donation will go a long way in our hands!*

## USE OF FUNDS IN 2012



1.31% Fundraising

1.53 % Administration

97.16 % Program

*Amigos programs are generously supported by:*

Miracles In Action

Feed The Dream

Carson Family Foundation

The Seattle Foundation

The Seattle International Foundation

Washington Women's Foundation

Rotary International

John Brown Family Foundation

....and our many friends...



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## Youth Conferences 2013 focus: self-awareness, citizen responsibility, and sex education.



*Young people who participate in our programs are eager to learn.*

We believe that the young people of Santa Cruz are the future hope of their communities. Therefore, youth leadership development is a key priority for Amigos. We work with our scholarship students to promote community service projects, require participation in sex education workshops and sponsor annual youth leadership development workshops.

In 2012 Amigos funded a yearlong youth leadership program which involved 45 young people ages 13 to 25 from 5 Santa Cruz communities. This group met with leadership development professionals who organized and ran dynamic monthly workshops that focused on youth organization, active participation, the rights of children and youth in Guatemala, and how to plan and implement community projects. The result of this program was the formation of a new official youth organization in Santa Cruz, "YO", led by an elected Board

of Directors and supported by Amigos and the local government. Youth representatives may now participate in local and national youth conferences, expanding their scope and world view. In 2013 we are sponsoring 4 day-long Youth Conferences with themes that include Citizen Responsibility, Leadership, Cultural Roots and Sex Education. Their first two have been very successful with over 65 youth participating actively in these activities.

### Sex Education in School

There is nothing as disheartening as seeing a girl who has become pregnant at a young age and her life choices become severely limited. These girls are forced to drop out of school and hide in the house, ashamed and powerless. Many times the family rejects them and blames them for shaming them. We have had too many situations like this in Santa Cruz over the last few years with girls, many of whom are

*"How are we supposed to know any of this if no one tells us? Thank you for helping us to understand about our bodies and about our rights and responsibilities as Santa Cruz youth."*



participants in our scholarship programs. Amigos addresses this problem through active promotion of sex education and family planning education. In 2012 we hired a full-time sex educator who works in our local primary school and junior high school in 5 Santa Cruz communities teaching sex education to 165 students as part of their formal course studies. Sex Education in the schools is a critical component to providing information and resources to young people so that they can make responsible decisions and enjoy healthy relationships throughout their adolescence and adult life.

Our goal is to expand these programs in 2014 to include out-of-school youth. We hope to see a significant reduction in pregnancies among Santa Cruz youth in the years to come.