



FALL 2014

NEWSLETTER

AMIGOS DE SANTA CRUZ FOUNDATION

COMMITTED TO HELPING IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF SANTA CRUZ THROUGH SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION, BETTER HEALTH, A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Stories that inspire and perpetuate hope

Dear Friends,



Pat Torpie, Director

Meet two of my favorite young people in Santa Cruz, Estela Simaj and Juan Carlos Mendoza.

Their stories inspire me and propel me in my daily work as co-founder and Director of Amigos de Santa Cruz. I have known their families since I first arrived in Santa Cruz, the year Juan Carlos was born. Estela's mother was one of the first local people Nancy and I became friends with when she knocked on our door along with two of her sisters to ask if we could teach them how to read and write. JC is the youngest of 9 children. His father was the whistling fisherman we listened to and watched in the early morning from our dock, while he quietly went about fishing from his simple dugout canoe. These two grew up with a different life experience than their parents. They were inspired to attend school and given opportunities to pursue their dreams. I am proud that Amigos had something to do with this.

Both were born at a time when the role of women was in the home and very few attended school. Although their parents were poor and lacked opportunities in their lives, they encouraged their children to attend school. With help of an Amigos scholarship both Juan Carlos and Estela are the first in their extended families to graduate from high



Meet Estela Simaj and Juan Carlos Mendoza, two inspiring young leaders

school. Both are now pursuing careers for which they are passionate. They have come a long way and are now young leaders in their community, inspiring others to improve their lives and break out of the cycle of poverty. They are what Amigos is all about. Estela is in her 5th year of university studying communications. She works as coordinator of our CECAP Artesenia Program empowering women to learn new skills and improve their economy. She says "my dream is to work in the media and be the voice of the people who often stay silent about so much injustice." Juan Carlos, top graduate of our Culinary Program, is now sharing his skill and passion for cooking as the

culinary instructor and head chef for our popular graduate-run café, *Café Sabor Cruceño*.

Amigos is growing...

This past year has seen a marked growth in the quality, impact and sustainability of our Amigos de Santa Cruz programs. Our programs and staff have expanded to serve more children in our preschools, offer more support for higher education through scholarships and provide formal sex education in our public schools. We continue to provide mothers and children in our nutrition programs with on-going education and support to foster healthy families and eliminate malnutrition among children in our remote communities. Our efforts to improve the economy of Santa Cruz through vocational training have seen significant success over the past year. In 2014, we are excited to take Amigos de Santa Cruz to a new level with a focus on quality in everything we do. As you read about our progress this year, I hope you will share my pride in our mutual accomplishments.

These girls have all grown up since this pix was taken in 2000. Three of them - Estela, Rosalia and Dominga - now attend college, and work for Amigos, helping to make a difference in their community. They are the very first young women to pursue meaningful careers and they now inspire others to do the same. The little guy in the back is Juanito, our computer teacher!



Empowering women to help themselves



Weekly workshops in our remote nutrition centers focus on family health & hygiene, productivity training, and empowerment.

We are in our 8th year of working in the remote communities of Santa Cruz where malnutrition is among the highest in the country. The goal of our nutrition program is to educate and provide mothers with the skills and knowledge to improve the health and welfare of their children and families. Our four nutrition centers work with a total of 120 mothers and 190 children, ages 6 months to 5 years old. This year our focus has been more on education and training for mothers, and less on supplemental feeding. Mothers receive weekly trainings on the themes of self esteem, health and hygiene, and nutrition, while children 3 to

5 years old participate in early stimulation activities.

This year women are learning productive skills such as bead jewelry making, learning to read and write through participation in literacy classes, and participating in community garden projects. Our long-term goal is sustainability via increased family food production, training for mothers in family health practices, self-esteem and productivity. The results will be healthier babies and more confident and capable mothers better able to care for the children's health and nutritional needs. *We are grateful to our partner, Feed the Dream, for making this program possible.*

Early education program expands



Meet Manuela, an Amigos scholarship student, who now runs our early stimulation program for 3 to 5 year olds in our Tzununa Nutrition Center.



Community gardens produce healthy organic food for families in remote communities.

Healthy foods, home grown

Our community gardens are flourishing this year. Thanks to a generous loan of a large parcel of land in Tzanzomel, each woman was provided with 6 square meters of good land to learn about, cultivate and harvest organic produce to supplement their family's diet. Two local indigenous neighbors were trained to take over the Local Food Production Project started in 2012. This year 92 women have been actively participating on a regular basis. They are encouraged and pleased



with the success of their efforts having enjoyed two harvests so far this year. The focus for all communities is now moving toward family gardens, taking what's been learned from the community gardens and bringing the production closer to each family's home.

The first Amigos model classroom that opened in 2013 was such a huge success, that we now support a second model classroom in the Santa Cruz public school. Amigos currently works with a total of 100 children, ages 2 1/2 to 5 years old, who participate in our early education programs. Mothers are involved in all of these programs and we provide weekly training to the teachers. We would like to see our model preschool classrooms expand in number until the entire preschool and kindergarten in Santa Cruz is a "Model" school.

This year has seen some significant accomplishments in our expanded early education program. In March, Amigos initiated an early stimulation project with the children who participate in our Tzununa nutrition center. These children are now getting creative stimulation through art, music and games. This exposure will help them continue on to regular school with a healthy self-esteem and potential for success. We hope to duplicate this project in our other nutrition centers.

CECAP is reaching New Heights



2013 graduates of our culinary program with instructor, Juan Carlos

CECAP, the vocational education center established in 2010, is a source of great pride not only for Amigos, but for the communities of Santa Cruz. CECAP is fulfilling its purpose as a place where people of all ages can come to learn new skills that can lead to meaningful work and a more prosperous community. Our workshops are abuzz with activity, graduates are finding meaningful work and the community is beginning to feel the positive influence of CECAP on the economy. We couldn't be prouder of its accomplishments to date.

We are particularly proud of our two CECAP social enterprise businesses, the graduate-run Café Sabor Cruceño and our artesenia shop, "Manos Cruceñas". Both run by local graduates, these two small businesses have been successful in their areas generating work for local women and youth and generating increasing revenues for CECAP. The retail tienda has expanded over the past year and sales have doubled. Wholesale work as well as craft production keep more than 50 women busy and earning income. The café employs graduates of our popular culinary arts program and under the direction of our young chef, Juan Carlos, it has won the Award for Excellence this year from Trip Advisor and is recognized as the best restaurant in the area. Café sales continue to

increase and are now generating enough income to run itself as well as contribute to the CECAP operations. Sustainability is our goal for CECAP and these two young businesses are helping us move in that direction.

Now we are ready to take CECAP to new heights. Our goal is to expand our physical building to better accommodate our store, café, and artesenia program. Our dream is to turn



Above, Francisco, one of our carpentry graduates, works in our carpentry shop on special orders. Right, our Maños Cruceñas shop sells products made by graduates of CECAP programs. Sales are up 46% so far this year from last year.

the roof into a large restaurant, teaching kitchen and bake shop, complete with outdoor and indoor seating and the best views in all of Lake Atitlan. We will be able to expand product and services in the tourist and food industry, both major economic drivers in our area of Guatemala, as well as employ more CECAP graduates. We will expand our artesenia production area and retail store as well provide more jobs and income for local artisans. We want to make Santa

100% of culinary program graduates have found employment in local restaurants

27 home workshops in carpentry established

4 welding workshops in three communities now at work

4 barber shops in 4 villages established

50 women graduates now earning income from sales of artesenia products

314 participate in CECAP classes in first half of 2014



Highlights of the Year 2014

Amigos receives legal status and authority to work in public schools as newly formed Guatemalan non-profit organization (NGO).

Amigos hires our first Program Director, Ramona Kirschenman.

Early Education programs expand to include a second model classroom in the Santa Cruz preschool and an early stimulation program in the Tzununa nutrition center.

Amigos nutrition center gardens flourish in four communities, providing supplemental healthy foods to families.

Manos Cruceñas, the CECAP artesenia shop expands sales and provides income to 71 women artisans by midyear 2014.

Manos Cruceñas forms partnership with clothing company, Lur Apparel, to produce speciality products made by women sewers in Santa Cruz.

Café Sabor Cruceño earns Award of Excellence from Trip Advisor and is rated the number one restaurant in Santa Cruz.

CECAP Culinary program graduates 8 young cooks in December. All have employment in 2014.

SRH program receives funding from Summit Foundation to provide Sex Education to all Santa Cruz students in grades 5th - 9th.

314 students and adults participate in CECAP classes in first half of 2014.

Amigos scholarship program support 30 high school and 11 university students in 2014.

5 scholarship students graduate from high school in 2013, 2 as teachers and 3 with general degrees.

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

USE OF FUNDS IN 2013



2.56% Fundraising

2.94 % Administration

94.4 % Program

Honoring our donors

Amigos programs are generously supported by:

Miracles In Action

Feed The Dream

Carson Foundation

The Seattle Foundation

The Seattle Int'l Foundation

CG Charitable Foundation

SG Foundation

The Summit Foundation

Rotary Clubs of Maine and NH

John Brown Family Foundation

Innocent Eyes Project

Mayan Educational Foundation

....and our many wonderful friends...



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Why we focus on generational change



100 young Santa Cruceños are now participating in Amigos sponsored youth activities focused on leadership skills and community participation.

Long-term solutions require a long-term investment, and a strong determination. Amigos focus is on long-term generational change because we know that the young people of Santa Cruz are the future hope of their communities.

Education has always been at the heart of everything we do and no more so then in the support we provide to young people who are motivated and able to pursue high school and university levels of education. Over the past 15 years, Amigos has helped over 100 of young people continue their education beyond the 6th grade through scholarship support. This is the first generation to achieve a basic level of education and beyond. Our graduates now work as teachers, health promoters, office workers and administrators. We are proud to support 11 university students, the first ever in their communities to pursue this level of education. They are models for others to follow.

We know that education is the greatest factor in reducing the cycle of poverty that has plagued the indigenous communities of Guatemala. It is not a quick fix but it is worth the long term in-

vestment. We see hope emerging in this new generation. Amigos is helping the younger generation to have access to education and skills needed to participate in making their communities stronger, healthier and prosperous.

Sex Education in School

Early unplanned pregnancies plague the small indigenous villages Santa Cruz la Laguna. There is a critical need to provide young people with the information, and resources to help them avoid unplanned pregnancies and STDs, to understand their changing bodies as well as their rights and responsibilities as adolescents.

In 2014, Amigos received funding from the Summit Foundation of Washington, D.C. to formalize and expand our efforts in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health Education (SRH) and Youth Empowerment. Our Guatemala NGO is now legally authorized to work within the public school system in all communities of Santa Cruz. Our SRH staff travels to 9 schools in 5 communities every week to teach classes to a total of 428 students in grades 5th through 9th. We

"My goal is to contribute to the development of my community, creating opportunity for other people. I want them to overcome and realize their dreams."

—Antonio Canel, University scholarship student, and first in his community to graduate from high school



"I have an education which previously I thought was impossible. I'm a poor person but that does not stop me from dreaming, I can make my dream of graduating from college come true."

—Estela Simaj, 5th year university scholarship student, and first female in her family to complete 6th grade

are also conducting an impact study of our efforts over the next 4 years. Our goal is to measure the impact of SRH classes on the behaviors, attitudes and knowledge level among our students with regard to SRH.

Our commitment is to help young people acquire the skills needed to make responsible decisions and to pursue healthy lives.