



FALL 2015

NEWSLETTER

AMIGOS DE SANTA CRUZ FOUNDATION

COMMITTED TO HELPING IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF SANTA CRUZ THROUGH SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



"The work you do is a shining example of a non-profit making a huge impact and doing it well. Thank you for all you do to make the world a better place."

Dear Friends,



Pat Torpie, Director

These words accompanied a generous donation by a family that recently visited Santa Cruz. We are touched by the acknowledgement and support for our work and hope all of our supporters share these same sentiments. Amigos has been working in this one small corner of the world for the past 17 years, watching what happens when a generation becomes educated for the first time. Our roots are deep and our commitment is strong. The impact of our programs is obvious to anyone who visits our small villages. It's all about empowerment through education in its many forms. Young people are growing up better educated, young families are healthier and parents are better able to care for their families and imagine a better future than the generation before them.

As an organization, Amigos is stronger than ever. Our local staff, our partner organizations and all of you who support us make our accomplishments possible. I hope you will share my pride as you read about some of our accomplishments over the past year and exciting plans for the future.

Supporting youth empowerment



Amigos strongly believes that youth need to play a critical role in social change. For the past several years we have focused on youth empowerment by organizing youth conferences throughout the year that emphasize leadership and community participation. In 2015, our theme is "conscious voting." This is an important election year for Guatemala. With over 60% of the

SC Youth Corp provides job training



Meet Francisco and Lisa, our first Youth Corps interns working in our sex ed. program as peer educators.

Santa Cruz youth are growing up better educated and more prepared to enter the work world. The problem is finding a job. Most employers are looking for candidates who have some work

population under 25, the youth vote will have a powerful impact on the results of the election both locally and nationally. Local elections are typically poorly attended and manipulated by candidates through bribes and promises. People have little faith that their vote can make a difference. Our youth have taken on the challenge to make their vote count and to encourage their family members

experience. Our young high school graduates struggle to compete because the job market is limited.

The Santa Cruz Youth Corps is taking on this challenge by offering our scholarship and vocational graduates a chance to gain work experience as SC Youth Corps participants. The idea is to give our youth a positive experience working as interns in one of our four main program areas. Youth Corp interns work 20 hours per week for 6 to 10 months and receive a stipend, training on and off the job, supervision by program coordinators, and a chance to try out new skills and knowledge. The ultimate goal is for our interns to

to vote. Our workshops have provided important information about the electoral process and have opened up dialogue among youth about how to choose the best candidates through conscious voting. All youth over 18 who participate in our program have registered to vote. This alone is a big step. Youth groups have organized voter registration drives and informational activities in their communities to get others who have never voted registered and ready to vote this year. A Mayoral Candidates Forum is being organized and sponsored by a youth group that has determined that this is the year they can make a difference. Youth are beginning to take on leadership roles in their communities. This is what empowerment is all about.



be able to enter the work place with a resumé that demonstrates good work habits and abilities. It's a win-win for everybody. This year we are introducing this concept in our youth programs with Lisa and Francisco. We hope to expand the Youth Corp program to include 6-8 interns in 2016.

How Amigos programs impact a family

Meet Nicolasa, a 36-year-old mother of 8 who lives in Jaibalito, a small and very poor village located just beyond Santa Cruz. Like most of the children of her generation, Nicolasa never attended school and was sent to the fincas on the coast to pick cotton and cut sugar cane to earn money for her family. Her life was very hard. She married young to escape her family. Now she worries about her children and does not want them to suffer as she had. She is determined to provide her children with a better future.

With no support from her alcoholic husband, Nicolasa is making sure that all of her children are attending school to get a basic education. All 8 children, ages 5 to 19, attend school. The oldest four have graduated from primary school and now attend middle school, a level rarely achieved among children in her remote village. Nicolasa has had to find ways to make money to support her children by washing clothes and carrying cargo, which

provided little income. Last year Nicolasa completed training in making beaded jewelry, a course offered by CECAP. She graduated in December and is now able to work at home earning income by making beaded jewelry products for CECAP while watching over her youngest child who is not yet in school. This year Nicolasa is taking the advanced beading class which will qualify her to earn more income through production. Her dream is to have her own small business one day and C E C A P can help her achieve this goal.

Nicolasa's two oldest daughters are also learning new skills in CECAP as part of their middle-school program. Their school travels to CECAP once a week to attend vocational classes including sewing, computer and carpentry. They are among the first girls to complete a basic carpentry class and are now enrolled in the adult class

“My dream is that my children can have a better life than mine.”



on Saturdays because they like it so much.

Learning skills like carpentry and sewing not only open up possibilities for future work but help girls gain confidence in their abilities. Next year they can apply to become SC Youth Corp interns to work in the carpentry shop learning to make wooden crafts and toys that are sold in the CECAP store.

Nicolasa's daughters also participate in weekly Sex Ed. classes

taught by Amigos as part of their regular classes. They are learning critical information and finding access to resources that will help them avoid unplanned pregnancies and to understand their rights and responsibilities as adolescents. Nicolasa supports this program because her daughters will better understand the consequences of their actions and hopefully not make the same mistakes she made. It's for sure that her children are already on their way to a brighter future.

Early education initiatives are making a difference

Amigos Early Education Initiative expanded in 2015 to include a third model kindergarten classroom in the Santa Cruz school. Our model classrooms now have 70 children enrolled.



Model classroom teachers are hand selected by Amigos. They receive a small monthly stipend along with their government salary and are supported with weekly trainings, volunteer helpers, and classroom materials to help them grow as teachers and provide a richer classroom environment and learning experience for their students. It's a model that works and is highly regarded by mothers who enroll their students in our model classroom. Attendance is up to 95% in model classrooms as compared to 72% attendance in regular classes. Parents now send their children to school everyday and mothers

volunteer to assist the teachers in the classroom on a rotating basis. We are seeing significant improvements in the children's learning and social development as a result of their participation in this program.

We will be taking our model up to the primary school next year as we continue to follow and support our original 25 children who have been with us since they entered school. Studying the impact of the model classroom experience on children will also be the topic of a research project for a US-based university student.



70 children, ages 3 to 5, are enrolled in Amigos Model Classrooms in 2015



CECAP IS GOING UP!

Thank you to all of our supporters for helping us take CECAP to the next level.

A very special thanks goes out to all our friends on Lopez Island, WA who saw the potential and said, "lets make it happen!"

COMING SOON: rooftop café and expanded artesania production area and store, and a more prosperous economy for the community.

Putting people to work

The goal of CECAP has always been to provide hands-on training that can lead to jobs, income and a more prosperous economy for the people of Santa Cruz. CECAP is well on its way to doing just that.

Over the 5 years that CECAP has been in operation, over 350 adults and 300 students have participated in a variety of training programs, learning a wide range of hands-on skills including sewing, weaving, beading, carpentry, welding, technology and culinary arts. Graduates have found employment in local restaurants, and

hotels. Some have opened their own small shops or work out of their homes making beaded handicrafts for both retail and wholesale buyers. CECAP itself has transformed into a production center. On any given day, a visitor will see women busy on sewing machines making products and earning income, and culinary graduates preparing and serving delicious meals. Our goal is to continue to increase production and sales of locally made products and, therefore, increase earning for our local graduates.



Amigos is very proud of our excellent team of women artisans. Pictured above: women show off their beautifully woven scarves for sale in the Manos Cruceñas Shop in CECAP

CECAP: a social enterprise business supporting a social mission

We couldn't be prouder of the two small businesses that have stemmed from our CECAP training programs over the past few years: Mano Cruceñas Craft Shop and Café Sabor Cruceño. These two social enterprises share Amigos' mission: to help improve the lives and economy of the people of Santa Cruz. Both the store and the café employ local graduates of CECAP and generate income that goes toward our goal of sustainability. Over 60 women are earning income from their production of artesania products that are sold to both wholesale and retail customers. Sales continue



to grow each year as does the amount that women are earning.

The popularity of our café, run by graduates of our Culinary Program, is also growing tremendously, especially over the last year. Sales have doubled since last year and our café is proud to be reaching a level of operational sustainability. We plan to grow these two businesses



in the years to come. With the building expansion to move the restaurant to the rooftop and expand the store and production area downstairs, we will be able to promote CECAP as a tourist destination. Coming soon: Guatemalan cooking classes, and beading classes for tourists. By promoting CECAP, we aim to put Santa Cruz on the map and we are well on our way!

Highlights of the Year 2015

Amigos hires 3 new key staff members: a full-time nutritionist, a production and marketing manager for CECAP and a new in-country director, Jessie Cohn.

Amigos board & staff complete a comprehensive organizational assessment and new 3-year Strategic Plan.

241 adults and students participate in CECAP classes during the first half of 2015. Girls enroll in carpentry classes for the first time and love it!

Over 380 students participate in on-going sex ed classes in all 6 Santa Cruz communities.

Manos Cruceñas, the CECAP artesania shop increases sales 65%, with women producers earning a total of \$9,500 during the first half of 2015.

Café Sabor Cruceños continues to be a great success with sales doubling in the first half of 2015, enough to cover all costs, including salaries for 5 culinary graduates

Amigos is listed in the Seattle International Foundation's 2015 Global Giving Guide as one of the top 22 small non-profits based in the Puget Sound area that is making a global impact.

12 scholarship students graduate from high school in 2014, 10 new students added.

Santa Cruz Youth Corp begins with a pilot program.

Amigos supports 28 high school and 9 university scholarship students in 2015

70 Santa Cruz youth participate in leadership workshops with a theme of Conscious Voting.

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

USE OF FUNDS IN 2014



4.6% Fundraising

6.6 % Administration

88.8% 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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Teamwork & Partnerships: Working together to change the world, one small community at a time



Meet our Amigos team: from left to right, Noé, Jessie, Estela, Umberto, Hilda, Juan Carlos, Jessica, Santiago, Norma, Francisco, Lisa, Andres, Ilka, Virginia, Vicki, Francisco, Rosalia. Bottom row: Manuela, Christina, Alberto, Clara, Dominga, Ester, Juanito, Elmy, Fransisco, Felix

One of the greatest strengths of Amigos de Santa Cruz is our dedicated and talented local staff, all of whom are indigenous and most of whom are under 30 years old. In 2015 our staff has grown to a total of 27 young men and women. Many are either current university or former high school scholarship recipients. They are among the first generation to have pursued an education and career. We are very proud of them and the fine work they doing to help make Santa Cruz a better place. Our local staff are models for others to follow and are dedicated to the mission of Amigos de Santa Cruz.

Empowering youth and fostering generational change are high on our priority list. By employing local young adults we are doing just that. Our team is long-term, committed and growing. They are learning skills that will serve them and their communities well in the years to come. They help to set the direction of our work and

are responsible for achieving our goals in each of our program areas. They are what Amigos is all about.



Thank you, partners...

None of what we have been able to accomplish over the past 16 years would have been possible without the support and commitment of our loyal donors. Together we are working to make the world a better place one small community at a time. We hope each of you feel as proud as we do of our mutual achievements and will continue to support our work into the coming year.

Over the years we have partnered with other organizations and foundations that share our same commitment to helping people help themselves. Our partnerships are strong, deeply rooted, and critical to achieving our mutual goals. We want to especially acknowledge a few of our oldest partners. **Feed the Dream** has been helping to relieve malnutrition that plagues our poorest families by supporting nutrition centers in our most remote villages for the past 10 years. **Miracles in Action** has been with us from the beginning providing financial and moral support for many of our programs, especially CECAP. We are also deeply grateful to the **Seattle International Foundation** for its strong support for our work over the past 7 years.

We know that change doesn't happen overnight and that our work in the Santa Cruz communities isn't over yet. With your help we will continue to work toward achieving our mission and vision for Santa Cruz.