



JUNE UPDATE

Meet the Rising Stars of Santa Cruz!



This month we shine the spotlight on our **2018 Santa Cruz Youth Corps!** Now in its 3rd full year, this year-long professional development program provides work experience and leadership training to recent high school graduates. The experience gained through the program will put them on the first step toward a professional career, as well as empower them to become responsible agents for positive change in their community. We are so very proud of each one of them! Here are a few of their stories.

Maria Sipac Mendez - Education Intern at Escuela Caracol

Maria comes from the Santa Cruz community of Tzununa. She graduated in 2016, cleaning rooms for a hotel in the mornings in order to support her family while she studied.

Maria is excited to be interning this year at *Escuela Caracol* in the nearby town of San Marcos, learning about Waldorf Pedagogy as she gains practical experience as a teacher. It makes her happy to see that she has gained the confidence of the teachers and students in the school, and confirms her dedication to becoming a teacher and dedicating her career to education in her community.

"I feel very happy, being a teacher is the most beautiful thing as it is through learning that we can have a better future."



Erik Balcot Santos - *Administrative Intern with Starfish*



Erik is proud to be the first in his family of six to graduate from High School. Since a child, he has dreamed of working in an office and having a professional career. It seemed like a far off dream just a few years ago, but now he is very proud to be on his way to doing just that!

Erik is interning this year at Starfish, a local NGO that is having a big impact on girls' education in Guatemala. Erik is excited to learn from their experience about how to do good work in his own community. And he is eager to gain practical administrative experience that will help him in his future.

"My goal in life is to study at the University and create my own company to support the other young people in my community."

Aura Maria Simon Sipac - *Education Intern at PanaKids School*

Aura graduated in 2017 and dreams of becoming a teacher. She is currently interning as a teacher at PanaKids, a school in the local town of Panajachel and is proud to be teaching lessons in Kachiquel, her native language. At first, Aura was very nervous to start working outside of her own community. But little by little, she has built her confidence and been encouraged by her colleagues and the students that she teaches.



"I am proud of my culture and of sharing my language with others, since in the school there are students who come from different countries, I like to work as a teacher who



AMIGOS' 20th ANNIVERSARY

Each month we are sharing the stories and photos of just how much has changed in Santa Cruz over these 20 years, in the community and among the individuals with whom we work.



Amigos started working with parents to advocate for better public education in 1998. Twelve years later, Santa Cruz's first Middle School opened (pictured left) with only a handful of students graduating each year. Now there are four Middle Schools across the municipality of Santa Cruz, and over 50 students graduate each year! Amigos works with these students by holding 3 conferences each year that provide these young men and women with the resources to make positive decisions about their lives and their futures. More young Santa Cruceños are now completing Middle School, and more and more are going on to higher education.

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Photo: [Molly Haley Photography](#)

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