



## OCTOBER UPDATE

# Transforming Skills into Employment



This October, students from across Santa Cruz are putting their practical studies to work in meaningful employment. **Alfredo Guoz García**, 16, has been studying Basic Culinary in the CECAP Vocational School since January and is now gaining practical experience working at La Iguana Perdida, a local hotel. Alfredo comes from Jaibalito, one of the smallest Santa Cruz communities where there are very few economic opportunities. This placement gives him a foot in the door and a solid chance at obtaining full-time, well-paid work.

## Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in Santa Cruz

*"We are excited to start our own business. We want to show that men are not the only ones that can earn a good income, we can too!"*  
- Elena Mendoza



A group of 12 Santa Cruz women have been learning to make natural shampoos and soaps using almond, macadamia and avocado oils. Less than half of the women in the group know how to read and write, yet they are helping each other to understand the product development process and learn new techniques. Throughout the process, they have also participated in Amigos' empowerment workshop series covering areas such as nutrition and health, self-esteem, gender equality, and business skills.

## Getting a Taste of the Professional Life



This year, 11 Amigos scholarship recipients will be graduating from high school! We couldn't be more proud. Before their graduation, each must complete a month-long professional practice.

**Diego Santos Hernández** just completed his practice in the Amigos office, working in our computer lab to round off his studies in Computer Science. Diego was raised by a single mother and grandmother, who work selling fruit or picking coffee

in the town of Tzununa to support him in his studies with what little they can. Their sacrifices have been great, but they know that an education is the path to a better future for Diego and have helped him to work toward his dream. We enjoyed having Diego in the office, and look forward to cheering him on when he receives his diploma! With his education and practical experience, we know there is a bright future ahead for Diego.

## Meet Our Beading Instructor, Esther Santos

*When Esther was just 11 years old she began collecting discarded beads off the floor in the marketplace in Panajachel to make her own bracelets. She never thought those beads would turn into a livelihood.*

**Esther Santos Ujpan** has been teaching beading classes at Amigos since 2012. From the village of Santa Cruz herself, these skills provide Esther with a good income and meaningful work, helping to provide her two children with opportunities for a better life. Esther's youngest son, Danilo, is in the 4th grade and her oldest daughter, Carolina, graduated from high school with an Amigos scholarship last year. She is currently studying in CECAP's Basic Culinary Program, and completing her practical placement just like Alfredo, pictured above.



Each year, Esther teaches beading to 40-50 women of all ages from the Santa Cruz communities. And she helps to design new beaded products, such those sold by [Miracles in Action](#) in their online store. Esther is an important part of the Amigos team, and a role model for other women in Santa Cruz who are learning new skills and earning an income for the first time.

Photo: [Daniel López Pérez Photography](#)

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