



NEWSLETTER 2019-2020

Improving the lives of the people of Santa Cruz through support for education and sustainable economic empowerment since 1998



Dear Friends,

The stories we share in this newsletter are stories of hope. They are stories that demonstrate that even in

the face of extreme poverty and desperation, we can invest in programs that truly make a difference. In this year's newsletter you will find stories of young women and men overcoming great obstacles to build a better future for themselves, their families, and their community.

The news this year has been dominated by harrowing stories of families trying to cross the U.S. border seeking an escape from crippling poverty. Many of them come from Guatemala, from towns just like Santa Cruz. Yet, what I hear again and again from community members in Santa Cruz is that they don't want to leave. They want to stay in their community with their families.

With your help, we can continue to build educational and economic opportunities in Santa Cruz that keep families from migrating north. Together, we can ensure that children in this small community receive an education rather than spending months locked in a detention center on the border. Together, we can help build a strong local economy where both men and women can find fair-wage work to earn an income to care for their family and ensure a healthy meal on the table every day.

It is imperative that we take action to reduce the perils of immigration by improving living conditions here in the communities of Santa Cruz. By investing in education, we can break that cycle of poverty from the ground up. The stories of generational change presented in this newsletter demonstrate what is possible. Please join us.

Jessie Cohn,
Executive Director

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY



THE UNIVERSITY PIONEERS OF SANTA CRUZ

Meet the future leaders of Santa Cruz! These young women and men form the very first wave of university students in Santa Cruz. They have overcome significant obstacles to pursue an education, including poverty, limited resources, and lack of family support. They are studying fields as diverse as education, law, music, social work, and even medicine; working full time while traveling to study on weekends. It is a grueling schedule that requires true determination.

They were just small children when Amigos de Santa Cruz was founded 21 years ago, and their

accomplishments demonstrate the change underway a generation later. Theirs is a dream unheard of by their parent's generation, who were lucky if they made it to the 3rd or 4th grade. Amigos scholarships help make that dream a reality. Through their hard work and notable accomplishments, this group is living proof to the next generation that a university education can be within reach. These 10 pioneers are the young leadership Santa Cruz needs to break the cycle of poverty and build a brighter and more educated future for their community.

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women's expanded access to the economy results in greater equality in the home and in the community, a stronger voice in society, and investment in healthier and more educated families. That is why Amigos uses an integrated empowerment model with fostering women's entrepreneurship skills at its heart. We support women who have never worked outside the home or attended school to start and grow a business of their own.

This year Amigos is supporting over 50 women entrepreneurs in businesses such as organic compost, mushroom cultivation, and natural soaps & shampoos. When running their own business, women develop a self-confidence that flows into all aspects of their home and public lives. The integrated approach also includes nu-



trition workshops and staff accompaniment in cases of domestic violence to help the women and their families live happier, healthier lives. Supporting women entrepreneurs in Santa Cruz empowers women in the home and in the community while growing the local economy.

AMIGOS' LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS...

CULINARY STUDENT TO CHAMPION CHEF



"As a chef, I am not just satisfied with providing guests with a meal. I want to give them a unique Guatemalan culinary experience."

– Santiago Pérez



Santiago Pérez comes from the remote Santa Cruz community of Chuitzanchaj, high on the mountainside above Lake Atitlán. He studied the Basic Culinary Program in Amigos' CECAP Vocation Training Center in 2012, walking two hours down and back up the mountain each day to come to class. Santiago was shy then, and nervous to travel so far from home. But he loved being in the kitchen and was determined to forge a better future for himself and his future family.

Seven years later, Santiago has grown into an exceptionally talented and confident chef and restaurant manager. He runs a team of 11 staff and has helped Amigos' Café Sabor Cruceño to increase its sales and make a profit for the first time, now two years running. He also teaches CECAP culinary classes and experiments

with new dishes in his spare time. His story is an example of the long-term investment that Amigos makes in the youth of Santa Cruz and what a real impact it can make.

Since 2011, a total of 69 young men and women have graduated from CECAP's Basic Culinary Program. The program consists of an intensive year-long, five-day-per-week course schedule that covers various culinary cuisines as well as hygiene, customer service, English language, math and computation skills. Students spend their last two months in practical placements at local restaurants and hotels, where many are hired on full-time following their stud-

93% OF CULINARY GRADUATES ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED, 84% IN THE CULINARY INDUSTRY.

ACTING NOW TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT



"The future of Santa Cruz depends on the actions that we take today to protect our environment."

– Juan Pérez Simaj, Amigos' Environmental Action Coordinator

This year Amigos doubled down on its commitment to promote good environmental practices in our work and through our leadership in the community. We recognize the significant threat that environmental degradation poses to educational and economic advances in Santa Cruz and are stepping up our efforts to promote responsible stewardship.

Our approach to environmental action is three-fold. First, through environmental education that equips children, youth and adults with the knowledge essential to changing habits. Second, by requiring good environmental practices from the local businesses that we support; and third, through implementing innovative environ-

mental practices in the CECAP Vocational Center and Amigos Programs such as going 100% solar, treating our waste water and banning disposable plastics in Amigos activities. Finally, we are championing local environmental action and policy advocacy by raising awareness and engaging community support on issues such as deforestation, illegal trash dumping, and lake pollution.

A healthy environment is important to a prosperous future for Santa Cruz. Amigos is proud to be a leader on environmental action, led by our local staff and supporting the voices of local community members on this important issue that impacts their community.

LEAD TO LONG-TERM CHANGE

AMIGOS ORGANIZES GROUNDBREAKING POLITICAL FORUM

During the 2019 Guatemalan elections, Amigos organized the first ever General Mayoral Candidate Forum in Santa Cruz. Over 400 people came to listen to the candidates' positions on education, the economy, and women's equality. This was the first time ever that candidates publicly debated actual issues affecting the community. The forum was a great step forward for transparent civic engagement and governance in Santa Cruz, and represented a significant step forward for youth leadership in the community.

Amigos staff takes pride in being part of a non-partisan organization promoting civic engagement and good governance in Santa Cruz, with a particular focus on youth and women. At Amigos, the next generation of young leaders are not just getting an education for the first time, but they are learning how to become strong leaders at the forefront of positive change in their community.



MEET THE RISING STARS OF AMIGOS' YOUTH CORPS

The Santa Cruz Youth Corps, a year-long professional & leadership program now in its 4th full year, provides an important stepping stone into a professional career for recent Santa Cruz graduates. These Youth Corps interns are the future leaders of Santa Cruz! Here are their stories.



MANUEL SIPAC SANTOS
ACCOUNTANT & 2016 INTERN

Manuel was shy and reserved when he participated in the first Youth Corps class of 2016. He comes from a family with very few resources and was the only one of his siblings to complete his schooling. As a new intern he was placed with an accountant's office in Panajachel on an interim basis to see how he did, and Manuel excelled! He was hired to work extra hours, beyond his part-time internship responsibilities, and offered a job for the next year. Now, three years later, Manuel is still employed in the same office thanks to getting his foot in the door while in the 2016 Youth Corps.



JUAN GABRIEL CANEL
MEDICAL STUDENT & 2017 INTERN

As a 2017 Youth Corps intern, Juan worked with Amigos' Sexual & Reproductive Health Program and was fascinated to learn more about biology and health. After completing his internship, he eagerly applied for a university scholarship to study medicine. Despite facing many disadvantages, including being the first in his family to make it past the 6th grade, he achieved acceptance into a top program and is now the first medical student from his small town of Tzununa! We are proud to support Juan in his studies, and are confident he will go on to a successful career in medicine to help his community.

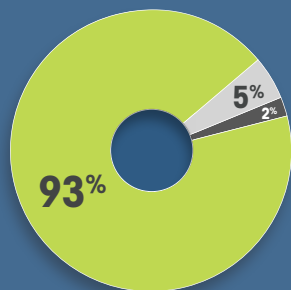


JULIA TEPAZ PEREZ
2019 SOCIAL WORK INTERN

Julia is a current 2019 Youth Corps intern working with a local community development organization. She is also married with two children. In Santa Cruz, few women continue studying or working once married with children, yet Julia knew that she needed to go back and finish school in order to be an example for her children. She is now excelling in her work, and was even offered a temporary full-time position. Julia is breaking barriers, paving the way for the next generation of girls who will have easier access to an education and work opportunities. We are incredibly proud of all that she has achieved.

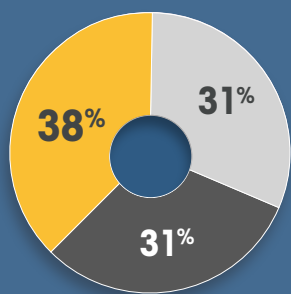
USE OF FUNDS 2018

TRANSFORMING GENEROUS
PARTNER SUPPORT INTO
REAL IMPACT



USE OF OPERATING FUNDS

- PROGRAM SERVICES
- ADMINISTRATION
- FUNDRAISING



OPERATING REVENUE

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and our many wonderful friends...

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

JOIN US...

*in changing the world,
one community at a time...
one generation at a time.*



We are proud to be an organization led by indigenous local staff, almost all from the Santa Cruz communities themselves. The young men and women who now make up our team were among the first recipients of school aid when Amigos first began working 21 years ago. And today, they are leaders of the organization.

Investing in the professional development of our staff is integral to the Amigos mission. We are helping to build the first wave of young professionals in Santa Cruz, young men and women who are the catalysts of change in their community.

SUPPORT OUR WORK TODAY!



We hope that you will give generously this year to help us break the cycle of poverty in Santa Cruz.

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www.amigosdesantacruz.org/donate

SEND A CHECK

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