



NEWSLETTER 2022-2023

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

VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO MEANINGFUL JOBS

Dear Friends,

I am proud to share this year's Annual Newsletter, full of stories of accomplishment and inspiration from our little corner of the world. Two years out from the pandemic, the Amigos team is resolved in our commitment to long-term investment that is leading to real and lasting impact in the community.

This year's accomplishments include: training in new areas such as solar installation and community tourism that will bring jobs to Santa Cruz, expansion of our Reading Program to include 144 local children, support for 64 women entrepreneurs to run their own business, and awarding 74 secondary and higher education scholarships. We also trained 78 teachers in sexual and reproductive health education, while continuing to engage parents and youth on this important topic.

However, while we celebrate our accomplishments, we also know that the challenges are great. The men and women of Santa Cruz are feeling the pull to migrate to the United States grow ever stronger. The majority in our village do not want to leave their community and their family. Our challenge, as Amigos, is to shape a stronger, healthier and more resilient Santa Cruz, where families can stay and thrive. We will do this through access to quality education, and through economic opportunities that are fair and dignified. Together, we can meet this challenge. Please join us and support our work today.

Jessie Cohn, Executive Director



**80% GRADUATE
EMPLOYMENT RATE**

In the ten years since we first welcomed students into our CECAP Culinary Program, 75 young men and women have trained in our center. The program remains one of our most successful initiatives, and today graduates can be found working in many different restaurants around the lake! This year, a new class of eight students are completing their studies, learning the culinary techniques and technical knowledge to enter the workforce

as budding young chefs.

Raising employment and income levels are key to ensuring a better future for the young men and women of Santa Cruz. That is why ensuring a clear pathway from training to employment is one of the four priorities Amigos de Santa Cruz has committed to implementing as part of our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Despite cultural and religious barriers, women in Santa Cruz have begun to talk about reproductive health. Amigos staff are helping to soften these barriers by engaging women directly and privately in ways and in places where they feel most safe, including their own homes.

By taking the time and care to ensure safe spaces for discussion, women are able to listen more openly and to ask questions. They are getting the information they need about puberty, pregnancy, health and self-confidence for themselves and for their school-aged children.



EDUCATION FOR THE NEW GENERATION



WELCOME TO OUR NEW READING CENTER!

Our Reading Program has come a long way! Ten years ago we started a Model Classroom Program in the local preschool, and five years ago we shifted our focus to start an Afternoon Reading Program that encourages a love for reading while developing creativity and critical thinking skills.

But we did not stop there! This year, with the help of many generous supporters around the world, we were able to purchase a dedicated

reading space which we intend to remodel to provide better conditions and access to quality education for the future leaders of our community.

Ten years on, we are seeing the fruits of our investment with students from our first early education cohort qualifying for scholarships in a selective private school!

OUR READING PROGRAM IN NUMBERS

144

Participants from Santa Cruz and Jaibalito

96%

Student attendance rate

90%

Students enjoy reading in their free time.

45%

Increase in parents reading with their children at home

20 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

This year, as in previous years, Amigos has awarded an increasing number of scholarships for middle school, high school and university studies. We now also provide additional support including computer access and weekly tutoring sessions. These tools enable youth to access secondary and higher education for the very first time, a first step toward breaking the cycle of poverty in Santa Cruz.



65%

The majority of our scholarships were awarded to young women in 2022.

284

Scholarship recipients since 2002.

In 2022 we awarded 48 scholarships for middle school, high school and university studies.

BUILDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES



NEW DESIGNS ARE HERE!

Our Manos Cruceñas Artisan Store has a new collection of signature handmade products. The products are designed to increase income for local artisans while celebrating local artisan traditions through beautiful, stylish and unique products. New items debuted in our Santa Cruz retail store earlier this year, and are now ready for purchase online in time for holiday shopping!

Shop with impact today:

<https://www.amigosdesantacruz.org/store/>



ELENA'S STORY

Building sustainable, community-based tourism

Elena is one of a kind, with an outgoing personality and winning smile. Yet she struggled to start a tourism business after the pandemic. In 2021, she participated in Amigos' Community Tour Guide Certification Course, learning the skills and business strategies to become a successful guide and help her business grow. Now Elena has joined ten other guides to form the first-ever Santa Cruz Guide Association, and one of only two women in the group. She is particularly known for her energetic hikes and her local cultural sauna tour. Come give it a try the next time you are in town!

"I am very happy and proud that more than 100 tourists have hiked, experienced the local sauna and learned to make tortillas with me. I am currently building and furnishing rooms that I intend to rent to tourists as part of a package along with other activities." - Elena Rafael Simón



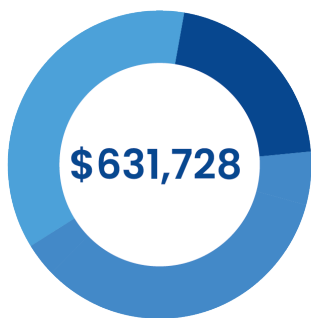
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS MAKE PROTECTING LAKE ATITLAN THEIR BUSINESS

This year, Amigos formed a new alliance with Atitlán Recicla, a lake-wide initiative of the NGO Amigos del Lago focused on reducing solid waste in Lake Atitlán while generating income for local women. The program supports 10 women from the villages of Santa Cruz and Tzununá, and will soon support an additional group in Jaibalito. The women receive training in handling recyclable

materials, using scales and sorting materials, and how to create a business plan. Working in cooperatives, they collect and clean recyclables for which they receive payment based on the material collected. So far in 2022, they have collected more than 39 tons of recyclables! This has contributed to their household income while reducing the amount of trash around the lake. **A win-win for everyone!**

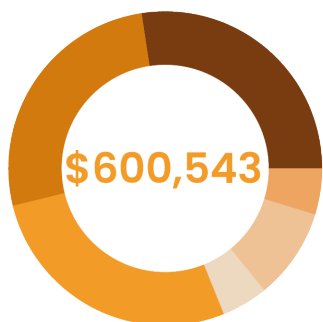


USE OF FUNDS 2021



INCOME

Grants	41%
Individual donations	38%
Social Business/ Program Income	21%



EXPENSES

Education & Youth	28%
Social Businesses	27%
Economic Empowerment	27%
Admin	10%
Fundraising	4%
COVID Emergency Programs	4%

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO...

Amigos de Jaibalito
Carson Foundation
CG Charitable
Chances for Children Intl.
Friend of Amigos
Girl Rising
John Brown Family Foundation
Linda Vista Foundation
Maya Educational Foundation
SG Foundation
Thrive SK2 Fund

And over 1700 passionate and
generous donors around the
world!

JOIN US...



DID YOU KNOW?

We are proud that our staff are 97% Guatemalan, that more than 85% come from Santa Cruz or one of its surrounding towns, and that more than 60% are women. This staff structure allows us to truly know the community we serve and build the trust we need for our programs to be accepted and sustainable in the long term.

MEET DANIEL

From program participant to Amigos staff to community leader!

From a very young, age Daniel was motivated to work hard for himself and for his community. He participated in various professional development workshops and conferences as an Amigos youth participant, starting in 2009. A few years later, he joined the Amigos Youth Corps internship program, and a year after that he was hired on staff. Daniel's work now focuses on empowering youth through sexual health education, leadership and professional opportunities. He is especially proud of his work developing local men's groups to talk about emotions and mental health.

This year, Daniel was also elected President of the Community Council for Local Development (COCODE), an important community leadership position. He is a shining example of how a person with access to education and training can contribute to improving his own community!



SUPPORT OUR WORK TODAY!



Please consider giving generously
this year to help us break the cycle of
poverty in Santa Cruz.

DONATE ONLINE

[www.amigosdesantacruz.org/
donate](http://www.amigosdesantacruz.org/donate)

SEND A CHECK

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