



Progresas

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program



Spring Update - May 2017

32nd. Student Conference— April 22 and 23

This year's conference was well attended and well appreciated by all. Our students arrive from many directions, often from considerable distance and with great difficulty. A number of them live where they may have to travel several hours just to reach a road good enough to have bus service, and then there are many hours more to the conference. Most come from families that speak one of the 22 Mayan languages at home, and only learned Spanish when they went to school. Some are the first person from their community ever to have attained their level of education. A number were attending the conference for the first time and knew none of the other students.

The theme this year was "Migration", a timely topic, especially in light of the current US government. The program opened with a documentary film about travel to the US from Central America by riding the Mexican freight train known as *La Bestia*: very thought provoking. After a good lunch, opportunities to greet old friends, and a presentation on malnutrition by medical student Herberth Beb Coc, we were divided into groups to engage in workshops on either theater, dance, or painting/drawing. These were run by young Guatemalans with expertise in the various

fields. The painting group was led by our own Aurelio Rodríguez Sajché. It was interesting and delightful to experience a collection of mildly apprehensive strangers transform itself into a newly confident community with new skills.



Participants of the theater workshop

After dinner, we spent a long and lovely evening sharing the fruits of our afternoon workshops, works of dance, theater, and visual art; plus singing, games, poetry and much laughter. All this was followed by a dance lasting until the wee hours of the morning.

Quaker Meeting for Worship followed breakfast the next morning, under the trees in the morning sun with the sounds of the birds, the breeze and a nearby church choir in our ears. Although it is not required, the majority of the students attended. It appears Meeting has become an important part of the conference.

The PROGRESA staff gave three

awards to students who had done exemplary work with their community service projects: a young woman in accounting put together a project empowering men to be more capable heads of households through budgeting; another in agronomy worked with rural women in improving household produce gardens; and a young man in nursing did a community health project. They were inspiring for the content of the work, but also for their careful organization, planning, and follow through that was demonstrated.

The keynote address for the weekend was given by Luis Arena about the complexities of migration, especially to the USA. It was

very informative drawing the audience in through many opportunities to ask questions. The many questions demonstrated that it was of subject of interest and concern for the students. Luis presented sobering data about poverty, corruption,

continues on next page



inequity and educational deficits in Guatemala. However, the overriding message was that young Guatemalans such as our PROGRESA students are empowered with the gifts and talents to transform the country.

After lunch, there were warm hugs and warm wishes as friends, new and old, went their ways in hope of meeting together again. Although the subject matter of these conferences is always timely and important, it is our perception that this building of community, of a network of committed professionals across the indigenous regions of Guatemala that have been kept in poverty and oppression in part through isolation, is the most important work here. This community is a source of great hope for the future of Guatemala and the world.

Small but important changes

We are very proud of the service we provide to our students but we are always looking for ways to improve. Last year as part of our indepth analysis we interviewed students and



New students, their parents and our office staff during our workshop in Xela

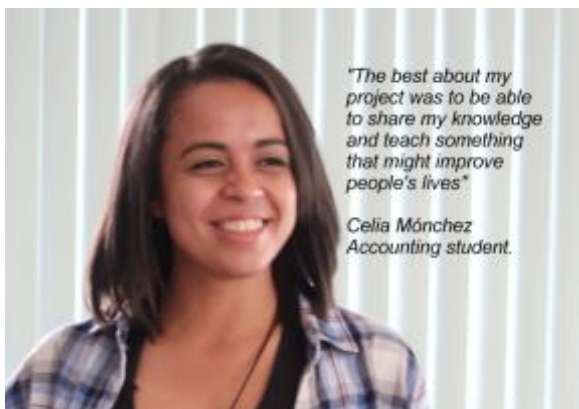
graduates asking for their suggestions of how we might strengthen their connection to PROGRESA. They had a lot of good ideas and we have already moved to incorporate some of them into our process of working with new students and recent graduates. In the past we have only worked with new students individually. This year we started with a general workshop for these students and their parents. We presented them with a short slide show which elaborated both our values (based on Quaker testimonies) and procedures. We ad-

ressed how our partial scholarships can be augmented with a non interest bearing loan. We also discussed the community service requirement and answered all their questions. After the general presentation we met with each student individually to determine his or her exact financial need. We were very pleased with the new approach. The students and parents had the opportunity to interact with each other and ask questions. They felt welcomed into a community and to our surprise and delight the entire process ended up taking less over all

time because the individual interviews went much faster.

A similar group approach will be used in our final interviews with the graduating students. We will emphasize that even though they are graduating we still

consider them to be an important part of the extended PROGRESA family. In the coming year we have plans for further activities aimed at making our students and graduates feel they are part of a special group. We have already increased our use of social media including Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. We plan to hold workshops between semesters in Xela, Coban and Paramos when we travel to meet those who live far away. We will also look to our graduates to help with the workshops.



"The best about my project was to be able to share my knowledge and teach something that might improve people's lives"

Celia M6nchez
Accounting student.

Community service projects in 2016

Another small but important change was made in the area of community service. This year for the first time we made time during the student conference to recognize three students for the excellence of their community service projects. The awards were based on a combination of how well the service met a real community need and the quality of the proposal and final report. Here are summaries of two of the three winning projects.

Medical and Humanitarian Help

Marlo Rodelvi is studying professional nursing and decided to do his service project in conjunction with the “Puesto de Salud” in his community. The small health centers never have enough staff so they were grateful for his help and put him to work at a variety of tasks. When he realized that the majority of the patients suffered from arterial hypertension and didn’t always appear for regular check-ups, he asked permission to make home visits. This had a positive

impact because many of the women were finding it difficult to leave their homes and family responsibilities in order to have regular check-ups. Marlo was able to talk to them about the consequences of hypertension and the importance of regular doctor’s visits in preventing the serious side effects of this condition. Not only was Marlo able to put his knowledge into practice, his decision to visit people in their homes was a first step in letting members of the community learn about his nursing skills.



Marlo taking bloodpressure to a patient at his house



Women planting their family gardens during Rosa’s workshop.

Family Gardens

Rosa Amalia Vasquez is an agronomy student who lives in the municipality of Rabinal in Baja Verapaz. She decided to work with the women in her community to teach them how to grow some vegetables which were not common in their diet because they were too expensive in the market. She began with several talks about the value of a family garden and the importance of watering. In order to help the women understand and to help motivate them she used pictures during her talks. After five talks they began the practical part of the project

which involved planting cilantro and radishes for family consumption. This project served to motivate the women to plant their own family gardens since they were the ones who fed the family and worked at home. The men in the family, who were generally farmers, usually only planted vegetables they could sell in the market.

Rosa Amalia says that she too learned a lot. Working with the women helped her to overcome her fear of speaking in public. As for the women, they learned that there is a young woman in their community who is capable of leadership.

News from our graduates

Santos David Villatoro is from Ixcán Playa Grande. In 2016 he graduated as a Licenciatura in Legal Sciences. Many of our ESL teachers are sure to remember him for his participation in several ESL tours and his talent for music. He is currently working at the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office in Ixcán Playa Grande. This public organization is responsible for ensuring the fulfillment of Human Rights for all people. He is the attorney in charge of initiating cases that could be considered possible violations of human rights.



Rubidia Matías is from Pueblo Nuevo Ixcán. With our help she graduated in 2013 as a Professional Nursing Technician, which is a technical career at the university level. She has been working as a nurse in her municipality. Rubidia is very happy with her job because her contributions are improving the health of her people, especially those in remote communities. In addition, Rubidia continued her studies and is writing her thesis in order to receive her licenciatura (Bachelor’s degree) in nursing.

Gilda Mariela Hernández is from San Pedro Yepocapa, Chimaltenango. On March 31, she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Social Work. Presently, she is working as Municipal Coordinator of CONALFA, an organization dedicated to promoting adult literacy, in San Pedro Yepocapa. But she has also been active in other areas as well such as promoting workshops on preventive health care and environmental stewardship. Gilda remains connected to PROGRESA visiting the office and recommending other young women for scholarship assistance.

A new colleague!

We are very happy to share with you that since January our office team has a new member. Her name is Angela Karina Sic López and she is a graduate of our program. In fact, she graduated just a few weeks ago in Social Work. Karina is a young woman with many talents and abilities. She already has a lot of experience in the field of community organization. She will work primarily in program development for our students and improving our community service activities.

At the same time, we would like to thank Yesika Tucubal, who worked with us for two years and is also a graduate of ours. She now works as a teacher which was her goal and is continuing her studies in education.

Here is a message from our new colleague:

Hello everyone. My name is Karina. I am from Uspantan, El Quiche. I am the oldest of eight children. I received support from PROGRESA for three years. Last month I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. The help that PROGRESA gave was very important to me and without that support I would not have been able to start or finish university. Now I work for PROGRESA. I have learned a lot during these first months and have greatly enjoyed the work. I like being involved in the community as well, and I am currently part of an organization of



Karina Sic and Gilda Mariela Hernández after their graduation ceremony last March.

indigenous youth addressing issues we face, such as racism. In the future I hope to work in public administration, because I believe politics can be a means to improve conditions for women and indigenous peoples. I believe that it is important for young people to participate in these concerns.

[Note: the Bachelor's degree in the U.S. is known as licenciatura in Guatemala and is the level of Professional Social Work here.]



Teaching English Experience # 8

In January 2017, 19 North Americans came to Antigua to spend a week in the beautiful Posada Belen helping 19 PROGRESA students learn and practice their English. Many of the teachers have attended before and find it such a rewarding and joyous experience that they return year after year. Join us in Jan. 3-11, 2018 for Teaching English Experience # 9. The cost is \$1150. See the website www.guatemalafriend.org for details. Contact Donna Smith: dforestvil@aol.com for further information, tax-deductibility and optional Highland tour.

Many, many thanks to our faithful donors who make all this possible!

All donations are made to: **Redwood Forest Friends Meeting**
and are mailed to: Redwood Forest Friends Meeting
Attn: Guatemala Scholarship Program
P.O. Box 1831. Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Contact us:

Web: www.guatemalafriends.org
Email: progresas3@gmail.com
Facebook: Progresa Quakers
US: Harriet Lewis, hlewis@sonic.net (707) 526-1066

PROGRESA STUDENT ROSTER 2017

UNIVERSITY LEVEL (63)

Major / Names	Age	Language
Secondary Teaching (3,5 years)		
1 Daniel Hernández García	55	Mam
2 Sandra Verónica Sirin Maxía	21	Kaqchikel
3 Domingo Ixquiactap Perechú	29	K'iche'
4 María Isabel Cabrera Sales	24	Mam
5 Berta Alicia Chipix Apén	28	Kaqchikel
6 Maydy Rosemary Hernández Santos	22	Kaqchikel
7 Macaria Tubac Simón	30	Kaqchikel
8 Dolores Ical Jóm	22	Poqomchi'
9 Efraín Mendoza Pablo	22	Mam
10 Marta Reina Sanic Botones	23	Kaqchikel
11 Fidel Alexander Lúe Són	22	Kaqchikel
12 Amalia Verónica Maxía López	24	Kaqchikel
13 Antonia Pascual Diego	34	Q'anjob'al
14 Magda Elizabeth Tomas Baltazar	24	Chuj
15 María Yolanda Cuy Chom	24	Kaqchikel
16 Hermelinda Concepción Miguel	28	Q'anjob'al
Nursing Professional RN (3 years)		
1 Brenda Marisol Ismalej Osorio	19	Achi
2 Byron Anibal Joj Ralac	29	K'iche'
3 Concepción Damián Chicajau	21	Tz'utujil
4 Elgar Dionel López López	20	Achi
5 Marco Antonio Cardona Sales	34	Mam
6 María Aracely Vásquez Puac	22	K'iche'
7 Marlo Rodelvi Cardona Ramírez	21	Español
8 Marvin Danilo Tux Caal	19	Q'eqchi'
9 Miriam Aracely Joj Ajvix	22	Kaqchikel
Medicine (6 years)		
1 Emerson David Vivar Valdéz	20	Español
2 Herberth Estuardo Beb Coc	24	Español
3 Jocelyne Adriana Fuentes Osorio	23	Español
4 Natividad María Guadalupe Cojtí	20	Kaqchikel
5 Piana Imelda Pérez Brito	23	Ixil
6 Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández D.	23	Poptí
Business Administration (5 years)		
1 Jennifer Haydeé Gómez Ixpatá	19	Español
2 Enrique Bala García	28	Kaqchikel
3 Juan Nicolás Cruz	24	Q'eqchi'
4 Leonardo Chub Coc	26	Q'eqchi'
5 Milton Rocaél Manchamé Arrollo	26	Español
6 Oscar René Och Tut	36	Q'eqchi'
Psychology (5 years)		
1 Alejandra Beatriz Gómez Guzmán	24	Ixil
2 María Chiviliu Ajtujal	21	Tz'utujil
3 Mildre Mabeli De León Cano	23	Español
4 Yuri Nicolasa Coché Pablo	20	Tz'utujil
Physical education (5 years)		
1 Yesica Marleny Ixchajchal Ordoñez	24	K'iche'

Major / Names	Age	Language
Social work (5 years)		
1 José Luis Ramiro Tay Morales	51	Kaqchikel
2 Mario Mendoza López	28	Poqomchi'
3 Nora Verónica Sabán Car	20	Kaqchikel
4 Yessenia Sales Morales	22	Mam
Education (5 years)		
1 Elsa Ofelia Yojero Estepán	29	Kaqchikel
2 Erika Roxana Salomé Ixcotoyac Uz	22	K'iche'
3 Santos Rodolfo Chán Chuc	27	K'iche'
CPA (5 years)		
1 Carmen Elisa Cojtín Ajtzij	19	Kaqchikel
2 Celia Adelina Monchez Bellozo	21	Español
3 Héctor Anibal Ben Xoquic	21	Kaqchikel
Agronomy (5 years)		
1 Antonio Carrillo Puac	27	K'iche'
2 Rosa Amalia Vásquez González	20	Achi
3 Tomas Cristobal Us Us	23	K'iche'
Physiotherapy (3 years)		
1 Aída Anahí Rodríguez Valdez	29	Español
2 Yessenia del Carmen Maldonado	21	Español
International relationships (5 years)		
1 Iris Angélica Ajú Cholotío	24	K'iche'
Radiology (3 years)		
1 Laura María Pixcar Bonilla	18	Español
Engineering (5 years)		
1 José Alejandro Pérez Tzaj	26	K'iche'
Forestry (5 years)		
1 Sandra Gabriela López López	25	K'iche'
Systems engineering (5 years)		
1 Elizabeth Guadalupe Ruiz Erazo	22	Español
Law (5 years)		
1 Deker Eleazar Quiacaín Pop	24	Tz'utujil

SECONDARY LEVEL (9)

Bookkeeping (3 years)		
1 Marta Verónica Joj Cac	18	K'iche'
2 Rosa Lourdes Joj Osorio	19	K'iche'
3 Noe Tiul Ico	22	Q'eqchi'
4 Paulina Ramirez Ahilón	32	Mam
Agriculture (3 years)		
1 Edwin Alexander Chilisná Chipel	18	K'iche'
2 Edgar Amilcar Chóc Morán	18	Poqomchi'
Young students under special memorial fund		
1 Jasmin Mishel López García	15	Kaqchikel
2 Margarita Stephanye López García	18	Kaqchikel
Mechanics (3 years)		
1 Isabel López García	20	Kaqchikel

MEET TWO OF OUR NEW STUDENTS IN 2017.

María Isabel Cabrera Sales is 22 years old and already something of a community leader. She works in her aldea teaching part time for CONALFA, the government sponsored adult education program, and also teaches classes at a middle school run by the community. Unfortunately neither of these jobs pays very much. María lives with her parents and 5 of her 6 siblings. Her father is a farmer and her oldest brother also works in the fields. Her mother cares for the family and earns a little money raising small animals which she sells in the market. The rest of her siblings are still in school but help with the crops when they can.



María graduated from high school and began taking Saturday classes at a university. After only one semester she had to leave school because she lacked economic support to continue with her studies.

María describes herself as loving learning and teaching. Her greatest joy has been teaching young people in the very room where she was once a student. Her enthusiasm about teaching spills out as she describes the creative approaches she uses with her students and how she strives to make the classes interesting. A sponsor (or combination of sponsors) able to pay \$1500 for the year, we could give María a full scholarship and let her continue to use her salary to pay for the education of her younger brothers and sisters. We believe this would be an excellent investment. Please help.

Alejandra Beatriz Gómez Guzmán had already lived up to her parents dream when in 2015 she graduated as a primary school teacher. Neither parent can read or write but they strongly believe that education is the path to advancement and have struggled to make this possible. Alejandra is the second of 5 children and the second to obtain a high school degree. All three of her younger siblings are in school. Alejandra is an excellent student and received a scholarship to attend high school at a government run boarding school. Her academic average in the final year was very high, 89.5 so we have no doubt that she will be able to accomplish her goal of graduating with a Bachelor's degree specializing in psychology.

The family lives in Santa María Nebaj in El Quiché where they resettled after the war. Her father works as a day laborer and tends his own crops of corn and beans. Her mother sometimes has a job as a cook's assistant. The children have always worked to help supplement the family income. Over the years Alejandra has worked selling fruit in the street, weaving, cleaning, laundry and a variety of other low paying jobs.

Alejandra has chosen to study psychology hoping to work with the poor helping those who have suffered trauma. She has a special concern to alleviate the effects of violence to women and children. Although she doesn't directly address the impact of the war on her family, it appears that this suffering has influenced her career choice. Alejandra plans to attend a private university where registration and monthly payments are fairly high. Alejandra needs a sponsor to cover her expenses of \$750 for the year.



Alejandra's older sister and Alejandra during our workshop in Xela.

Some data about our students in 2017.

This year our program is supporting a total of 72 students. 88% of them (63) are at the university level and 12% are at the secondary level (9).

We have 45 women which represent 62% and 27 men or 38% of the total. The most popular majors continue to be secondary teaching, nursing, medicine and business administration at the university level. In secondary, bookkeeping is the preferred major by our students.