

**Latin American Concerns Committee
Report to
PYM Representative Committee March 2018**

In 1997, the Annual Session established a standing Latin America Concerns Committee to gather and disseminate information to Pacific and other Yearly Meetings regarding Friends groups and service projects in Latin America. The intention is to support rather than replace spirit-led projects already supported by Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and individual Friends.

Committee meetings will be held three to four times a year: usually before and during Annual Session and Representative Committee. Some meetings will be by conference call. These meetings will include planning and preparation of Interest Groups at Annual Session. The three main programs, Casa de los Amigos, El Salvador Project and Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program, will take turns as presenters for Interest Groups. In 2017, Sacramento Friends Meeting Undocumented Student Scholarship Project was added as a fourth program to LACC.

LACC is proposing two Interest Groups for Annual Session 2018: Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program and Sacramento Friends Meeting Undocumented Student Scholarship Project.

Casa de los Amigos

The October 2017 temblor of 7.1 in the heart off Mexico City brought minimal visible damage to the structure of the Casa de los Amigos, yet took its toll. The 100-year old structure, once the home and studio of famed muralist Jose Clemente Orozco, stood fast, but the 20-year old plumbing suffered major damage, inflicting strain on the refugees and migrants and the paying hostel guests, the income from the hostel supporting a third of the Casa's budget. Alas, the specter of the extent of the yet indeterminate weakening of the roof and supporting walls will be a crushing major future expense.

Nevertheless, the Casa became a bustling earthquake relief center and its volunteers spread out to provide help in neighboring colonias. These volunteers, the active arm of the Casa, have recently come from Germany, Italy, Venezuela, Mexico, and the US. New ones are being sought as terms end.

Refugees finding their tortuous, prolonged way to the Casa, and lacking welcome to there US, have fled from a dozen oppressive countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, often aided within Mexico by the United Nations High Commssioner for Refugees, have pressed Casa hospitality to the limit. This past year over 100 persons, some in small family groups, have been guests at the Casa for two or three months, welcomed for safety, shelter, and intensive language preparation to begin to help them become self-sustaining in their new land.

The Casa's shoestring budget has been strained mercilessly by anticipated structural roof repair to an historical building and relief work after the quake. It is strengthened by a warm working relationship with a small but vibrant Mexico City Meeting, its tenant in the historical building the Casa owns, but it faces a gigantic financial burden for the director whose term ends in April of 2019 and whoever follows.

El Salvador Projects

The El Salvador Projects of Palo Alto Friends Meeting continues to work to provide financial support in the form of a no interest loan to University students from rural El Salvador. Over the past few years this work has been concentrated in the municipality of Suchitoto where graduating high school students from 5 rural K-12 schools as well as youth from the high school in town can apply to our program.

In 2018 due to increased donations we were able to increase the numbers of student we support from 16 in 2017 to 21 this year. As we had several students who finished in our program we were able accept 8 new students this year. As over the past several years each student will receive 10 monthly stipend of \$100 for a yearly total of \$1000. Ten of our students stay in our coed and multi-financed student house in San Salvador. We finance the house with help from the city of Suchitoto, as well as two other US nonprofits. A total of 22 students share the student house space and which is located only 5 blocks from the National University where the majority study.

Our programs provide other minor support to some of the rural schools, where we hope to improve the academic quality of middle and high school students. In 2018 we hope to start a weekend course in at least one of the rural schools; we will do this providing travel expense to some of our current and past university students who will tutor in math, science, biology and social studies. We are also providing some funding to the high school teachers to equip a new science lab.

In 2017 we implemented a program of social work, where our university students designed and implemented a project which included 40 hours of social work. As our program is a loan we discounted \$100 from each student's debt. At the end of the academic year the students as a group along with our project director evaluated each project and the top 3 were given a small cash prize. The project was such a success that it will be continued in 2018 and beyond. Projects varied from sex education in adolescents to recycling, with sever including tutoring at small rural schools.

In memory of Carmen Broz, a local artist and ex scholarship student Juan Domingo Rivas will be painting a public mural of Carmen. The mural will be located on a full wall of a small house on the village's main road and seen by all who enter.

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program(Progresa)

80 students are currently receiving scholarships in Guatemala. In Jan. 2018, 22 North Americans attended Teaching English Work Tour in Guatemala assisting 22 of our students with English instruction. Following ESL, 11 participants toured the Guatemalan Highlands with Progresa. Program development has included an Advisory Council of former students and trainings for current students.

Sacramento Friends Meeting Undocumented Student Scholarship Project

We are currently supporting 12 students with their studies at Sacramento State University. Of the twelve, eight of them will continue in school in the fall of 2018. Of the eight, two plan to graduate in the fall. The main way we raise money is through visits and presentations at different Monthly meetings. However, we haven't visited any monthly meeting in the last couple of years. We have sent thank you cards and letters requesting funds from different donors and meetings that have participated in the past. Most recently, we received donations from Quarterly in San Francisco, after we did a short presentation where one of the recipients spoke. Our current budget is about \$7,500 (not updated due to a fundraising event at Sacramento Friends Meeting on 2/11/18). We also received a \$2,000 donation from Sierra Club to be given to a student or students in the field of environmental studies. That amount is not included in the \$7,500. Usually around this time of the year, we send out an email announcing the scholarship, but this year we will only have funds to serve our current students and the ones in the field of environmental studies. We will be requesting applications for those in the next few weeks.

Additional information on the scholarship:

The scholarship is renewable, provided that the student keeps the required 2.75 GPA and that Sacramento Friends Meeting Undocumented Student Scholarship Project has the funds.

Students have to have completed at least one semester at Sacramento State University in order to apply.

Current recipients have to submit an unofficial transcript and a short description of where they are academically in order to continue receiving the scholarship in the fall.

For further information about PYM outreach and service in Latin America, visit the program websites.

www.casadelosamigos.org

www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org

www.guatemalafriends.org

www.quakerundocumentedstudentscholarship.org

Submitted by,
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