

Latin American Concerns Committee Report to PYM Annual Session 2018

SUMMARY

In 1997, PYM 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 with special attention to Casa de los Amigos in Mexico City, El Salvador Project and Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program. The intention is to support rather than replace spirit-led projects already supported by Monthly Meetings, Worship Groups and individual Friends. In 2017, the Undocumented Student Program of Sacramento Meeting became the fourth project in LACC.

LACC met three times during the year to discuss support of programs. Two Interest Groups for Annual Session were planned. Miguel Costop, director of Guatemala Friends Scholarship, will be our guest at Annual Session. He will be presenting an Interest Group on how this program is contributing to preservation of Mayan culture and language. Patricia Portillo of Sacramento is coordinating an Interest Group, which will include Dreamers in her program.

CASA DE LOS AMIGOS

www.casadelosamigos.org

In 2017 the Casa de los Amigos was able to support 171 refugees and 53 migrants, we hosted 1,100 guests who enjoyed solidary hospitality, we had more than 10,000 visitors who learned about la Casa and Quakerism. We had 45 volunteers working in different programs. We organized learning tours about fair trade-economy and migration with the Universities of Haverford, Redlands, the Universidad Iberoamericana and the Mexican Institute of Psycho-oncology, Universities of Mexico and the United States. Indigenous and community cooperatives are very important to the objectives of the Casa de los Amigos. We supported the training of environmental and community activists in environmental issues. The Quaker Meeting continued with their activities and we also celebrated World Quakerism Day, among many other actions.

EL SALVADOR PROJECTS

www.pafmelsalvadorprojects.org

After 29 years from its founding by Carmen Broz, the Palo Alto Friends Meeting “El Salvador Projects” continues to work with vulnerable communities in rural El Salvador. In 2018 we provide financial support to 20 university students in fields of study that vary from Medicine and Law to Computer science and Sociology. Besides our university student loan program, we also co-finance a student house in San Salvador where 22 students from 5 different programs including our own live. Our work started in the community of El Barrio in 1989 and today we continue to support the K-12 school there providing funds for a vocational baking program, one teacher’s salary and an academic tutoring program for high school students in Math, Science, Social studies and language on Saturdays. This year a mural to remember Carmen Broz who founded our work is being painted by one of our past scholarship students in El Barrio. As a new element our university students as of 2017 are required to complete 40 hours of social work hours each academic year. This new aspect provides multiple benefits throughout rural Suchitoto where our students are from. Some tutor elementary students, some are planting and maintaining green belts, some teach junior high and high school students about sexually transmitted diseases, one teaches English at the high school he graduated from and another tutors math at another high school, the list goes on and on. Those interested in seeing our projects at work are invited to visit El

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Salvador where our director Robert Broz can introduce them to our students and communities. All are invited to follow our work on Facebook @Palo Alto Friends Meeting El Salvador Projects or visit our webpage.

GUATEMALA FRIENDS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (PROGRESA)

www.guatemalafriends.org

2017 was a very positive year for PROGRESA. We supported 74 students in 2017 and have 75 for 2018. Students continue to perform community service projects each year with the help of Progresa. An important development was the addition of training workshops for our students to complement their formal education. Topics have included gender equity and an analysis of Guatemalan politics. We have established an alumni advisory committee to help us maintain contact with our graduates and to advise us in our operations and future planning. Two Books For Peace libraries for the preservation of Mayan culture and language were established. Our Teaching English Experience in January 2018 was the largest ever with 22 volunteers being paired with 22 of our students. A tour of the Highlands with 11 participants followed. The next Teaching English and tour are being planned for January 2019.

SACRAMENTO FRIENDS MEETING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

www.quakerundocumentedstudentscholarship.org

We are currently in the process of renewing the scholarship for last year's recipients. We will continue to support 8 students in the coming 2018-19 academic year. Our current budget is \$10,967.10, which includes a donation from the Sierra Club to select a student in the natural sciences and/or environmental studies. We extended the application deadline because we did not have anyone qualified apply by the initial deadline. We hope to be able to use the money, although even among the current scholarship recipients, none are in the natural sciences or environmental studies field.

Submitted by Donna Smith, Clerk