



# Progresá

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program

## Fall Update – November 2015

### MEET ONE OF OUR STUDENTS



**Marta Batén Ramos** is one of those students who inspires us with her determination to get ahead by obtaining an education. She is now 32 years old and has spent most of her life struggling to continue her education. She comes from a family of farmers in the Ixcán in the northern part of the country. She is the youngest of six children. Among her older brothers and

sisters only one was able to finish primary school; they are now married and work either as farmers or as housewives. Marta and her mother now live with one of these brothers and his family.

Marta's father died when she was only three years old and after that time her family's financial situation became very difficult. Everyone had to work just to meet basic necessities. She too had to leave school after the third grade to help her mother and work in the fields. It was not until her adolescence when she began to earn her own money that Marta was able to attend a night school for adults and finish the sixth grade. She then completed three years of middle school in Instituto Telesecundario, a national program which brings classes to students using video-taped instruction materials. Her desire to continue in high school was very strong but it seemed impossible until she learned of a congregation of nuns who offered to help her. Their school was located in Esquipulas in the eastern part of the country so in order to attend Marta had to leave her home and travel far from her community. It was during this stage of her life that she discovered her vocation of nursing.

In 2013 Marta began studying in a weekend nursing program while she worked during the week as a domestic employee. Although she managed to pass all of her courses during the first

### NEWS FROM GUATEMALA

As many of you know, this has been an exciting political year for Guatemala. For the first time in the country's history the people (rich and poor alike) stood up to protest the endemic corruption and in the end forced both the President and Vice President to resign. They are now in jail along with many other high level members of the government.

Unfortunately the resignation of the President came too late to change the slate of candidates running for election and none of the candidates had clear records of honest government. In the end the people were forced to choose between a TV personality who had no previous experience and whose party was founded by retired military and the ex-wife of a previous President whose record had been tainted by reports of corruption even before she became First Lady. In the run-off election Jimmy Morales, the TV comedian, won with 67% of the vote. He ran on the slogan "Not corrupt, Not a Thief" Now the country can only wait to see if this totally inexperienced new President will really be willing and able to fight corruption. He will need the force of the people behind him.

year, her financial situation became precarious because at the end of each semester she needed to complete a month-long practicum which was not acceptable to her employer. In 2014, during her third semester, she failed one course could not continue until she repeated this course. In 2015 she applied to Progresa and we accepted her on the condition that she make-up the failed course on her own. She succeeded in passing during the first semester and became a scholarship student in July of this year. Marta says she is very happy because now her goal of graduating as a nurse feels like a reachable goal.

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## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

### Helping in a Centro de Salud



**Miriam during one of her talks to patients**

**Miriam Aracely Joj** is 20 years old and comes from Sumpango, Sacatepéquez. In November she will complete her first year of Professional Nursing. Miriam decided to do her service on Saturdays in the public health center located in her village. Because she was a beginning student, the doctors assigned her simple tasks such as taking blood pressure, weighing and measuring the babies and even giving vaccinations.

In addition to performing these nursing duties Miriam was asked to give various informative talks to the patients who were waiting for their turn to see the doctors. Her “talks” included information about hygiene, self-care, and the prevention of sexual diseases and tuberculosis. Miriam explained that many of the patients showed interest in her information but were sometimes too shy to ask questions. She gave the example that after she had explained about the importance of having regular Pap exams, several women approached her privately with questions of whether it was really necessary,

whether it would hurt, and at what age one should begin.

For the majority of Guatemalan women from the rural areas who often have had very little formal education, these are important doubts, and probably many had never had a Pap exam before because of their lack of knowledge and consequent shame. We think the idea of providing this information while the women were waiting to see a doctor was brilliant because in most of the public clinics the patients spend hours waiting for their turn to see the doctor.

### Encouraging Citizen participation

**Iris Angélica Ajú**, 20, is completing her third year in International Relations at the Landívar University in Quetzaltenango. She comes from Santa Clara La Laguna near the shores of Lake Atitlán. Her service project was entitled “Discussions about Citizen Participation”. Its objective was to educate and motivate a group of 22 young people in regard to their rights and obligations as a citizen. Since this was an election year in Guatemala, her talks took place before the general elections and focused on topics such as “the characteristics of a good



**Iris (center) and some of the talks' participants**

candidate” for the office of President. The young people also engaged in various analyses of the parties and the candidates running for offices in their own village. In one exercise the participants were asked to describe what projects or actions they would emphasize if they were elected mayor of their community. This gave them the chance to think about their own priorities and to help them analyze which candidates might share their ideas and thus provide the best option for them.

### **Interpreting construction plans**

**Jose Alejandro Pérez Tzaj** is 24 years old and comes from Santa Clara La Laguna near Lake Atitlan. He is currently finishing his second year of Civil Engineering at the University of San Carlos in Quetzaltenango. When he graduates Jose will be the first engineer to live in his town. When he worked



**Group of masons studying construction plans**

on a small volunteer project last year, Jose realized that none of the masons or “Maestros de Obra” in his village knew how to read construction plans. Thus grew the idea of offering classes to working masons on interpreting plans for construction, drainage, water systems and electricity. They often were men with lots of experience but little formal education.

Jose worked with a group of community advisors to spread the word about his classes. Since the masons were working men with families it was hard to find a time when they could attend classes. Finally it was decided that the classes would be held on Saturday and Sunday afternoon. Seventeen men attended the first class but over the next eight weeks attendance dwindled to 10. Given the many competing responsibilities of his students we think it is impressive that 10 out of 17 chose to attend all of the classes.

When the course was finished the students expressed their appreciation to Jose for his work. It was the first time that any of them had participated in a course like this. Jose reported to us that he too could see that many of the men valued the information they were receiving and were eager to gain new knowledge. We were extremely pleased to see Jose share his learning with his community.

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## **NEWS FROM OUR GRADUATES**

**Angélico Leonel Otzoy Sajbochol** is well known to many of our donors. He studied law with the help of Progresa from 2006 to 2009 at a time when he was already married and the father of two children and during those years he participated regularly in the Teaching English Workshop. We are very aware of how hard it was for him to both study and work to maintain his family. At first he worked as a waiter and later he obtained a job as an assistant to a lawyer. Angélico always demonstrated a high level of responsibility and determination toward reaching his goal and after his graduation he managed to finish his law exams and be accepted to the bar in only one year, less time than most of our students. Since that time he has worked in



**Angélico and his parents after his Master's degree graduation.**

private practice in Guatemala City primarily in the areas of civil, labor, and administrative law. Because of his ability and the fact that he lives relatively close to the Progresa office we have used him as our own lawyer during the past several years and have always found him to be diligent and efficient. During this time he has also continued his studies and this year graduated with a masters' degree in tax law. We are very proud of his accomplishments so far and hope he continues to grow in the future.



**Juan Efraín, his two children and wife.**

**Juan Efraín Tzic** comes from an aldea of Tonicapán. Like many of our students he could not continue studying immediately after high school. He needed to work in order to help support his parents and siblings who were basically subsistence farmers. Thus he was 38 years old when he applied to Progresa for help in obtaining an Associate degree in middle school teaching. After he graduated in 2009 it took him two more years to find employment but he is now working as a teacher in a neighboring community in Tonicapán. Efraín wrote to us recently to say that he feels very happy. He now has two children who continue to motivate him to get ahead.

With a lot of struggle he has recently managed to open a tiny internet café in his home aldea. Not only does this small business provide some additional income to his family, it also provides a service to the young students in his community who can now use this important tool for their studies. Efraín closed his letter with his sincere thanks to Progresa for having helped him change his life.

### A SECOND SERVICE TOUR FOR YOUNG ADULT FRIENDS

With the objective of expanding inter-cultural understand and helping rural Guatemalans, Progresa organized a Guatemalan service tour for 20 adolescents from North Pacific Yearly Meeting during the summer of 2014. During their time in Guatemala these young volunteers planted more than 2000 trees, taught English classes in a tiny village school and shared a day and a night with a Guatemalan family from a rural area among other activities. It was clear that the trip had a powerful impact on their lives from the ways in which they shared these experiences with members of their monthly and annual meetings. Their enthusiasm was so great that they have now begun to search for ways to return to Guatemala in the summer of 2016. They have opened a page on the website [www.gofundme.com/kt2mpt8s](http://www.gofundme.com/kt2mpt8s) hoping to find financial support for the new service trip. If you feel you want to support their work please go to the website and donate what you can.

We at Progresa think our first Youth Service trip was a wonderful win win win win experience for everyone involved. If there are other monthly or yearly meetings that want to organize a similar trip, we would be glad to help. Please contact us at [progresas3@gmail.com](mailto:progresas3@gmail.com) and we can work together to provide an unforgettable experience for your young people.

#### **We still have a space for you in our 2016 Teaching English Experience**

For more information visit:  
[www.guatemalafriends.org/the-teaching-english-experience](http://www.guatemalafriends.org/the-teaching-english-experience) or write us at: [progresas3@gmail.com](mailto:progresas3@gmail.com)

#### **Our Heartfelt Thanks to Our Donors!**

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