

2018 Spring Update

Web: www.guatemalafriends.org Email: progres3@gmail.com

SERVICE/LEARNING – It really is both

Since 2009, when we began requiring all of our students to complete a community service project every year, we have tried to report on one or two of the completed projects in each Update. This time we thought we would focus on the entire process and tell you more about the work that goes into our community service requirement. We are proud of what we do and even prouder of our students who are learning a lot at the same time that they contribute to their communities.

First the requirements: Each year the students must perform 40 hours of community service. They will also need between 5 to 10 hours to set up their project with a local organization, write (and usually rewrite) their proposal in telephone consultations with us, and then execute the project and submit their final report. We strongly encourage them to do their service in their home communities but when necessary allow them to volunteer where they are studying. We also ask that they try to do service which is related to their specialty, but if this isn't possible they can do something aimed at saving the environment.

Next the learning: We spend quite a bit of staff time helping our students with their service projects. For new students, it is usually the first time that anyone has ever asked them to decide for themselves what needs to be done, then find an organization that will supervise their work as a volunteer, write a proposal, carry out whatever they have planned and finally, report on what happened. It is no small task for our busy students to do 40 hours of volunteer work, but it is almost as hard for some of them to move from "tell me what to do" to "this is what I think is a problem and here is what I propose to do about it?"

Finally the growth: Helping our students to reach out to a community organization as well as plan and carry out their own project takes time, but connecting them to institutions in their community is an important step. In the end it is very satisfying to

watch their self-confidence and ability grow over the years they are with Progres. This year we are reporting on the work of two students who are nearing graduation. You will see for yourself how their horizons have grown.

Monitoring Pine Bark Beetles in the Forests of Totonicapán

Sandra Gabriela López (Gaby) is now in her final year of studying Forestry Engineering at the San Carlos University; she is very passionate about conserving her native forests. In 2017 she initiated a community service project which was aimed at something very important to her community. Totonicapán, her department, has suffered for several years from a plague of the pine bark beetles (*Dendroctonus adjunctus*) which has destroyed an important forest area near her home. In 2017 Gaby learned of a study being done by the National Institute of Forests (INAB). This motivated her to ask if the study could be extended to include the department of Totonicapán and with the support of various community leaders and several university professors she succeeded in having INAB include her area. Now Gaby is participating in the study which consists of locating and maintaining traps which attract and



Gaby checking one of the beetle's trap

trap the beetles using pheromones and allow the researchers to measure the insect's activity. With this they hope to learn more about the beetles and try to establish an early warning system before the severe damages that are caused by this plague. Gaby is very happy because she hopes that this could help in the search for a solution to this problem which has had serious consequences for many of the communities of Totonicapán. In addition, she has received various trainings in order to be able to work with the study which have greatly augmented her knowledge of this issue. This study has generated a lot of interest, so much so that a regional newspaper wrote an article about it and Gaby was photographed and interviewed for the story. We feel very happy and proud of Gaby and are sure that she will continue to make important contributions in her field.

Empowering Women

Erika Roxana Ixcotoyac finished her studies for her licenciatura in education in 2017. For the last two years she has worked as a receptionist for the Municipality of Santa María, Chiquimula, her home town. In her work she has observed many needs in the community. Last year she informed us that the Office for Women in the municipality was planning projects aimed at helping women in the rural communities who are generally very poor and have few opportunities. Many of these women are widows or single mothers and have suffered the consequences of a culture which is very "machista". This motivated Erika to coordinate with the municipal Office for Women to implement a training program teaching the women in 8 different aldeas how to make various products such as shampoo, soap and aromatic candles as well as some food products.

The principal objective of these trainings was to motivate these women to start a small business which would help them economically, but also to improve their self esteem and reduce the negative affects of machismo in their lives.

In addition to teaching them to make the products, the workshops included motivational topics regarding self esteem, organization, and empowerment. All of the trainings were in K'iche' which meant the women could learn from them since many spoke little or no Spanish. In addition to helping the women, the workshops helped Erika to improve her own language skills in her native language which she acknowledges were far from perfect.

At the end of the project, the women presented their products in front of the municipal authorities and other organizations who formed an association to donate a small amount of money as "seed capital" so the women could begin their small business. Erika also told us that several weeks after the end of the trainings she visited two of the communities covered by the project and was pleased to see that some of the women were indeed selling their products in the little community market. Some women told her that they had also begun to travel to other aldeas to sell their products and that they felt very happy and thankful for the training that they had received.



One of the groups showing aromatic candles they made for sale.

MEET SOME OF OUR NEW STUDENTS

José Domingo Pérez

comes from a very rural community in Alta Verapaz located 3 ½ hours from Cobán. He is 39 years old, the oldest of 4 siblings. His father and 2 brothers are working in the fields while his mother and sister take care of the house, raise small animals and sometime find time to weave articles to sell. Although José didn't specifically say so in his application to Progreso, we are sure that when he is not at the university studying nursing, he too will be working in the fields.

We respect Jose's determination since at age 39 he decided to return to school to study nursing. In his application he wrote that he has "wanted to study nursing for some time because of the need of the



people and the fact that there are not enough professional nurses to cover the distant communities.”

The national nursing school in Cobán, where José is now attending, does not charge tuition, but for him the expenses are prohibitive because the school is too far away for him to commute on a daily basis. He has elected to take weekend classes so his biggest expense will be transportation plus room and board during the weekend. In addition, he will eventually need uniforms and small equipment such as a stethoscope and a blood pressure monitor as well as money to cover traveling to complete his practicums where he will have to work during the week.

At this point José’s expenses amount to about \$100 a month So \$1000 would cover his entire school year.



Henry Jimenez Lopez is 27 years old and comes from a very rural place, Canton Las Piedras, Santiago Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango. He studied Bi-lingual Primary Education in high school and reports that he always wanted to continue at the university but could

not afford to do so immediately. As he better understood the job situation in his area he realized that there were more teachers than positions in the field of education so he decided to pursue a different career at the university level. He chose to study Systems Engineering because he had always liked working with computers and the University Mariano Galvez was offering a program with classes on Friday and Saturday in Huehuetenango located only a few hours travel from his village. This would allow him to continue working with his father during the week and spend two days taking classes over the weekend.

He knew it would be difficult to begin in a new field but felt that his determination and persistence would allow him to succeed. Against all odds and facing many obstacles he managed to pass the first two years of study before applying to PROGRESA in 2017. His grades were only in the 60s, but, since his curriculum included such classes as Lineal Algebra, pre-calculus, Calculus, Systems Logic, Accounting I and II, and

Algorithms, only an intense effort allowed him to pass at all. In addition to his academic struggles, his financial resources were so limited that he stayed with a friend whose noisy parties interfered with his ability to study rather than rent a room; he even skipped breakfast and lunch in order to save money.

We hope that our scholarship/loan money will provide him with stability and more time to study. We are currently giving Henry a combination of scholarship and loan which he is supplementing with his work as an agricultural day laborer. If we can find a sponsor for him, he won’t need to worry about a student loan. Our commitment with him is to provide him \$1700 for the whole year.

FIRST MEETING OF GRADUATES AND FORMER SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

As part of program development by Progresa in 2017, a meeting was held in December for students who had just graduated and other alumni of the program. The main objective of the activity was to strengthen and extend the sense of belonging for graduates with PROGRESA. It was also hoped that Progresa might continue to provide support, motivation and tools to alumni for success in their professional lives. Another objective was to form the first "Alumni Advisory Team" that will be a committee of former students to advise and support the board and work of Progresa.

The meeting included various motivational and reflective activities. Progresa staff spoke of the communication difficulties with former students and the lack of involvement of former students with Progresa.



Participants in our meeting of graduates

There was a plenary in which the graduates offered opinions and suggestions about the work of PROGRESA. The final part of the meeting consisted of a workshop facilitated by our former student Doris Martínez, a psychologist, with experience in motivational activities. She made the group focus on their abilities and strengths to be successful. There was a significant sense of teamwork that came about in small group games and artistic activities. This was the first such meeting with recent graduates and former students and we were very pleased with its success. We hope to hold these meetings every year so that our graduates continue to understand that they are important to PROGRESA and perhaps PROGRESA can continue to be important to them as well.

INSPIRING STORIES FROM OUR FORMER STUDENTS (EXBECARIOS)

Milton Rocael Manchamé, has been one of our best students for his excellent academic performance, his responsibility and his gratitude to PROGRESA. The following is a note that he wrote to us to be included in this Update:

“My name is Milton Rocael Manchamé Arroyo, I was blessed to be favored by one of many scholarships that PROGRESA offers to the youth of Guatemala. I am the oldest of 10 children, my parents separated many years ago and each one has a family of their own. Since I was very young, I lived with an uncle in Petén, which is the largest department in Guatemala. With the desire to continue studying, I emigrated to Guatemala City in 2008 thanks to a scholarship at a Catholic boarding school called Villa De Los Niños. During my years of study there among 356 other students, I received the first place medal at the end of my studies for having the highest grades. After finishing my secondary studies in 2013, I started studying Business Administration at Rafael Landivar University where I received a partial scholarship. At that time I needed



support to cover my study expenses. It was PROGRESA who supported me with a scholarship that was of great assistance not only for the economic aid, but the encouragement helped me throughout my studies. I graduated last year as a Bachelor in Business Administration.

I have been working 5 years at Banco Agromercantil de Guatemala, S.A. Today I work in the Business Area as a loan consultant. I am a very dynamic young person and enjoy collaborating with different groups. I am currently vice president of the Alumni Association of my high school Villa de los Niños, which seeks to generate funds for the school to continue functioning. In the month of December, I was also elected as the coordinator of the ProgresA Alumni Advisory Team. The purpose of the team is to support the Board of Directors and the administrative team with suggestions to improve the program. I want to take this opportunity to thank ProgresA for all the support they give to young Guatemalans. Thanks to your support and the work PROGRESA has done, many young people achieve their dreams and can change their lives just as you have changed mine. May God Bless you always.”

On May 16, Milton shared with us very good news. He received a scholarship to study for a master's degree in financial management in Valladolid, Spain. There are only two who received this scholarship in Guatemala and only 28 in all of Latin America. We will miss Milton for the next two years, but look forward to his return with a graduate degree. We are extremely happy for this latest achievement and we are sure that Milton will continue to have many more successes and achievements in his career.

Yuri López Tecú is originally from the municipality of Rabinal in Baja Verapaz. She studied psychology with our help between 2008 and 2011. As a ProgresA student, Yuri was always a very responsible and organized student regarding her classes and commitments to PROGRESA. After graduating, Yuri has worked in several organizations which benefit communities. One of her first jobs was with the Peoples Judicial Office that defends the poor who cannot afford a lawyer. Yuri's work with them was to provide psychological care to individuals and groups of women who are victims of violence and sexual abuse. She also offered workshops on gender equity, rights of women and youth, prevention of domestic violence and on human rights in general.



Yuri was also the coordinator of the Achí (the linguistic community in her area) Women's Office that was responsible for working for rights of Achi-speaking women. One of Yuri's most important tasks in this position was to accompany 36 women victims of sexual

violence during the internal armed conflict in their psychosocial process of healing. Currently, she works in another organization that also supports a group of women victims of the Ixil area. The Ixil was one of the most severely persecuted areas during the internal armed conflict suffering the torture and massacre of hundreds of men, women, and children. Here, she also provides psychological support to those victims, mainly women, who participate in the trials of ex-army officers accused of war crimes against the Ixil population.

Rosa Delfina Sunum, from Quetzaltenango, was supported by our program between 2005 and 2009 to study for a degree in chemistry and biology, a rather difficult and uncommon career among our students. Despite the complexity of her career, Rosa finished her course



work on time, but the final thesis and practice requirements added more years of work. She finally graduated in 2013 and now works in the National Institute of Forestry in the area of research. Previously, she worked several years as an assistant professor in her university. Rosa was always interested in studying fungi, so she also worked as a researcher in her university to explore the cultivation of mushrooms as an option for small Guatemalan farmers. Those who attended the first Teaching English Tour may remember her because she was part of that first group of students.

Jacinto Bernal López, is from Nebaj, in the department of El Quiché. He studied law between 2010 and 2015. Many of our supporters remember Jacinto as he participated in several Teaching English Tours. Jacinto was always responsible and active in our activities. After graduation,



Jacinto was successful in his goal of returning to his community and establishing his professional office there. Jacinto lives in one of the villages of the Ixil Triangle, which suffered a lot during the internal armed conflict that Guatemala experienced until 1996. As a result, Jacinto always had as a goal returning to his hometown to help his people defend their rights. We are very happy that he has been able to establish his career there. In many instances students who live and study in Guatemala City do not want to return to their communities of origin. We wish Jacinto much success and we are sure that we will hear more good things about him.



Join us for Teaching English in Antigua Jan. 3-11, 2019. It is a soul-satisfying week with our students full of work and fun. The cost is \$1170. A highlands tour afterwards is possible. For more information, visit our website or contact Martha Dugan at marthadugan@gmail.com or Donna Smith at dforestvil@aol.com

Many thanks for supporting education in Guatemala.

All donations are made out to: Redwood Forest Friends Meeting and mailed to:

**Redwood Forest Friends Meeting
Attn: Guatemala Scholarship Program
P.O. Box 1831
Santa Rosa, CA 95402**

2018 STUDENT ROSTER - PROGRESA

UNIVERSITY LEVEL (64)

Major / Name	Age	Language
Secondary teaching (3.5 years)		
1 Alonzo Magnolio Aguilar R.	29	Q'anjob'al
2 Zulmy Vanessa González Canahu	20	Spanish
3 Ana María López Colaj	32	Kaqchikel
4 Daniel Hernández García	56	Mam
5 María Teresa Joj Lux	27	K'iche'
6 Ramírez Mateo Domingo	19	Q'anjob'al
7 Sandra Verónica Sirin Maxía	22	Kaqchikel
8 María Isabel Cabrera Sales	25	Mam
9 Berta Alicia Chipix Apén	29	Kaqchikel
10 Maydy Rosemary Hernández	23	Kaqchikel
11 Macaria Tubac Simón	31	Kaqchikel
12 Dolores Ical Jóm	23	Poqomchi'
13 Efraín Mendoza Pablo	23	Mam
14 Fidel Alexander Lúç Són	23	Kaqchikel
15 Amalia Verónica Maxía López	25	Kaqchikel
16 Hermelinda Concepción Miguel Ni	29	Q'anjob'al
Nursing (3 years)		
1 Meyli Cecilia Matom Velasco	26	Ixil
2 Brenda Marisol Ismalej Osorio	20	Achi
3 Elgar Dionel López López	21	Achi
4 Marco Antonio Cardona Sales	35	Mam
5 Marlo Rodelvi Cardona Ramírez	22	Spanish
6 Marvin Danilo Tux Caal	20	Q'eqchi'
7 Denis Anibal Chub Xol	20	Q'eqchi'
8 José Domingo Pérez	40	Mam
9 Piana Imelda Pérez Brito	24	Ixil
Agronomy (5 years)		
1 Elizabeth Noemí Ajanel López	19	K'iche'
2 Jacobo Roderico López de León	25	Spanish
3 Karen Quib Bol	20	Q'eqchi'
4 Marta Lidia López Hernández	23	Awakateko
5 Simeón Cosigua Saloj	25	Kaqchikel
6 Antonio Carrillo Puac	28	K'iche'
7 Rosa Amalia Vásquez González	21	Achi
8 Tomas Cristobal Us Us	24	K'iche'
Social work (5 years)		
1 Magdalena Toma y Toma	28	Ixil
2 Consuelo Carrillo Sánchez	29	Ixil
3 Eswin Alexander López Xía	27	Kaqchikel
4 José Luis Ramiro Tay Morales	52	Kaqchikel
5 Mario Mendoza López	29	Poqomchi'
6 Nora Verónica Sabán Car	21	Kaqchikel
7 Yessenia Sales Morales	23	Mam
Medicine (6 years)		
1 Carlos Enrique Hernández	21	Spanish
2 Emerson David Vivar Valdéz	21	Spanish
3 Herberth Estuardo Beb Coc	25	Spanish
4 Juan Pablo Tecún Bolon	23	Spanish
5 Yóscelin Fabiola Hernández Delga	24	Poptí

Major / Name	Age	Language
Psychology (5 years)		
1 Alejandra Beatriz Gómez Guzmán	25	Ixil
2 Mildre Mabeli De León Cano	24	Spanish
3 Yuri Nicolasa Coché Pablo	21	Tzutujil
Education (5 years)		
1 Julio Manuel Yat Santos	23	K'iche'
2 Martín Morales Salazar	26	K'iche'
3 Elsa Ofelia Yojero Estepán	30	Kaqchikel
Systems engineering (5 years)		
1 Elizabeth Guadalupe Ruiz Erazo	23	Spanish
2 Henry Jiménez López	28	Mam
Business administration (5 years)		
1 Helin Elizabeth Manuel Martín	22	Q'eqchi'
Political sciences (5 years)		
1 Osman Edgardo Alarcón	23	Spanish
Law (5 years)		
1 Deker Eleazar Quiacaín Pop	25	Tz'utujil
Physical education (5 years)		
1 Oswaldo Humler Choc	27	Q'eqchi'
Fisiotherapy (4 years)		
1 Yessenia del Carmen Maldonado	22	Spanish
Civil engineering (5 years)		
1 José Alejandro Pérez Tzaj	27	K'iche'
Forestry (5 years)		
1 Sandra Gabriela López López	26	K'iche'
History (5 years)		
1 Santos Rodolfo Chán Chuc	28	K'iche'
Chemistry and pharmacy (5 years)		
1 Kevin Francisco Sánchez	26	Spanish
International relationships (5 years)		
1 Iris Angélica Ajú Cholotío	25	K'iche'
Technician in X-rays (3 years)		
1 Laura María Pixcar Bonilla	19	Spanish
SECONDARY LEVEL (10)		
Pre-primary teaching (3 years)		
1 Margarita López García	19	Kaqchikel
2 Roberto Yat Paau	21	Q'eqchi'
3 San Martín Hermenegildo Joj	19	K'iche'
Agriculture (3 years)		
1 Edgar Amilcar Chóc Morán	19	Poqomchi'
2 Edwin Alexand Chilisná Chipel	19	K'iche'
Auxiliary nurse (1 year)		
1 Carlos Daniel Morales García	20	Achi
2 Gladys Marisol Pérez Hernández	20	Achi
Bookkeeping (3 years)		
1 Marta Verónica Joj Cac	19	K'iche'
Business administration (3 years)		
1 Paulina Ramirez Ahilón	33	Mam
Young student under special memorial fund		
1 Jasmin Mishel López García	16	Kaqchikel