



# Progresa

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program



**Fall 2014 Update**

**[www.guatemalafriends.org](http://www.guatemalafriends.org)**



## **Junior Friends Guatemala Service Trip** *(adapted from an article by Joe Snyder)*

In August, 2014, twenty Junior Friends (high school age) from North Pacific Yearly Meeting traveled to Guatemala for a learning and service trip. organized by PROGRESA. They began their trip with a visit to the ruins of Iximché, the capital city of the Kaqchiquel Maya at the time of the Spanish Conquest. Included in this visit was participation in a Mayan spiritual ceremony explained and performed by a midwife and spiritual guide. The day culminated in a delicious dinner at the home Miguel Costop, director of PROGRESA who served as a guide throughout the trip.

After that dynamic start, the group spent three days in the little town of Santa Cruz Balanyá, where a PROGRESA student was completing her internship with a well organized women's co-op. Mornings were devoted to a reforestation project where well over 2,000 trees were planted. During the afternoons the group taught English at the local middle school. All this was under the care and direction of members of a women's co-op who provided the seedlings and a delicious midday meal. This segment of the trip culminated in an overnight home stay with a local family, the most dramatic experience of the journey for most of the participants. Deep friendships were made in this very short time.

After fond farewells, the group traveled to Xela (Quetzaltenango) with a detour to visit the fascinating (and famous) weekly market at Chichicastenango and a brief visit to the intriguing yellow church in San Andrés Xecul where another PROGRESA student acted as guide. In Xela we visited a school for street children or those at risk of becoming street children, founded by yet another PROGRESA scholarship recipient. After a deep cleaning of the school, a joyous futbol game took place with the students and staff. The following day, we visited the nearby town of Momostenango where Gaby López, one of the current PROGRESA scholarship recipients, shared her passion for and concerns about forestry in her region. She showed the group a section of forest ravaged by the pine bark beetle inadvertently imported from Canada by local furniture makers. After visiting a nearby 5<sup>th</sup> generation family hand weaving operation producing some of the woolen blankets and carpets for which Momos is famous, the group was treated to lunch at Gaby's house in a compound set up for families traumatized by the violence of Guatemala's 36 years of civil war. Her family fled to Mexico in the face of extreme violence to her grandfather and uncles and were repatriated in this area where 5 families are working together on organic plant production and preservation of plant species used for food and traditional medicine.

From Xela we traveled to the spectacularly beautiful Lake Atitlán with a boat ride from Panajachel to the pretty town of Santa Catarina Palopó. The last day, in Antigua Guatemala, was given to relaxation, preparations for travel home, grateful worship and reflection. During their travels the group met several PROGRESA students or graduates, learned first hand about the hardships they face, and realize how important the program has been in overcoming them. As one of the participants wrote:

“These are the descriptions in time and space. What is left out are the laughter and tears, exuberance and exhaustion, cooperation and community, deep places of worship and gratitude, and the transformative seeds that have been planted in many hearts.” **Read the full article at: <http://www.guatemalafriends.org/latest-news/>**

## Some community service projects during 2014

**Aurelio Rodríguez Sajché** lives in Chimachoy, an aldea of San Andrés Itzapa in the department of Chimaltenango. A few years ago he studied with Progresá and obtained a high school degree in primary education. He is now studying secondary education and administration at a branch of the University of San Carlos located in Chimaltenango.

Aurelio's community service project was entitled "Kojtzijon pa kaqchikel ch'ab'äl" (Conversational Kaqchikel). The classes were held at a "telesecundaria" middle school in his community. Students in "telesecundaria" receive most of their lessons from videos which have been prepared by the department of education. Aurelio chose this project because he noticed that many of the young people in his community were losing their ability to speak their native language, and thus, an important part of their Mayan culture. The majority of "telesecundaria" schools are very small, often with only one or two teachers and in Aurelio's aldea none of the teachers spoke Kaqchikel.

Aurelio's primary motivation was to help preserve the Mayan language and culture for future generations. With this goal in mind Aurelio prepared exercises in which the students were helped to write and pronounce short sen-

tences in Kaqchikel. The students then practiced using these sentences in short dialogs with each other. Other lessons focused on the parts of speech and the conjugation of verbs as well as simple vocabulary such as the parts of the human body, fruits, and words that are frequently used in the classroom. In a clever application of Mayan culture, Aurelio also taught his students the Kaqchikel words for their "nawales", the animals and characteristics which are associated with their dates of birth in Mayan cosmology.

In addition to the middle school students, the principal and the teachers chose to take part in Aurelio's lessons. All of them rated the lessons highly and expressed their gratitude to Aurelio for all his time and effort. We were pleased that he is finding creative ways to share his knowledge with his community.



**Marta Reina Sanic Botones** lives in a very small community outside of San José Poaquil in the department of Chimaltenango. She is currently studying secondary teaching. Her community service project focused on strengthening the math and language skills of third grade students in the local primary school. She explained in her plan that by improving the children's skills at this level, she would make it easier for them to

succeed in their studies in the future.

During the classes Marta used creative materials and ideas to stimulate the children's imagination and interest.

She used resources from their everyday environment to make both the math and language lessons more meaningful. In one activity the students were asked to write a letter to their parents. The letters were then used to identify the different elements of communication. In another assignment they wrote about their dreams for the future. Children's books were used to encourage group discussion and improve reading and listening skills. Interactive games were used to improve the learning process.

In all Marta worked with 18 students. She spread her lessons over 5 weeks working with the children for 3 hours each day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Her service proved to be win/win for everyone involved. The children were happy with their lessons, the parents appreciated the extra attention and both the principal and the teacher expressed their thanks. As for Marta, she enjoyed working with the children and felt proud to have been of service.

### You can still join our Teaching English Experience!!

We still have spaces available for our next work tour to be held from January 5th. To January 13th. 2015. If you want to come and live this unforgettable experience please contact us at: [progresas3@gmail.com](mailto:progresas3@gmail.com) or Martha Dugan at: [marthadugan@gmail.com](mailto:marthadugan@gmail.com) before December 5th. If you can't come this time, consider the opportunity for the future.

Please visit our website: <http://www.guatemalafriends.org/the-teaching-english-experience> to keep informed about new opportunities.

### News from our Exbecarios (former students)

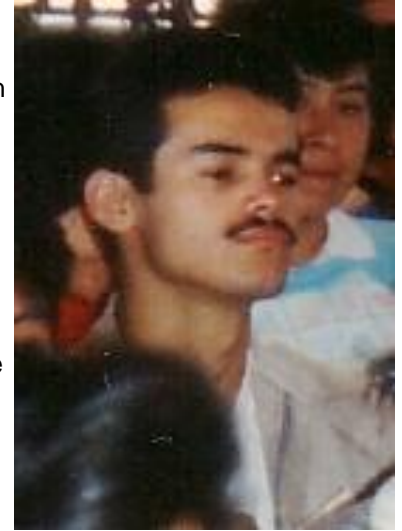
**Alex Villela** was helped to study dentistry from 1989 to 1993. He is from the town of Purulhá in the department of Baja Verapaz. Like many of our students it took him some time after his graduation before he was able to arrange all his papers and begin his career. After working for several years as a dentist he had the opportunity to train as a maxillofacial surgeon in the United States. He is now head of the department of dental surgery at the San Juan de Dios hospital in Guatemala City which is the largest national hospital in the country. He also has his own private clinic in Guatemala City and has become a prominent dental surgeon.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Alex has worked to share his success with others. For some time he has helped a school which offers small scholarships to students from low income families. From what he told us in a recent telephone conversation, he has never forgotten how much it meant for him to receive the scholarship which Progresá offered him. His sincerity is demonstrated by the fact that he paid off his loan many years ago and now feels ready to sponsor a university student through Progresá. Success stories like his are great motivators for those of us who work for the scholarship program and we think that you, our donors, should feel a sense of satisfaction that all of your contributions have borne such rich fruit.

**José María García Vásquez** is from Chuanoj, an aldea of Totonicapán. Progresá helped him to study law from 2005 until 2011. José has four sisters but he is the only one in the family who has studied at the university level. While he was at the university, he worked during the week as a primary school teacher and took his law classes on Saturdays. Several weeks ago we were pleased to receive an invitation to his graduation ceremony which took place on November 6<sup>th</sup> in Guatemala City. Unfortunately we were unable to attend, but we did attend the party which took place at his house the next day. During the celebration we got to meet his parents, his grandparents and his sisters. Everyone was very pleased at his success and we received many thanks for the help we had given him. They were especially thankful for our help because a year ago his father suffered a stroke which has left him unable to walk or talk normally. For now, José María plans to continue teaching in the morning while he works afternoons and weekends at a law office he will open in his community.

**Karisol Olimpia Ajanel** is another ex-student from the department of Totonicapán but she comes from a different town, Momostenango. Like José María, she studied law and graduated a few weeks ago. The financial situation of Karisol's family was very precarious. Her father abandoned the family when she was 10 years old and then died soon afterwards. Her mother maintained the family by working at humble jobs such as washing clothes for other families or working in the fields. In spite of these hardships all of her children managed to graduate from high school. Karisol wanted even more education, and this led her to enter the university in order to study law. She supported herself and her studies for three years with part time jobs. Since the start of her fourth year, she has been supported by Progresá.

It was a big surprise for us to encounter Karisol a few weeks ago when we went to visit José María. She too was very happy to have reached her goal of graduating as a lawyer, but she plans to continue her studies with a master's degree. She recorded a little greeting (in Spanish) for us and all of our donors. If you would like to see it please visit the following link: <http://youtu.be/kHkZ38LAqeQ>



### Contact us:

Email: [progresá3@gmail.com](mailto:progresá3@gmail.com)

Website: [www.guatemalafriends.org](http://www.guatemalafriends.org)

On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/progresá.quakers](http://www.facebook.com/progresá.quakers) Skype: "progresá-quakers"

## News from our office

### A new employee!

Since October 8<sup>th</sup> Progresa has had a new staff member. Her name is Yesika Tucubal. She is 20 years old and comes from Comalapa in the department of Chimaltenango. She was accepted as a student in the scholarship program this past January and is studying for a university level degree in primary education at the San Carlos university. We were very impressed with her scholarship application so when we learned that Joel Arana would be leaving Progresa to take another job we asked her to apply for the position. Once again her application stood out from the others we received and we were happy to offer her the job.



Like most of our students Yesika has an interesting story. Her father left the family to emigrate to the United States when she was only eight years old. For several years he sent back money to pay for his passage and help support the family but after a construction accident he was no longer able to send money. This left Yesika's mother with sole responsibility for raising her five children. She worked sewing traditional clothes but the family was very poor. At this point in her life, two of Yesika's older sisters are married and live away from home leaving Yesika, her mother, one younger sister and one older brother. Her older brother recently lost his job so Yesika was especially grateful to have been chosen for the position. She has written you the following message.:

*"Greetings to all of Progresa's donors and collaborators. My name is Yesika Tucubal and I am very pleased that God has given me the opportunity to learn about this program which has given me a scholarship to allow me to continue studying and thus the ability to reach my other goals in life. I am also grateful to Progresa for giving me the opportunity to work for the program. I feel very happy because all of the work I have done so far has been very interesting. I am also happy because I feel sure than I will be able to help all of you continue your support for all of the students. Of course I am especially pleased to be able to help my mother who has given so much to me and our family."*

### The selection process for new students in 2015

In October and November our office team faces one of our most important jobs, that of selecting new scholarship students for 2015. Currently more than 60 students have started the selection process which began with a short telephone interview aimed at making sure the applicant fit the minimum profile we are looking for. In the next step we evaluate all of their paper work which includes grades, income information, family data, a letter written by the student and photographs of their house and family. In the last few years we have been able to receive almost all of this digitally via the internet. Once we have evaluated this information we decide which students need to come

for a personal interview. Finally all of the information is summarized and a Quaker meeting for business is held during which we decide who will be offered scholarships in the coming year. The exact number of students we will be able to select depends on many factors including not only our finances but also how many will be leaving the program in 2014.

### We are on Skype!

In order to facilitate communication with both our students and our donors, we have created a Skype account. Look for us as "**progresa-quakers**" or our full name: "**Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program Progresa**". You can call or chat with us through this tool.



Please help us to continue this rewarding work. All checks are made out to **Redwood Forest Friends Meeting**, please write "Guatemala Scholarship" in the memo section of your check and mail it to:

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

For questions in the US, please contact:  
Harriet Lewis  
email: [hlewis@sonic.net](mailto:hlewis@sonic.net)  
Tel: (707) 526-1066

You can also make a secure online donation, to do so, please go to: [www.guatemalafriends.org/donate](http://www.guatemalafriends.org/donate)