



## SECOND JUNIOR FRIENDS SERVICE TRIP

In August of 2016 10 Junior Friends and 3 adult members of North Pacific Yearly Meeting traveled to Guatemala to perform three



different service projects and experience first-hand what life was like in a rural community. Their first service commitment took place in two aldeas (small outlying communities) of Poaquil, Chimaltenango. They spent two mornings planting 500 trees on land that belongs to a rural Indigenous school.

In a second service project they taught English classes to the 60 middle and high school students at the school. On one day the students at the school shared the work of planting trees and there was time left over for plenty of small talk and even a soccer game. On the third day



the student volunteers spent the entire day and night with the family of one of our ex-students, an experience which was

clearly one of the highlights of the trip. The third service project involved cleaning up the sides of a small river located in Momostenango. This project was organized by one of our current students, Gaby Lopez, who is currently studying Environmental Science at a branch of the national university. After enjoying lunch in the compound of Gaby's extended family the students worked to clear brush from a plot of land owned by a community organization. A highlight of this project was

learning to use a machete (a learning experience which was closely supervised by Miguel).

During their 10 day trip the young people also visited several important tourist sites. These included the market in Chichicastenango, the Mayan ruins of Iximché outside of Tecpan, where they took part in a special Mayan ceremony, the natural hot springs of Fuentes Georginas in Zunil, a boat ride across lake Atitlan, and the fascinating Spanish city of Antigua. On the final evening the students were asked to evaluate the trip and their experiences and comment upon what they had learned. Listening to the students we were moved by their testimonies of the way in which their experiences had impacted their hearts and minds. Several expressed their admiration for the Guatemalan families who in spite of great economic limitations lived every day with a spirit of joy and enthusiasm. Many expressed the belief that their lives had been changed by these experiences.

Our lives too have been changed by our contact with these wonderful young Quakers and we hope that more groups will decide to undertake a work tour with us. If you know of other groups who would like to do service work in Guatemala, please contact us at: [progresas3@gmail.com](mailto:progresas3@gmail.com) and together we can create a program which will work for your group. Work tours are a wonderful way to combine service to others with the pleasure of experiencing the rich and colorful culture of a new and beautiful country.



### **Deker Eleazar Quiacain Pop – Rights and Obligation of Young People**



Deker is currently in his sixth semester of studying law. He did his community service project with a group of 15 young people under the direction of the Office of Children and Adolescents of the Municipality of San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá. The participants took part in a series of workshops where they learned about their rights and obligations. Among the topics addressed were: the right to life, liberty and equality, the rights and obligations of employees and the rights and obligations of employers. In each workshop there were exercises aimed at helping the students understand the various topics. In one of the exercises the students had to investigate a real example in which the rights of a young person had been violated within their community. They then discussed the case and were asked to come up with possible solutions based on Guatemalan law.

### **Yesika Tucubal Sanahi – Volunteering at a Home for the Elderly**

Although we encourage our students to do service work in the area of their studies, sometimes their time commitments make this impossible. Since Yesika is working full time for Progresa during the week and attending her classes on the weekend she couldn't find an educational project that would fit into her time frame. Instead she chose to volunteer at a residence for the elderly located in her home town. The facility which is called "**Mi Dulce Refugio**" serves 32 "grandparents" and is entirely support by donations from the community. Most of the residents have no resources at all and have been abandoned by their families. None of

them pays anything toward their upkeep so those in charge are always looking for help of every kind, money, food, or labor. Yesika volunteered to work in the kitchen on several weekends preparing and serving breakfast and lunch.

Yesika writes that this volunteer experience has opened her eyes to the reality of life and the way these elderly people are treated. She wants to continue working with Mi Dulce Refugio and has also encouraged her friends and family to volunteer their time and money to these seniors who need everything. According to statistics provided by the Guatemalan Department of Human Rights over 40% of the elderly are living in situations of poverty or extreme poverty. The percentages are even higher among the indigenous and those who live in rural areas.



### **NEWS FROM OUR GRADUATES**

**Hageo Jiménez** is from San Juan Atitán in Huehuetenango. In 2012 Progresa helped him to complete his final year of magisterio in the field of Bilingue Education. After nearly a year of searching he gave up on finding work as a teacher in his area and decided to enter the National Police academy. He graduated in 2014 as one of the top three in his class of 640 and was recognized for his achievement by both the Director General of the National Police and the president of the country.

His desire to get ahead has continued and in 2015 he entered the University of Huehuetenango and began to study law. He is now in his fourth semester and indicates that his long term goal is to obtain a Master's degree in Penal Rights and Processes. In September he

contacted Progresa by email in order to repay the small loan that was owed and thanked us with the following words.



*“Many thanks for the immense economic support you gave me and for your confidence in my ability to succeed. Without your help I would not have been able to study and accomplish the dream I had for so many years.*

*I now have even more desire to forge ahead with my studies and to try to accomplish my goals.”*

**Santos David Villatoro** is from Playa Grande Ixcán in él Quiché. He was in the program from 2009 until 2015 when he studied law in Cobán. Many of our donors got to know him when he participated for several years in the Teaching English workshops where he stood out for his beautiful voice and talent with the guitar. Some may remember that his family was severely affected by the civil war and as a consequence he was raised by his grandmother.

In July David finished all his requirements for his law degree and sat for his final exam, the “privado”, much like the bar exam except it is administered by the university. The good news continued and in the month of August he began working for the Ixcán Office of Human Rights. His accomplishment has filled us with joy because getting this kind of job immediately after graduation is not common in Guatemala. We are especially pleased that David will be working in the defense of human rights in this area of the country which suffered gravely during the war.

**Juan Raymundo Velasco** was a Progresa student in 1988 when he began his studies in Agronomy at the San Carlos University and received a gold medal for being the best student in his class. After that he left Progresa because he obtained a higher paying scholarship. Several years ago we made contact with him and learned that he had received his Masters degree in Agronomy and Sustainable Rural Development in Israel. Juan worked for three years with the European Union as the director of the Ixil Project which addressed problems of agricultural production. He has also participated in

projects of community development, infrastructure, environmental education and nutrition with USAID and spoken on the topic of the Peace Accords and the Indigenous People at a conference in New York City.

Recently he contacted us to learn more about our selection process because he knew several students from his area whom he wished to recommend for a scholarship. He also volunteered to work with students from his area who might benefit from tutorials or talks. We were pleased with his offer and would like to find more graduates who would offer their services to our current students.

### **Miguel Angel Bulux Cojtí**

is a young man from Tecpán, Chimaltenango who Progresa helped to study Agronomy (a high school degree) in 2012 and 2013. He was the second member of his family to be supported by Progresa. Earlier we



helped his older brother, obtain the same degree. The boys had something of a tragic history in that they were abandoned by their parents when they were very young. Their grandmother took them in but they had to work from the time they were very small in order to help put food on the table and cover their most basic needs. As soon as Roberto graduated he in turn helped Miguel to graduate from middle school but the boys needed our support for Miguel to attend high school. Recently Miguel visited our office to make the final payment on his loan and thank us for the help we had given him. He is now working for a company which offers technical assistance to small farmers in the use of fertilizers and pesticides. At his job Miguel has greatly increased his knowledge of agronomy since he has worked with different types of crops in several different areas of the country. Last year he began to study agronomy at the university, following in the footsteps of his brother, Roberto who will soon complete the requirements as an engineer in agronomy. Both Roberto and Miguel have made good use of the support we gave them, working to move ahead and to follow through with their promises to repay the support they received as a loan. We are

sure they will continue to succeed because they are clear about their goals and have demonstrated a high level of responsibility.

### **A visit to exbecario Andres Cac by Nate Secret**

*Nate was our first short time volunteer. He is a member of Redwood Forest Friends Meeting and recently graduated from Guilford College. We sent him off to Totonicapán to look for Andrés because we haven't heard from him in several years. Some may remember Andrés from the English classes, his musical skills and leadership abilities were outstanding. Here is his report.*

Andres was a graduate of the Progres program in 2011. Since then he has blossomed into an amazing teacher who has and will most certainly continue to change lives with his innovative teaching style. This past year he received a teaching job in his local community just seven minutes from his house. This opportunity to give back to his community brings immense joy to the face of Andres whenever he starts talking about it.

His school works by having one teacher follow one class up through grade 6. The previous year, he finished 6th grade and is starting again a new 1st grade class this year. One innovative teaching technique used by Andres started when he realized that his students weren't grasping the concept of Math well. Like any great educator, Andres created a game! First he had the students collect "tapitas" (bottle caps). When each student had brought in some "tapitas" he took all of them outside and tossed the whole bucket of about 1000 tapitas into the playground and said "The student who collects the most tapitas is the winner... Go!" As you can imagine the magnificent chaos that ensued thrilled each and every first grader. Every day when the students came into class they would ask, "can we play that game with tapitas again today?" The game was such a hit that his supervisor took pictures of him playing this game with his students and sent it to his other supervisors!

Now that Andres had a super popular game he entwined the math components. First, they collected as many as they could. Then he would ask students to organize them into lines of 10, organize them by color, shape or size and later start making letters or even words with them to integrate other topics.

In addition to these innovative games, Andres utilized these tapitas to teach children how to hold a pencil correctly. To do this he asked his students to hold a tapita in their hand with their ring and pinky finger while practicing with a pencil with the other three fingers. This way they can't hold it with all 5 fingers without dropping their new favorite toy.



*Andres' students and classroom, note all the teaching materials on the walls.*

Andres is just starting to blossom as a teacher. In previous years, he would arrive home from work tired and slightly overwhelmed with all the fine details it takes to be a great teacher. In the coming years we can expect to see many more great games and innovations from Andres. For example, he has started a library in his own house where students now come after school to continue learning about anything under the sun. Oh and did I forget to mention that Andres already integrates music into his bilingual classroom. What a superstar!



Do you want to meet our students and learn firsthand what our program is doing? Come and teach English to some of our most motivated students. Our 2017 workshop is almost closed, but you can join us in 2018. Write us at [progres3@gmail.com](mailto:progres3@gmail.com) or at [marthadugan@gmail.com](mailto:marthadugan@gmail.com) for more information.

Thanks to our faithful donors who make all this possible! All contributions are tax deductible and are made to **Redwood Forest Friends Meeting** and are mailed to:

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