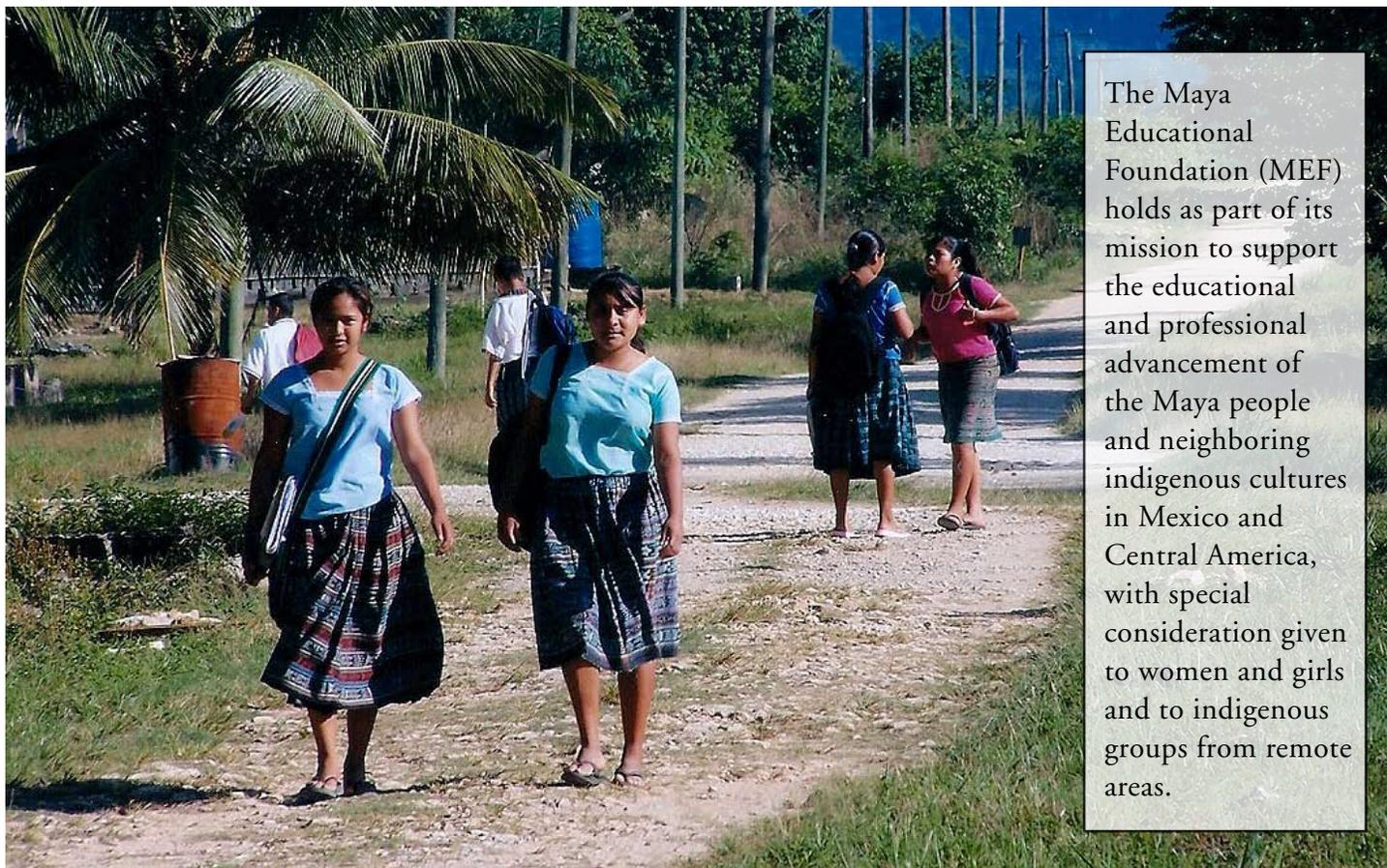




# Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities

2010-2011 Report to Contributors



The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) holds as part of its mission to support the educational and professional advancement of the Maya people and neighboring indigenous cultures in Mexico and Central America, with special consideration given to women and girls and to indigenous groups from remote areas.

Q'eqchi' scholarship students from the Julian Cho Society, Belize

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Colegio Paxil students  
learn about the meaning of  
the Day of the Dignity of the Ixil People

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Dear Friends of the Maya Educational Foundation,

This letter will bring you up-to-date on some changes in MEF which have been dictated by the continuing slide in the general economic situation in the United States. These changes have required some tough decisions and, by making them, we will prevent any damage to our projects and programs in Guatemala, Mexico and Belize.

Our annual Report to Contributors has always stressed that all of your donations have gone to support MEF programs. This has been possible because the costs of office and staff have been borne by a separate foundation which has loaned office space and staff to MEF for many years. This separate foundation's funds have been so severely affected by the economic downturn in the past three years that it had to make a swift decision to close down the Vermont office and sell the property. Thus, MEF quite suddenly lost its Vermont office space and staff over the summer.

However, MEF will continue to operate from its smaller branch office on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, under the direction of Elisabeth Nicholson, supported by staff and program coordinators in the countries where MEF works. She and the MEF Board will continue to see that programs are maintained, that scholarship money is transferred to needy students, and that our work goes forward. The supporting foundation, to whom we are deeply grateful for all the years of unwavering support, has pledged its support for this reduced administrative program so that we can again promise that all of your donations go to provide scholarships and programs for the Maya students and adults.

In other cost cutting measures, we will no longer print a long and comprehensive "Report to Contributors" as in the past but instead will prepare shorter pieces to keep you informed. If you want to help MEF save funds, you could send us your e-mail address and we will contact you in that fashion, saving some printing and postage expenses. If you prefer a mailed copy, we will continue to provide that. The most in-depth source for a complete overview of our programs will be our web site.

Though these changes were unexpected and extensive, we are making them in order to provide the educational opportunities so important to Maya children and adults. More than ever, we need your support to continue this work. Your understanding and your financial support make all of this possible. The need is enormous. Let your hearts be as wide. We know we can count on you to work with us to surmount these difficult times so that we do not have to disappoint the MEF students and program coordinators in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize.

Thank you for your understanding and support!

With warmest regards,

Marilyn Moors, MEF Board President

## MEF university graduates in Guatemala

The Maya Educational Foundation established its program of university scholarships in 1992, under the supervision of a group “Programa de Becas Mayas”, made up of a few of the university trained Mayas then living in Guatemala City. That group selected and supervised the scholarship recipients for several years, and in the process evolved into a Guatemalan non-profit organization called Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya (FEPMaya). They have a board, an office and a staff of two, and they continue to select and supervise the majority of MEF’s university scholarship recipients in Guatemala. They currently have 36 students at varying levels of university work. Recently they prepared a report on the graduates of this program.

Over the years, 86 Mayas have received their degrees, 37 women and 49 men. Your contributions to our scholarship program have produced 27 lawyers (15 women and 11 men), eight doctors (six women and two men), eight with degrees in pedagogy (all men), seven in psychology (all women), four agronomists (all men), three auditors, three economists, three in forestry, and three civil engineers. Two men have degrees in sociolinguistics, and one man and one woman in chemical engineering, in communications,

and in business administration. One woman received a degree in anthropology, one in nursing, one in sociology, and one in ecology. One man graduated in animal husbandry, one in mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, and systems engineering, one in architecture, one in political science, one in legal and social science, and one in neurosurgery. A very impressive list! We have great reason to be proud of them and proud of you for making this happen.

The majority of them studied at the University of San Carlos, either in Guatemala City or at one of its branches. Twenty-four received their degrees from Universidad Rafael Landívar, three from Universidad Mariano Gálvez, and one from Universidad Rural de Guatemala in Quetzaltenango.

They came from all regions of Guatemala, 12 from the Department of Quetzaltenango, 12 from Huehuetenango, 11 from Sololá, 11 from Chimaltenango, 11 from Quiché, eight from Totonicapán, five from San Marcos, four each from Alta Verapaz, Sacatepéquez and Guatemala, two from Baja Verapaz, and one each from Chiquimula and Izabal. They are speakers of K’iche’, Kaqchikel, Q’eqchi’, Q’anjob’al, Poqomchi’, Awakateko, Tz’utujil, Mam, Achi’, Ixil, Chuj, Jakalteko, Ch’orti’, and Popti’.

In this Report and subsequent ones, we will introduce some of the students to you. We will also provide information about the many graduates supervised by our partners in Mexico. As always, they and we are most grateful to you for your support.

*My name is María Isabel Matzir Miculax, I am Maya Kaqchikel and started my career in archaeology in 2006. Currently I am doing field work and also working on my thesis. Without FEPMaya’s academic, moral and psychological support, it would have been impossible for me to reach this academic level. Given the nature of this field, considerable expenses are generated regarding travel, text books, conference attendance and minimal technological resources, necessary for the adequate conduct of activities programmed for each practice course. I am so happy because now I know much more about my culture and I am devoting more and more time to epigraphy because I am aware in this way I will be able to contribute some knowledge to the reconstruction of the history of the Maya people.*



María Isabel Matzir Miculax and other archaeologists in the excavation activities of June, 2010 at Ixkol archaeological site, Dolores, Petén

Measuring, describing and cataloging the archaeological pieces housed in the Museo Regional del Sureste de Petén



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## Todos Santos Scholarships

For many years now, our program in Todos Santos, located in Guatemala's western highland Cuchumatan region, has been supported by the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation. Thanks to their support, three students graduated from their studies last year. Fidelina Mejía is now a bilingual secretary, Cirilo Pérez Pablo is a qualified bookkeeper, and Lilian Angélica Gómez has completed the sixth year for her teaching certificate.

There are six continuing students, one in the last year of primary school, one in middle school, and three in the teacher training program. The last student is in the fifth semester of her studies at the University to become a social worker. Three new students will be enrolled this year under the **Daniele Agostino Derossi scholarships**, two in middle school and one in the teacher training program. When we began assisting students in Todos Santos, there was only a primary school and students wanting to attend at the *básico* (middle school) level or beyond had to travel to Huehuetenango. Now Todos Santos has a *básico*, but those students desiring a *diversificado* (high school) diploma still must live in Huehuetenango to reach that goal.



Todos Santos students and parents during a meeting with MEF board members

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## In Memoriam Shelton Davis (1942-2010)

MEF is honored to announce an additional program for 2011 in Todos Santos that will keep alive the memory of a committed activist anthropologist and indigenous rights advocate who made this world a better place.

Shelton H. Davis, Sandy to his friends, passed away on May 27, 2010. Sandy did his first fieldwork in Santa Eulalia, a Maya community in the Cuchumatán highlands, and went on to spend his life working for the rights of the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere. He founded



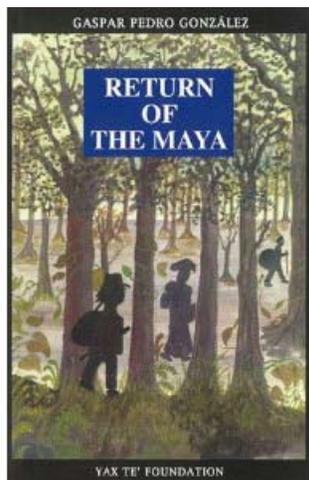
the Anthropology Resource Center and pressed for the rights of the indigenous people of the Amazon. He taught at Harvard, from which he received his PhD and later at Georgetown University. He worked at the World Bank from 1987 to 2004, advocating always for minority rights in language, territory, and culture, and for the right of indigenous people to speak for themselves in national and international arenas.

Sandy was a long-time supporter of the Maya Educational Foundation and its work. His family asked that donations be made in his memory to further our work. In consultation with his wife Mary Gubbins and his son and daughter, the Maya Educational Foundation Board established the Shelton H. Davis Memorial Fund and has outlined a program in his honor. Since we already have a well-established program in Todos Santos, in the region where Sandy did his original fieldwork, we are making a commitment to take on five new students in their third year of *primaria*, and follow them as far as their desire for learning will take them. They will be designated as **Shelton Davis scholars** and will come under the supervision of our very able partner in Todos Santos, Felipa Jiménez.

## Yax Te' Books

MEF supports Yax Te's mission of education and dissemination of information about Mayan culture and supports the production of books and other materials that serve this goal.

Yax Te' director, Dr. Hana Muzika Kahn, reports that the project of reprinting Gaspar Pedro González's book *Return of the Maya* has now been completed. More information will be available on their website [yaxtebooks.com](http://yaxtebooks.com) shortly.



## English Language Program

We have now a group of 15 volunteers, ready to undertake the next English Language Program (ELP) session 2011: two weeks in Antigua, Guatemala over the end-of-the-year university break, assisting those MEF university students who need or want to increase their competency in English. Using one-on-one teaching sessions and practice in small groups, along with field trips, skits, and fun times, 20 students will be ready to give a short speech in English at the end of the program. The volunteers pay their own way and contribute to the students' expenses. MEF is ever grateful to the Greenbergs who began this program and to Laurie Levinger and Jean Beckord who are carrying it on, for this very special resource for MEF's Guatemalan university students.



University student and volunteer teacher

## Tzununá Library

A dream has become reality in this remote village on the southern shores of Lake Atitlán. After two years of planning between some of the ELP volunteers and local residents, Tzununá's community library, Biblioteca Comunitaria Tzununá, opened its doors and in September proudly celebrated its first birthday.

Coordinator María Castells Arrosa writes on this occasion:

*Today is our first birthday. We started with 340 books, now we have 864, we started with shelves and blocks, now we have proper shelves, we had a small borrowed table, now we have two big tables and many chairs. We had one computer, today we have three. A lot of changes in this first year! As birthday presents we would like: more books, more support, and to keep growing!*

Happy birthday to Biblioteca Comunitaria Tzununá!

*Our friends from the Maya Educational Foundation English Language Program have organized several successful fundraising events in the United States for the Library after they raised the original seed money to help start the library.*

*Thank you friends for your unconditional support since the very beginning!*

From María Castells Arrosa's blog



*I have been an ELP volunteer since 2004 when the program began. Each year it gets better. I fell in love with Guatemala on my first visit and I have been very moved by my experiences there.*

ELP volunteer

## Sna Jtz'ibajom

Sna Jtz'ibajom (House of the Writer), the Maya literary and cultural group, based in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, continues its work of promoting literacy in the Mayan languages, Tsotsil and Tseltal, in fostering Mayan literature, play writing and production, in producing radio programs, and in mentoring and supervising 13 MEF university students in the area. Their students include three in medicine, two in pedagogy, two in the management of indigenous/rural development, one each in agronomy, nutrition, psychology, sociology, and language and culture. And while their reputation grows both within Mexico and world-wide, they continue to struggle to find the funds to carry on their programs.



Theater performance at Bochojbo, Zinacantán  
Photo courtesy of Sna Jtz'ibajom

## FOMMA

FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya/Strength of the Maya Woman), the indigenous women's organization, also in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, gave eleven theater presentations in various communities, stressing topics of importance to women including all the problems of migration which affect women and families. They also continued to give short literacy courses in the Chiapan Mayan languages and in basic arithmetic, and workshops on domestic violence and sexual violence. FOMMA mentors 17 MEF students who are working on their bachelors degrees, theses, teaching certificates, and doctorates. MEF has maintained its commitment to sponsoring the students, and FOMMA's other work has recently been strengthened by the receipt of a Ford Foundation grant.



Performance of "En la Floresta"  
Photo by Steve Homer, 2010

## Volunteering in Chiapas

Volunteer Steve Homer from California has visited San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, five times to teach English and photography with MEF's partner organizations. The English language program that he started in 2006 has enabled several students to continue their study at language schools in the area.

In 2010, Steve returned again and taught digital photography at FOMMA and English at both FOMMA and Sna Jtz'ibajom. During his two-month stay, he also visited other MEF projects and partners, wrote us his impressions, and took amazing photographs. We thank Steve from the bottom of our hearts for his unwavering support and dedication!



## Esperanza Juvenil

Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope, Girls Hope) in Guatemala City helps children in need who are motivated and academically capable to meet their full potential by providing value-centered, family-like homes, opportunities and education. It now serves 95 children and young people. MEF began supporting the first Maya students to be taken into their program in 2007. Directors Kristin Ostby and Lucas Pinzón report that the current twelve MEF scholars are doing very well. Their success prompted them to admit others in 2010, and now over one-third of the program participants are Maya, and are all encouraged to maintain their Mayan languages and culture. This year, Esperanza Juvenil opened a third home for twelve girls, most of them from Maya towns and villages far from the capital, with very few educational opportunities.

*The last month has been very tough for Guatemala. On May 27th, the Pacaya Volcano, located near Guatemala City, had a major eruption that rained 3 inches of sand-like ash across Guatemala City. A couple of days later, Guatemala was hit with Tropical Storm Agatha which caused nearly 200 deaths. Thousands of people lost their homes because of mudslides and flooding. Fortunately, the Esperanza Juvenil children, staff and facilities are all fine. The families of the Esperanza Juvenil children and youth all survived although a couple lost their homes and many others experienced major damage. It will take years for the country to recover from the infrastructure damage. The Esperanza Juvenil youth responded proactively. After the ash fell, they were all in the streets sweeping ash into trash bags and cleaning the homes and school. They helped some of the neighbors with their cleaning as well. During the storm, the high school students were out of school for a few days because of a national school shutdown. They went to a local food bank that was responding to the needs of the people and helped to unload boxes of donated food.*

Quoted from EJ midyear letter

### Esperanza Juvenil's MEF Scholars



## Fundación Tradiciones Mayas

Fundación Tradiciones Mayas (Maya Traditions) is a fair-trade organization for Guatemalan women artisans, based in Panajachel, Guatemala. Besides operating its wholesale businesses activities, Maya Traditions carries out impressive educational and social service projects. MEF helps Maya Traditions with its scholarship program, which in 2010 benefitted 136 children of its artisan members, 70 in elementary, 37 in middle, and 29 in high school, 69 are boys and 67 are girls. High school students attend workshops to enable them to carry out community service commitments during their school vacation, thus giving back to their communities.



Learning about the color wheel

## Oxlajuj B'atz'

Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads) was organized in 2004 in Panajachel, Guatemala as a women's educational resource project by two fair-trade organizations, Maya Traditions and Mayan Hands. Reaching out to over 400 Maya women in 21 rural communities, its teachers, leaders and programs are greatly valued for their educational work and women's empowerment projects, with classes, workshops and opportunities to learn new productive skills and techniques. Field workers make regular visits to the communities; bringing information on topics chosen by the women in their Mayan languages, all intended to raise the women's confidence, to advance their functioning as democratic groups, and to generate more family income through greater skill acquisition. There is a greater demand for their services than can currently be provided. MEF is proud to help advance Oxlajuj B'atz's work and vision and especially thanks the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation for their generous support.



Ceramic painting workshop with the group "Las Gladiolas" in Xeabaj, Santa Apolonia



Rug-hooking workshop using recycled materials in Panajachel.

With pride this member of the Chirijquiac group shows her finished rug, having been the first woman to complete one.

## CIRMA's New Presidential Archives Collection Underway

The Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) in Antigua, Guatemala has begun a new chapter in its effort to preserve documentation relating to Guatemala's recent history with the founding of the Presidential Archives Collection. These are documents which have not been systematically collected by other institutions, private or public, including the country's main repository, the Archivo General de Centroamérica. Until recently, papers of this genre have been held privately by former presidents and their families.

The first donation of presidential papers comes from the distinguished family of President Dr. Juan José Arévalo Bermejo, who served as president from 1945 until 1951. Arévalo, born in 1904, died in 1990, was the first Guatemalan president to be elected democratically. He launched a series of important reforms (including social security and public hospitals), and he promoted the founding of political parties and the integration of the country's indigenous (overwhelmingly Maya) population into the nation's political process. Many of Arévalo's reforms were the Guatemalan equivalent of those carried out by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States a decade earlier. Ironically, however, his efforts at socioeconomic and political reform and those (especially land reform) of his well-known successor, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman (president from 1951 until mid-1954), resulted in the end of the aborted Guatemalan Revolution with the June 1954 military coup directed and financed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

President Arévalo's personal papers contain letters and documents, as well as numerous photographs. In addition to this important, first acquisition, CIRMA hopes to expand the Presidential Archive Collection to include the papers of other former presidents of Guatemala, of all political persuasions.

MEF's support for CIRMA underwrites the care of the extensive collections in the Social Science Library, the Historical Archive and the Guatemala Photo Archive, all of which are very valuable resources for understanding Guatemala's history. All these collections are open for scholarly research and to the public.

## Colegio Paxil

MEF, together with the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, is helping to support Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural Paxil in the town of Nebaj in the Ixil region of Guatemala. This private middle school stands out from its competitors for its strong focus on its mission to teach and preserve the Ixil Maya traditions, while not excluding non-Maya students. In addition to its regular curriculum, it organizes celebrations for students, teachers, and families in accordance with the Mayan calendar. The school is very poor, shares classroom space with other groups, has very little in the way of supplies or computers, but presses on with its 53 students this year, determined and with courage. They need our support to continue and we are glad to be helping this school's dedicated teachers and students.



Colegio Paxil students participating in the O' q'ii (five sacred days of the Maya calendar) and Sajb'ichil (gratitude) ceremonies

For more information on any of these projects, please see our web site [www.mayaedufound.org](http://www.mayaedufound.org)

## MEF Outreach Programs

In accordance with our mission of helping students and their communities in remote and impoverished areas where students often have a difficult time even having access to a school, MEF has established outreach programs in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize in the following areas:

- **in Livingston, Izabal, Guatemala**, for eight students in middle and high school; MEF also gives support to Beluba Luba Furendei, a children's library;
- **in Sololá and Suchitepéquez, Guatemala**, the Ben and Lois Paul Scholarships, with now seven Tz'utujil students, under the supervision of Ajpub' Pablo García Ixmatá;
- **in Todos Santos, Huehuetenango, Guatemala** (see article on p. 4), up to ten students, at elementary, middle and high school level, all supported by the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation; as well as a new group of five elementary school children starting in 2011, underwritten by the Shelton Davis Scholarship Fund; both groups of students are in the care of Felipa Jiménez who lives there;
- **in Cajolá, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala**, MEF collaborates with Grupo Cajolá, an active organization based in the U.S. since 2000 and also in Cajolá since 2005 which supports its community with a number of exciting projects, a chicken farm, a library, a weavers' cooperative, and more. MEF currently helps with five scholarships for high-school students;

...continued on page 10

*As Association Grupo Cajolá in Cajolá we believe that education is the most important path to developing a better future for the community. We appreciate tremendously the support that Maya Educational Foundation has given us and hopefully will continue to give us in order that we may help develop the youth of Cajolá to be professionals committed to developing their town of Cajolá and proud of their rich heritage as Maya.*

Quoted from Cajolá newsletter

## MEF Outreach Programs continued...

- in Michbilixpú, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, five students in high school. This program is underwritten by the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation;



Michbilixpú scholarship students

- in Jacaltenango, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, five students in *diversificado*, a vocational high-school degree that qualifies students to work as accountants or teachers, a very cost-effective program, managed for us by Mercedes Montejo who lives there the greater part of the year;
- in the Maya region of Tziscaco, Chiapas, Mexico, MEF offers five scholarships to deserving high-school students as well as support for the publication of Chuj language materials where now over 6,000 Chuj Maya live in exile, many of them having fled there from Guatemala during its violent civil war;
- in San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas, Mexico, for four Tsotsil Maya students from this region that has seen extreme violence. These scholarships are in honor of Board member Christine Eber's parents, Linnea and Woodrow Eber;
- in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico, MEF has collaborated with Amigos de San Cristóbal on several projects over the past few years and hopes to continue this partnership that helps improve the

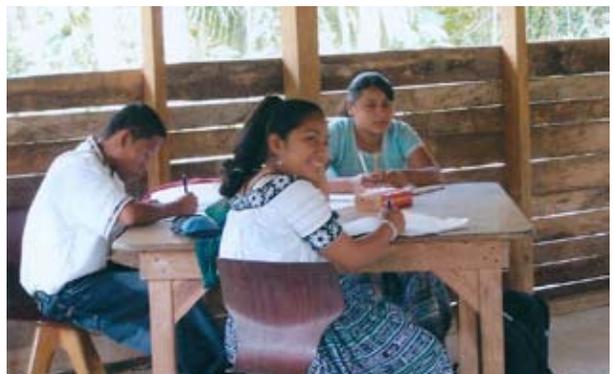
lives of disadvantaged people of Chiapas in the area of education, health, and economic wellbeing;

*Sueniños continues their expansion from their center-based after school program to their school-based after school program "Suenicos" in several marginalized San Cristóbal communities. Once these programs get established in the communities, the young participants and their parents have been consistently enthusiastic about their involvement. This summer Sueniños is taking their circus show on the road to include children in various San Cristóbal communities. Their circus has been a wonderful self esteem building activity for the children involved.*

Quoted from ASC midyear report



- in the Toledo District of Belize, MEF gives scholarships through the Julian Cho Society to 14 Q'eqchi' and Mopan Maya students at the Toledo Community College and the Tumul K'in Center for Learning in Blue Creek.



Belize students in class

## Special Grants and Projects 2010-2011

MEF's Board of Directors approved the following special grants:

- one more year of support to the amazing guitarist and composer **Luis Juárez Quixtán**. This talented young man, a Maya from Quetzaltenango, had reached the limit of how far he could go with his music studies in Guatemala. With grants from MEF and others, he has been able to study the last few years at renowned schools in Paris, France and has become very accomplished in composition and concert music. Luis gives back to the community by offering free concerts and workshops.
- a special grant to **Pueblo a Pueblo** in support of 20 children in elementary school in Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala.
- a grant to **Ripple of Hope** for urgently needed training in how to improve agricultural methods in the famine prone area of the Maya Ch'orti' community of El Matasano, Jocatán, Chiquimula, Guatemala. This area has high poverty and illiteracy rates and has almost no organizations helping, in contrast to the highlands or around Lake Atitlán.
- a grant for a small Mexican **community radio station** near San Cristóbal de Las Casas, to upgrade their equipment. This radio station, run by volunteers, is a vital link for indigenous communities, for information, entertainment, and especially for keeping the rural communities connected. The outreach in indigenous languages keeps the communities' Maya culture alive.



Luis performing at the "La Maison de l'Amérique Latine" June 2010

For 18 years your support has helped Maya students and adults in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.

Thank you!

## Why Give to MEF?

By Elisabeth Nicholson, Director

As we were writing our last mid-year letter to you, we did not yet know about the changes that would come our way soon after and to which we had to react and adapt swiftly (see Marilyn Moors' letter p. 2) in order to safeguard MEF's work. Despite a greatly reduced U.S. infrastructure, we have not had to reduce the support to any of our programs and will extend to them the same helping hand as before.

I appeal to you to give to MEF this year as generously as you can. Your support will help

- the children who, without a small stipend, would not be able to attend school as their families don't have the money to buy school uniforms or supplies;
- the students who believe they can reach for the sky and who can go all the way to a university degree, with a little bit of help in the form of scholarships;
- the women living in poor towns and hopeless situations, who can change their lives by learning new, marketable skills and bring hope to their families for better futures;
- the parents who do not know how to read or write, but want their children to be literate and to be good students;
- the programs where students, in their school vacations, give back to their communities and teach the adults about health, environment, culture, and how to function better in a Spanish speaking world;
- the organizations and institutions that work hard, sometimes with volunteer staff, to keep alive ancestral customs and the different Maya languages;
- the organizations that fight for the rights of the indigenous people and do not shy away from looking at the past, present and future of the Maya people and culture within the larger society, even if it was and is difficult to do so.

You have my heartfelt thanks for the encouragement and support you give to MEF. It is what keeps us going.

## How You Can Help

There are different ways you can help the Maya Educational Foundation:

- ✓ by sponsoring an event in your community to bring awareness to our mission
- ✓ by volunteering your time and expertise to enhance an ongoing program
- ✓ by considering a bequest to MEF
- ✓ by making a financial contribution
- ✓ by making a gift of appreciated securities
- ✓ by asking family and friends to make a donation to MEF in your honor

## Your Donations at Work

- \$ 180 supports the education of a university student for one month.
- \$ 85 supports a student in high school for one month.
- \$ 45 supports a student in middle school for one month.
- \$ 25 helps parents send a child to elementary school for one month.
- \$ 45 covers the cost of teaching an individual how to read and write his or her native language in six months.

**Any amount helps provide a variety of workshops and vocational training.**

MEF is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

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# Maya Educational Foundation

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I am considering a bequest to MEF. Please contact me.

Please, send me your reports by e-mail.