



# Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities

2011-2012 Report to Contributors



The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) supports the educational and professional advancement of the Maya people in Guatemala, southern Mexico, and Belize, with special consideration given to women and girls, and to indigenous groups from remote areas.

Colegio Paxil students,  
Nebaj, Quiché, February 2011  
Photo courtesy of Armando Alfonzo



**Maya Educational Foundation**

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## Contents

President's Letter	2
University Scholarships in Chiapas, Mexico	3
Volunteering in Chiapas	3
In Memoriam	4
Ricardo Stein Heinemann	
Luis Enrique Sam Colop	
FEPMaya	5
MEF Outreach Programs	5
ELP, Antigua, Guatemala	6
Esperanza Juvenil	7
A Birthday Gift	7
Todos Santos Scholarships	8
Colegio Paxil	8
Fundación Tradiciones Mayas	8
Oxlajuj B'atz'	9
Belize Scholarship Program	10
New Projects	11
A Note of Gratitude	11
How You Can Help	12
Your Donations at Work	12



Todos Santos student with her mother

For information on all our projects and more photos, please visit our web site [www.mayaedufound.org](http://www.mayaedufound.org)

Dear Friends of the Maya Educational Foundation,

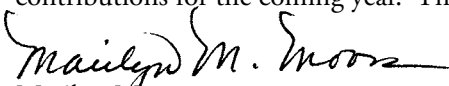
We are pleased to report that we are continuing to hold our own in an unstable economic year and that we have not had to reduce or eliminate any of our projects to make our budget balance. Your generous contributions, of whatever size, continue to provide educational support and assistance to many Mayas who would not otherwise go to school or university. We extend to you our most sincere gratitude for this blessing. As I read the reports of other grant-making foundations, I have come to realize what a rare and marvelous thing your support is.

If you have been a supporter for a while, you know that within our program we undertake some large projects and many small ones. Some of the larger programs, including the university scholarships, need little justification or explanation. Recently, there have been some questions raised about the usefulness of the many small projects that the MEF undertakes. Why do we support two or three students in this or that rural community? Is that not an inefficient use of our money and energy? Some background information and a little history may offer some insight into these projects.

The Maya Educational Foundation will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. After the first few years of supporting university students in Guatemala, we began to see a pattern showing that almost all the students who applied for university scholarships came from the larger cities or from towns close to the Pan-American Highway. These young people had access to schools or to transportation to reach schools and could prepare themselves to undertake higher education. And we realized that there were many, many more from more rural and more isolated communities who could not do this. Our friends and contacts in Guatemala, and later in Chiapas, Belize, and Livingston, told us of smart-as-a-whip kids, motivated to study, who lacked a school, transportation fees, books, or out of town expenses, and couldn't go beyond the *primarias* available to them locally. And we realized that if we wanted our scholarship program to counter not only the discrimination against the Maya and against Maya women, but also against the more rural Maya, we needed to begin supporting education at an earlier age in the rural districts to eventually produce university students from those areas.

We have been very fortunate to find wonderful, committed Maya adults, willing to take on voluntarily the supervision of these small projects and the mentoring of these students. These people have faithfully promoted and supervised young scholars in rural towns like Todos Santos, Jacaltenango, San Pedro La Laguna, San Pedro Chenalhó, and elsewhere. Some of these students have achieved just their *básico* (middle school equivalent, but training enough to get a job) education; others have completed *diversificado* (high school); a few have already applied to universities. They have become self-supporting teachers, bookkeepers, and business people, living more productive lives than would have been possible otherwise. These projects are not expensive, and we feel that our commitment to them reflects our desire to open the possibilities of education to Mayas in remote and isolated communities. We can't do it everywhere, but our partners make it happen in these few areas.

As we prepare for our 20<sup>th</sup> year of work together, we again realize how grateful we are to have you, our contributors, as our partners in this effort. Your long-term support encourages us and keeps us going. We look forward to your contributions for the coming year. Thank you so much.

  
Marilyn Moors  
MEF Board President

## University Scholarships in Chiapas, Mexico

In last year's "Report to Contributors," we brought you up to date on our scholarship program in Guatemala. This year we will tell you about the Maya young people who have graduated from universities in Mexico. The scholarship program in Chiapas began in 1998 and it is supervised by two of our partners there, Sna Jtz'ibajom (The House of the Writer) and FOMMA (a Spanish acronym for Strength of the Maya Women). We learned of these two organization through Dr. Robert Laughlin, anthropologist and linguist at the Smithsonian Institution and his wife Miriam. Bob is the author of many books and articles, the most famous of which is *The Great Tzotzil Dictionary of San Lorenzo Zinacantán*. In addition to the other programs which these groups run (see our web site for details), each group has undertaken to choose, mentor and supervise several young people through their university courses.

Sna Jtz'ibajom has supervised more than 40 students and 25 have received their degrees, 18 men and 7 women, in fields such as sociology, industrial agriculture engineering, general medicine, physical education, social anthropology, education, economics, law, indigenous development, computer science, indigenous languages, international relations, and public accounting.

Sna Jtz'ibajom is currently mentoring 16 students who are continuing their education. The students attend orientation sessions, receive information about

the requirements for maintaining their scholarships, and are reminded of the importance of their links to their home communities and cultures. They sign agreements to carry out these requirements.

FOMMA has had 32 Maya young people graduate from university programs, 10 men and 22 women, in pedagogy, economics, intercultural communication, social anthropology, history, biology, computer systems, clinical psychology, law, and primary education. FOMMA has similar programs and requires similar commitments from its students. Students from both programs have gone on to complete masters and doctorate degrees.



Students having fun in English class

Photo courtesy of Steve Homer

Both organizations encourage their students to maintain their ties to their communities. Work-exchange programs get the students involved in educational programs in San Cristóbal and nearby Maya towns. Students can assist with children's theater workshops or teach adults and children how to write in their native Mayan language. Students attend bi-monthly workshops designed to encourage them in their studies and in their personal development.

FOMMA's October workshop was on gender equality. Some of the students also benefit from English classes taught by MEF volunteers.

We are very proud of these Maya young people for their accomplishments. And we are very grateful to Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA for their mentoring and oversight.

## Volunteering in Chiapas

In Chiapas, we are very grateful to Steve Homer who is spending two months in San Cristóbal, volunteering his services for MEF. This is his seventh time! He is teaching English and computer skills, is in close contact with FOMMA and Sna Jtz'ibajom, visited with MEF grant recipient Radio Cultural in Tenejapa, and is checking up on all MEF programs in Mexico, including students in Chenalhó and the Chuj region. Steve has also taken the initiative and visited with some students who have received MEF support in the past. One of them is Magdalena Gómez Pérez from Chenalhó in the Chiapas highlands, who is now a medical doctor.

...continued on page 4

## MEF Outreach Programs continued...

MEF support helped her cover expenses that her Cuban government scholarship did not. Steve Homer writes:

“This Fall, Dr. Gómez started her year of post-graduate Social Service work. She runs a public health education program for women and children in 12 small towns near Chamula. Those towns have no Tzotzil-speaking female doctors, and most husbands won't let male doctors examine their pregnant wives. Dr. Gómez's workshops on nutrition, pre-natal health, and lactation are a literally life-saving opportunity for the local women and their children.

“The health clinic in Dr. Gómez's home town doesn't have a doctor; she hopes to get a job there after she finishes her Social Service.”

To see all of Steve Homer's in-depth field reports and photographs, please visit [www.mayaedufound.org](http://www.mayaedufound.org).



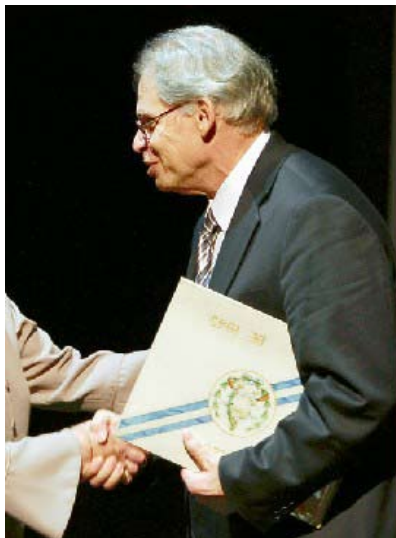
Dr. Gómez teaching in Chamula

Photo courtesy of Dr. Gómez

## In Memoriam

This past year we lost two individuals in Guatemala who were instrumental for two organizations that MEF works with closely, Ricardo Stein, Board President of CIRMA, as well as Luis Enrique Sam Colop, cofounder and former Board President of FEPMaya. We are all still reeling from these losses and will do our best to honor their memory and life work on behalf of the people of Guatemala.

**Dr. Ricardo Stein Heinemann** (1949-2011), founding executive Director of the Guatemala Soros Foundation, passed away May 30, 2011. For over thirty years, Ricardo Stein played a key role in helping to create conditions for peace, first in El Salvador and then in his native country of Guatemala. A mathematician by training, Ricardo was fascinated with the institutional architecture necessary to promote and sustain peace processes. The combination of a keen mind, sharp analytical ability and a belief in the importance of ethical behavior made Ricardo someone who was deeply appreciated by his colleagues and friends. In addition



to numerous important posts he held, he was the Board President of the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA). His life has been, and will continue to be, an example for those committed to strengthening open societies. He will be sorely missed.

**Dr. Luis Enrique Sam Colop** (1955-2011), cofounder and former Board President of Fundación de Estudios y Profesionalización Maya (FEPMaya), passed away on July 15, 2011. A K'iche' Maya from Cantel near Quetzaltenango, he was a poet, linguist, and lawyer, as well as a teacher, and prolific writer, and the first published Mayan newspaper columnist. He wrote his weekly column in *Prensa Libre*, in both Spanish and K'iche'. He was not one to shy away from political debate, even at his own personal risk. Among his poetic works are the two bilingual books, *Versos sin refugio: quiché y español* and *La copa y la ratz*.



In 1999, he published a critical edition of the K'iche' text of the greatest work of Mayan literature, *Popol Wuj: Versión poética k'iche'*. This was the first version of the text to be published by a native speaker and writer of the K'iche' language, and the first to fully reveal its poetic forms. He followed this in 2008 with *Popol Wuj: Traducción al español y notas*. For us at MEF and the students and staff at FEPMaya, his passing is a great personal loss. Enrique Sam was a friend and defender of Mayan rights and he believed in higher education for the Maya, sacrificing countless hours to this cause.

## FEP Maya

In 1992, the Maya Educational Foundation established its scholarship program Programa de Becas Mayas in Guatemala, under the supervision of Dr. Enrique Sam Colop and Dra. Irma Otzoy. Over the next few years, a comité de becas selected and supervised the scholarships, and, in 2003, developed into a Guatemalan non-profit organization called Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya (FEP Maya).

About 35 students carry out their studies at any one time under FEP Maya's supervision. They are involved in various levels of university work and they come from all regions of Guatemala, representing the varied Maya groups and their languages, among them K'iche', Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi', Q'anjob'al, Poqomchi', Awakateko, Tz'utujil, Mam, Achi, Ixil, Chuj, Jakateko, Chorti', and Popiti'. The majority of the students study at the University of San Carlos, either in Guatemala City or at one of its branches. Some others receive their degrees from Universidad Rafael Landívar, Universidad Mariano Gálvez, and Universidad Rural de Guatemala in Quetzaltenango.

FEP Maya offers the students a special program of parallel education activities, including speakers, meetings, and short courses, some via computers. Their office provides a meeting space for students to congregate, study, and network. Former students serve on the FEP Maya Board of Directors and serve on the comité de becas which selects new students.

As a result of their and our work, over 90 Maya students have received their degrees in a wide spectrum of disciplines, including law, medicine, education psychology, agronomy, chemical and civil engineering, ecology, architecture, all of the social sciences, and more. MEF is proud of these students and pleased to continue to work with FEP Maya to make this investment into the lives of young Mayas.

We are saddened by the great loss of Dr. Luis Enrique Sam Colop this year and know how much he will be missed by all the students and staff at FEP Maya.



FEP Maya students

## 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 and Mexico, among them in:

- **Livingston, Izabal, Guatemala**, scholarships for eight students in middle and high school, and as of this year one in university in Computer Science;



Livingston university student

- **Cajolá, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala**, MEF supports Grupo Cajolá by providing five high-school scholarships;

- **Sololá and Suchitepéquez, Guatemala**, MEF established this scholarship program in memory of Ben and Lois Paul. It currently supports seven Tz'utujil students;



Tz'utujil student from San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá

- **San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas, Mexico**, scholarships for four Tsotsil Maya students from this region. They were established in honor of Board member Christine Eber's parents, Linnea and Woodrow Eber. Congratulations to Christine on the publication of her book *The Journey of a Tzotzil-Maya Woman of Chiapas, Mexico*, written together with "Antonia" (University of Texas Press). The book offers many insights into the difficulties and choices facing girls and their parents seeking education in this area;
- **Jacaltenango, Huehuetenango, Guatemala**, MEF provides three scholarships in vocational high school;
- **Michbilixpú, Alta Verapaz, Guatemala**, MEF supports five students in high school;

...continued on page 6

## MEF Outreach Programs continued...

- **San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico**, MEF collaborates with Amigos de San Cristóbal to give support to four projects: *Sueniños*, an after-school and Saturday program for school children in five disadvantaged communities of San Cristóbal; *Chiltak*, a program working with teenagers to keep them away from violence and teach them how to prevent it; *Hogar Comunitario*, an educational program for pregnant mothers and their children; and *Pingüinos*, a multi-cultural primary school;
- **The Maya region of Tzisco, Chiapas, Mexico**, an area where more than 6,000 Chuj Maya live in exile, having come there from Guatemala during the civil war. MEF supports four high-school and two university students and hopes to be able to add two more scholarships next year. MEF is pleased that the long-awaited Chuj Maya language manual is now published and congratulates the Sociedad Cooperativa “Productores Alternativos de la Selva” on this accomplishment. It is a testimony to the determination of the Chuj Maya to preserve their culture.



Girls in the *Sueniños* program

## English Language Program in Antigua, Guatemala

In addition to MEF offering interested students English courses at language schools in Chiapas and Guatemala, volunteers have gone to San Cristóbal (see p. 3) and to Antigua, Guatemala for years now, offering their expertise to the students. These efforts have been very successful in both places, and we appreciate the hard work on part of our volunteers. The students cannot praise this interaction with native English speakers enough. Here is what volunteer Susan Feinberg wrote after the January 2011 course in Antigua:

“As a former board member and office manager for the Maya Educational Foundation, I was very familiar with the MEF and its English Language Program. Still, I arrived in Guatemala with all the trepidations of first time volunteers, not sure what to expect, anxious about the routine, not sure what the students would be like, not sure if I would measure up as a teacher.

“Our group consisted of 20 students and 14 teachers, the daily routine consisted of English class in morning from 8:30 am until noon, when students went to lunch with their host families. Optional informal activities were planned each afternoon, all of them conducted in English. After the group activity, tutoring was available for individual students. After dinner, evening activities were planned. Each day was full, exciting, challenging, exhilarating, and exhausting.



“As the days flew by, the group dynamics evolved. Students became more confident as they learned, and they became a cohesive group, supporting each other. Bonds between students and volunteers became easy and comfortable.

“What impressed me most about this experience was the students’ palpable hunger to learn. The majority of students took advantage of all activities every day. One repeated comment in their feedback was that they wanted more activities, shorter breaks and more exposure to English.

“I am aware of the great challenges confronting these Maya students in order to reach university level. They must deal with blatant discrimination, financial difficulties, and family demands. I sensed a relentless determination to succeed in their studies and desire to give back to their communities and country.

“I am grateful for this opportunity. The experience of working with young people who respect and want what you have to offer is inspirational. On the other hand, students receive the interest, admiration, and encouragement of adults who are “gringos,” providing them with a new perspective on their own lives and their places in the world.

“I encourage readers to contact MEF to learn more about participating in this unique experience. No Spanish required!”

## Esperanza Juvenil

Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope, Girls Hope) in Guatemala City helps children in need who are bright and motivated to meet their full potential by providing value-centered, family-like homes, opportunities, and education. It now serves 110 children and young people.

Rescued from the streets, violent homes or desperately poor family settings, the students at Esperanza Juvenil receive above-par schooling, loving homes if needed, nutritious meals, and a solid chance for a lifetime of success... Through Esperanza Juvenil's residential program, 70 students live nearby in five well-supervised group homes, forty other students remain with their families in poor barrios around the capital and attend school each day. Esperanza Juvenil also has an apartment for the university students it serves (Matt Boker in [revuemag.com](http://revuemag.com)).

MEF began supporting the first Maya students to be taken into their program in 2007, and now supports 12. For next year, MEF has decided to provide funding for an additional six Maya girls.

In their last report to us, Directors Kristin Ostby and Lucas Pinzón recall how, in 2006, Esperanza Juvenil was a small program supporting just 29 non-Maya children and youth from Guatemala City. Through MEF, Kristin tells us, they were introduced to our work and Maya community leaders in various regions of Guatemala, who then referred Maya children with great need and tremendous potential to them.

Today, Esperanza Juvenil supports 110 children and youth, 23 of whom are Maya girls and 10 are Maya

boys. In January, the first two MEF scholars will enter university, and in the next three years, 13 Maya students (9 girls and 4 boys) will be ready to go to university!

*As we grow, we are eager to continue to invite Maya children to join the program. We have found that our Maya scholars, despite the poverty in which they have grown up, come with strong values, respect for their elders, a desire to get involved and give back, and a strong motivation to pursue an education. We thank you for making this connection happen between Esperanza Juvenil and the Maya communities of Guatemala.*

Kristin Ostby



Students with painting donated by Sally Lutz to Esperanza Juvenil's headquarters

## A Birthday Gift

One of our faithful contributors died this past year, a woman in her eighties who discovered us through a friendship with our Board President. An occasional contributor in the beginning, she decided one year to give herself a birthday present of sending one little Maya girl to school in Guatemala. She made a pledge of \$25 a month to MEF and we applied that gift to the

program that helps to send the children of the Maya Traditions weavers to primary school. To honor her life and to keep her gift going, her family and friends have each pledged enough to MEF to send two little girls to school. Thank you, Ruth Blom, for your big heart. And thank you, Ruth's family and friends, for continuing to do this in her memory.

## Todos Santos Scholarships

Together with the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation and support from the Shelton Davis Scholarship Fund, MEF provides scholarships for 17 students in Todos Santos in the western highland region of Guatemala.

We hope to accommodate two women who recently applied for university scholarships.

Big news: Finally, the community of Todos Santos has its own *diversificado* / high school! We hope that this will make life easier for some of the students who had to travel far before.

Todos Santos student  
with parents



## Colegio Paxil

Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural Paxil, a private non-profit middle school in Nebaj, Guatemala, has been our partner since 2007. The school is poor and shares its classroom space with other groups, but its dedicated teachers, parents and students are united in the mission of mastering all required courses while continuing to value their Ixil language and Maya traditions. They maintain a culturally and racially integrated student population with 62 students in three grades: 50 Ixiles, 8 K'iche's and 4 ladinos.

MEF is grateful for support from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation whose special grants have enabled this school to enhance its music and arts program. After a visit there earlier this year, the Foundation has given MEF core funding for Colegio Paxil to be used for the next five years.

Maya  
ceremony with  
students

Photo courtesy of  
Armando Alfonzo



## Fundación Tradiciones Mayas

Maya Traditions (Fundación Tradiciones Mayas, FTM), a Guatemala-based, fair-trade, non-profit organization, has worked with womens' weaving groups since 1997, helping with the design and production of crafts and weavings for resale through fair-trade outlets. They also provide educational programs for the weavers, most recently concentrating on the production and use of traditional herbal medicines for healing and for sale.

When FTM asked the weavers about their most pressing needs, they responded that they would like help sending their children to school. FTM then began a scholarship program, now 15 years old and enrolling 130 students. The Maya Educational Foundation became involved in this program in 2007, providing assistance for these scholarships. Director Marcelle Renkin reports that a former scholarship student is now their new program coordinator. The daughter of a weaver, she also studies social work at the Panamerican University and makes regular visits to students' homes, providing assistance and motivation to continue in school. Cases needing special intervention can be caught early and remedies suggested. Teen aged scholarship students participate in workshops each year. This year's included youth leadership, the Maya cosmovision, in which students explored their Maya heritage, and career choice. Students are expected to share what they learn through these workshops with their families and other teens in their home communities.

The dream Jane Mintz had when she started Maya Traditions has become a reality and has had a profound impact on the lives of many indigenous women and their families in Guatemala. Special thanks go to Murray Mintz and Jane's family for continuing her legacy and giving support to Maya Traditions through the Jane Mintz Trust.

Students  
in the  
leadership  
project  
brainstorm  
on possible  
project ideas





## Oxlajuj B'atz'

Oxlajuj B'atz' (OB) or Thirteen Threads is a non-profit indigenous women's empowerment and non-formal education organization based in Guatemala, which the Maya Educational Foundation has worked with since 2004. This dynamic NGO provides skills training to more than 20 Maya women's cooperatives throughout rural Guatemala and focuses on four areas of interest: Health and Well-Being, Artisan and Product Development, Democracy and Team-Building, and Small Business. Through OB's workshops, more than 500 women have acquired new skills and learned more about topics they have chosen. These courses include women's health, preventative medicine, medicinal plants, working with natural dyes, making candles, rug-hooking, basket making, and other skill development. The women learn about team work, small business management, and associated legal and political processes. OB's field workers visit communities regularly, bringing information in their Mayan languages about topics requested by the women. All these activities raise the confidence of the women and give them more control over their own lives.



Rug-hooking workshop  
Photo courtesy of Armando Alfonso

Highlights this past year included the grand opening of OB's Maya Women's Center, located in the impressive historical building, Casa Kaqchikel, Calle 14 de febrero, Panajachel, Solola, Guatemala. The Center gives OB a space for organizing community workshops and trainings, a cooperative Fair Trade store, a community resource library, workshop and meeting space, and a departure point for tours to the women's villages.

Another exciting event was that OB women were invited and three of them recently attended the U.S. Rug Hooking Exhibition at the Anderson Center in Minneapolis, MN as part of Mary Anne Wise & Friends: The Art of the Hooked Rug. For more about their 10-day trip and all of its work, see OB's website [www.oxlajujbatz.org](http://www.oxlajujbatz.org)

Outstanding support for OB this year came especially from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation (DADF), the Delta Family Foundation, and Dining for Women, as well as individuals and groups that would like to remain anonymous. Thank you!



DADF Board members visit to OB's headquarters  
Photo courtesy of Armando Alfonso

*Mission accomplished, I am graduating with a degree in Business Management, a career I had dreamed of..*

Carlos Morales Quila,  
Tz'utujil student



**For 19 years your support has helped  
Maya students and adults in Mexico,  
Guatemala, and Belize.**

**Thank you!**

## Belize Scholarship Program

MEF partnered with the Julian Cho Society (JCS) in the Toledo District of Belize in 2006 and started a scholarship program. Currently, MEF is supporting sixteen students at high school level and—the newest accomplishment—two university students. To get real insight into the situation in Belize, we wanted you to see what Faustina Pop, our colleague at the JCS writes:

“The JCS works with all 38 Maya Q’eqchi’ and Mopan villages of the Toledo district, communities who continue to live communally on subsistence farming. Maya villages are cash poor and do not compete directly or predominantly in a cash economy but depend primarily on a system of sustainable co-habitation with the rainforest of Belize. They gather forest products to build their houses such as the valuable cohune thatch and the rosewood posts. They hunt, fish and gather for game meat. They use and protect the watershed where they settle as this is their source of drinking water. They raise domesticated animals like chicken, turkeys, pigs and cows to help sustain their family, and at times sell the surplus as they do with their agricultural crops to buy supplies not found in the rainforest. The Maya communities’ survival is grounded in the relationship they have with the forest and the seasonal plants they grow such as corn.

“All of the students come from humble families who are struggling to appreciate the importance of education for their children but challenged financially to meet this need. This is especially true for young Maya girls.

“Reacting to demands from the families, the government recently began to offer a government subsidy for first year high school students. Though this helps reduce the overall costs, the families still struggle to meet other expenses for high school.

“Coming from villages without electricity or libraries,

the students are often the first children from their families to pursue higher education, bridging two worlds, literally by having to travel far from remote villages to attend school and to experience discrimination, all the while trying to maintain their own Maya identity.

“Then, there is a lot of pressure on the students who complete high school, as the families need them to find work to help support other siblings. Often they leave their communities in search of jobs on the cays where they make minimum wage to help their families, all the while being subjected there to many kinds of abuse. Finding a good job is hard with just a high school diploma especially when a young Maya student is competing with others who have acquired an Associate’s degree or higher.

“Though we are constantly looking for opportunities for higher degrees for deserving students whose families cannot afford higher education, we are also faced with the greatest discrimination in terms of opportunities for higher education, especially when scholarship opportunities are announced through government ministries. We find that Toledo rarely knows of the existence of these scholarships until just days before the deadlines.

“Monitoring the progress and lives of past scholars, the JCS has in the last year seen a motivation to continue to pursue higher education and a heightened level of involvement in community and civil society organizations. Former students are maintaining ties with the JCS and helping out by supporting the youth program and visiting the office weekly, inspiring other young Maya men and women and showing that poverty is no reason to be discouraged from aiming for greater self-development. This is a noteworthy accomplishment of the seeds planted through this scholarship program.”



We are pleased to report that these three scholars have all graduated from high school successfully. In fact, the young Q’eqchi’ girl from rural Santa Anna village graduated with highest honours in her class.

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## New Projects

A highlight this year was that most members of the Board of the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation (DADF) and MEF representative Armando Alfonzo were able to travel and make site visits together to a number of projects in Guatemala. Following the trip, MEF decided to accept two new projects, suggested by and in collaboration with our friends at the DADF:

### Cooperativa Unión San Juan Entre Ríos

Located in Sayaxché in the Petén, the cooperativa exists in a jungle region lacking most basic infrastructure amenities. Its inhabitants were refugees from the Guatemalan civil war who lived in camps in Mexico after fleeing their homes. The first groups returning in 1992 found that their lands had been usurped by others. With the help of FONAPAZ (Fondo Nacional para la Paz), the government purchased the finca “Hacienda Entre Ríos” and 15 families resettled there. In 1996, 85 more refugee families arrived. Today Entre Ríos is a community of about 150 families of seven different cultural groups. The area around them contains 23 other communities, most of them K’ekchi’ speakers. Within this larger community, Entre Ríos has shown a great sense of community development, a willingness to work with each other, and high motivation to educate their young people. The returned refugee educators became certified, and the community built the area’s first primary school. Now, every one of the 24 communities has a primary school. In 1999, with DADF support, the community built a middle school, and now there are three middle schools serving the 24 communities. Local people formed a chapter of the Asociación de Docentes en Acción Educativa Rural (DARE) and they are hoping to have a fully functioning high school in the area by 2012.

This year’s funding will allow DARE to provide scholarships for students at the high school and university levels, to fund teacher support and training, to purchase teaching materials, and to finance the legal work necessary to establish the *diversificado*/high school.

### Cooperativa Integral de Comercialización Tejidos Cotzal

This weavers group in San Juan Cotzal, Quiché consists largely of widows who need to become more successful and self-sufficient in order to maintain themselves and to pass on their skills and talents. They want to create a resource center and weaving school to provide jobs, housing, and a measure of independence for the elderly women in the group. Funding from the DADF will help make this happen. Our colleagues at Oxlajuj B’atz’ are supervising this project and reported good impressions from their last visit.

MEF is glad to partner with DADF in support of these two active and committed groups and thanks the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation for its vital support for these and other MEF projects.



Three generations of Maya weavers  
Photo courtesy of Armando Alfonzo

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## A Note of Gratitude for Your Role in MEF

from Elisabeth Nicholson, Director

Preparing this newsletter, once more, brought home to me how lucky MEF is to have your support and commitment to the work we do. Whether as donors, volunteers, board members, or advisors, YOU have shown me this past year once again that, even with a very small staff, together we can still accomplish so much. When I receive your phone calls, notes and letters, or the reports from the field, I am truly humbled and grateful to all of you for caring, even though some of you were struggling with your own setbacks this year, a health crisis, a job loss or the loss of a loved one. Your generosity and faith in the value of the work we do on behalf of the Maya people inspires us to do better, to help more, and to make our upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> year the best one yet. Thank you!

## How You Can Help

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

- ✓ by sponsoring an event in your community to make people aware of 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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YES, I want to support the Maya Educational Foundation programs.

Enclosed is my check payable to Maya Educational Foundation in the amount of US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my  MasterCard  VISA in the amount of US\$ \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card Account No. \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Street / P.O. Box, City, State, Zip, Country

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

Please, send me your reports by e-mail.