



Maya Educational Foundation

P.O. Box 1483, Wellfleet, MA 02667, USA
mayaedufound@aol.com • www.mayaedufound.org
Tel: (508) 349-1330 • Fax: (508) 349-0252

June 2015

Dear Friends,

Since we last communicated with you, the Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) has had a busy six months. In this letter we are pleased to update you on our programs in Chiapas, Mexico. For updates on MEF programs in Belize and Guatemala please see our website www.mayaedufound.org.

In February 2015, I visited with many of the students sponsored by our partners in Chiapas. My conversations with these students impressed me with their perseverance and determination, as well as the joy they find in living, despite the many hardships they face. Economic conditions were particularly difficult this winter in Chiapas. Most of MEF's students come from farming families who raise corn, beans, and coffee. In several regions of the state, the corn crop fared poorly. Many of the rural households I visited had only one large burlap bag of corn, enough to last about a month. Families obtain cash to buy corn and other food through selling coffee and artisanry, or working in wage labor, usually in distant parts of Mexico. But this year the coffee crop was all but obliterated by a disease called "la roya" and few farmers had any coffee to sell. Assistance from MEF took on special significance this year given that families have even fewer resources than usual.

When I was in Chiapas, the memory of 43 students who were forcibly disappeared in September 2104 while studying at Ayotzinapa Teachers College in Guerrero, Mexico weighed heavily on the hearts and minds of MEF students. More than a dozen of these students currently attend teachers colleges in Chiapas. I had the opportunity to talk at length with a few of them about their concerns and goals. They spoke of their dedication to become teachers to the most marginalized children of Chiapas, of wearing their traditional clothing in the classroom, and of their efforts to engender pride in reading and writing Mayan languages. These young men and women have chosen one important career among many that MEF scholars are pursuing.

While in Chiapas, I was pleased to inaugurate a special scholarship for a student to study dentistry. This scholarship is the dream of Tom Potts, a dentist from western New York who has been providing free dental care in San Pedro Chenalhó for the past 30 years. Through a donation from the Chiapas Highland Maya Fund and the Latin American Solidarity Committee of the Western New York Peace Center, Ceiba Marisol Velasco Pérez, will enter a dental college in San Cristóbal de Las Casas in fall 2015. Ceiba was the first young woman to graduate from the MEF high school scholarship program in Chenalhó. After graduation from dental school, Ceiba will provide low cost dental services to the people of Chenalhó and carry on Tom's work in the spirit of service that is so important to Maya communities. (Ceiba is the student holding papers in the photo on the back.)

For the past twelve years I've been honored to serve MEF as a board member and for the past three years as board president. I will retire from the board in August 2015 in order to have more time for other projects. As someone with godchildren and many friends in Chiapas, I'm grateful that in the coming years I will be able to continue my friendships with MEF students and program staff. I am also gratified to leave MEF at a time when its programs are thriving thanks to your generous donations and the hard work of everyone involved with MEF.

We hope you enjoy the back of this letter which is resplendent with photos of participants in the programs MEF supports in Chiapas.

With my deepest thanks for your past support and my sincere hope that you will continue to donate to MEF's important work in Chiapas, Belize, and Guatemala.

Christine Eber
MEF Board President

Voces Mesamericanas (Mesoamerican Voices) is an organization supported by MEF partner Amigos de San Cristóbal. This photo shows a mobile museum about migration that Voces created to educate diverse communities about this issue, the focus of the organization's work.



High school students and supervisors in the Chenalhó program



Chuj students, supervisors, and MEF Board President



Sna Jtz'ibajom university students, supervisor, and MEF Board President



Graduate of a Tzotzil reading and writing course sponsored by Sna Jtz'ibajom



La FOMMA university students and supervisor