



Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities

Supplement to the 2014-2015 Report

The Chuj Scholarship Program

MEF scholarship partner since 2006, Productores Alternativos de la Selva (PAS) is a coffee cooperative in the Lagos de Montebello region of Chiapas which was founded in the 1980s by Chuj Maya refugees from Guatemala. PAS members have made education for the children of their community a priority. This year the current scholarship students—six in university, two in high school, and one in elementary—showed their commitment as well by creating a small cooperative of their own called Akib'al (Nuestras Raíces, Our Roots).

Believing that each of them forms one link in a chain that grows stronger as they pass on their good fortune to others, the students put that belief into practice by starting a fund for students in need. Each current student donates 50 pesos a month from his or her scholarship (about US 4.25) so that it will grow and aid other students in special hardship situations in the future.

What an impressive group of young people!



Chuj students in Tziscaco, Chiapas, Mexico.

Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural Paxil

Up from 94 students last year, Colegio Paxil is serving 105 students this year, mostly Ixil Maya but also K'iche' and Ladino students. This exceptional, non-profit middle school in Nebaj, Quiché, Guatemala has been able to grow over the years with funds provided by MEF and support from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation. These funds do not support individual students, but are used to purchase books, instruments, supplies, and to cover teachers' salaries and tuition supplements.

The school provides education in both the Ixil Maya and Spanish languages, respecting both Maya and Ladino cultures. It seeks to keep the students rooted in and proud of their cultural heritage, while also teaching the full, standard curriculum.

MEF staff visited the school this year and found that this extremely dedicated but poor school deserves increased support in order to retain good teachers, who are underpaid, and to provide additional cultural activities.



Livingston

From Livingston we received the shocking news that MEF scholarship student, Layla Naomi Castro Rodríguez, recently and suddenly passed away from diabetes. Layla (in the middle of the photo to the right) was a fighter who had already experienced a great deal of sorrow in her early life, having lost her mother to a violent murder and a brother to AIDS. Her friends and colleagues write that, instead of turning bitter, her spirit was bright and everyone liked her. Before graduating from the high school adult program and becoming a law student in MEF's program, she served as treasurer of the Asociación de Amigos para el Desarrollo de Livingston, our non-profit partner that supervises twelve scholarships in Livingston. MEF will transfer Layla's scholarship to her son, Dantei, who will start middle school next year (sadly his younger and only sister needs special care and is not able to attend school). This will help her family and honor the value that Layla placed on obtaining a good education.

Program supervisor Sara Martínez is glad to report that all the other students are doing well. Carlos Marcelo is working towards a degree in systems engineering and is

expected to be the program's first university graduate, but by no means its last. The students following behind him are extremely motivated by his good example and expect to graduate with university degrees in public accounting, law, teaching, and other fields.



Layla (middle) and friends at their high school graduation, Livingston, Guatemala.

Cajolá

Grupo Cajolá believes that education is a means to emerge from poverty. Since their founding in 2006, they have made it a priority to improve the school system. They brought a public middle school to Cajolá in 2009 and more recently established a preschool. Grupo Cajolá also offers projects for women, an egg farm, a textile business, and beekeeping. They pay great attention to their Mam culture and recently published two children's books in Mam. Together with MEF, they started a scholarship program in 2006. After initially helping younger students, they now concentrate on university education since the area is in great need of professionals. MEF gives support to nine university students from Cajolá. The group

helps to raise funds and the students contribute community service. This year the first student graduated in law.



Meeting of the Grupo Cajolá, 2014.

Typical for many Mayan communities, only half of Cajolá's population of 20,000 (of which 93% are Mam Maya) has had any education (men mostly), 94% live in poverty, and 57% in extreme poverty. A third of the population has emigrated to the US.

Caryn Maxim, Grupo Cajolá

Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads)

Oxlajuj B'atz', in Panajachel, Guatemala, started as a women's educational resource project in 2004 and continues its mission of bringing educational workshops to impoverished Maya women in the Lake Atitlán region. Women in more than 20 Mayan communities have benefitted from these workshops.

When we visited there this spring, we heard testimony from a number of women about what it means to them that Oxlajuj B'atz' teaches in their communities where many women have never had formal schooling and cannot read or write. Workshops are offered on a variety of topics of interest to the women and can cover health topics and the making of new products (e.g., making medicinal herbal tinctures and creams).

Oxlajuj B'atz' recently relocated its office space and store outlet for the women's products to a busier street in Panajachel where the rent is lower and the store attracts more customers.

Oxlajuj B'atz' is teaching workshops in San Juan Cotzal and is also overseeing the final phase of construction of a women's weaving center there. The women of the Cooperativa Cotzal are already making good use of the center which was underwritten by the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation.

MEF thanks Dining for Women and the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation for their continued support of this project and of Oxlajuj B'atz'.



Oxlajuj B'atz' members at their store.



Women at Cooperativa Cotzal.



New Oxlajuj B'atz' store location in Panajachel.

How You Can Help

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

- ✓ by making a financial contribution
- ✓ by asking family and friends to make a donation to MEF in your honor (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions)
- ✓ by making an in-kind contribution
- ✓ by volunteering your time and expertise
- ✓ by exploring and utilizing employer matches to multiply your donations
- ✓ by considering a bequest to MEF
- ✓ by spreading the word about our work and mission

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

Your Donations at Work

- \$ 200 supports the education of a university student for one month.
- \$ 100 supports a student in high school for one month.
- \$ 50 supports a student in middle school for one month.
- \$ 30 helps parents send a child to elementary school for one month.
- \$ 50 covers a student's fee to participate in a six-month course that teaches students how to read and write their Mayan language.

Any amount helps Maya students with their education and provides workshops and vocational training to women and whole communities.

Your donation to MEF will help change lives.

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



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