

# Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities for the Maya



## 2007 Report to Contributors

*"...helping a fellow human being fulfill his or her dreams and improve his or her life and the lives of other people, gives meaning to my existence in the balance of humanity."*

Carlo Olivieri, MEF supporter

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Dear Friends:

In this report you will see that we have had another successful year. Your generosity and your continuing support for the Maya Educational Foundation have made an important difference in the lives of many Maya—children and their parents, young people attending college and learning English, women weavers learning about health care and how to market their goods, writers, artists and photographers—and so many others. This report tells you more about our partner groups in Guatemala, Chiapas, and Belize and the work that they do. Our outreach to them has always been in their educational efforts, in assuring that the teachers, the books, the scholarship money, the mentoring and the support is there so that people's lives can change and improve and that they can, in turn, affect and transform others.

Because we are a small group, we can try new approaches to see what kinds of results they bring. This past year, in addition to our regular scholarships for pre-university students, we sponsored eight Maya children in a program called *Esperanza Juvenil*, placing them into a group home in Guatemala City with an excellent educational program, fine teachers, and superb resources (see p. 5). We are also supporting a bilingual middle school *Colegio Paxil* in the Ixil area, providing textbooks and support for an innovative community project (see p. 3). And in MEF's university program, sixty-four students are progressing well and those involved in our English language program (see p. 7) are making rapid progress in mastering conversational English.

Your part in all this is so very vital, and so very simple. You, from the goodness of your heart, send us a contribution. We promise that we will put your money to work in the most effective ways we know. We again appeal to your generosity to support MEF's programs and to expand our outreach. There is so much to be done. For each individual we help, there are many standing behind, waiting for an opportunity. Your donation makes such a difference in these lives. Please join us again to keep this work going.

With much affection,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Marilyn M. Moors".

Marilyn Moors  
MEF Board President

# MEF Scholarship Programs Overview

MEF's primary focus is to provide scholarships to Maya students. We began with two scholarships in 1992. Now, in addition to 64 university scholarships, we provide scholarships to 124 Maya students in under-served communities at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Feedback from students and administrators is positive and we know our efforts are making a difference, one student at a time. With the help of our donors, we will continue to establish scholarship programs in communities where educational opportunities are limited or non-existent.

The problem of education in Guatemala is exemplified by the rural community of Cajolá, in the department of Quetzaltenango. According to the 2005 census, out of a population of 15,000, there were just three residents who graduated from college, and just 210 who graduated from high school. While Guatemala's constitution calls for free education, the reality is sadly different. Often there are additional costs for inscription, books and copies for homework, internet assignments, learning activities, uniforms and festivals celebrated during the year. Such fees represent important sacrifices for Maya families wishing to send their children to school.

In Cajolá, there is only an elementary school. In order to continue their education, students face transportation costs and time to commute to a larger town, and often the cost of room and board to live in town during the week while attending school. In the context of Cajolá's daunting statistics on poverty, where 93% of the town lives in poverty and 57% in extreme poverty, the need to improve access to education is critical.

The situation is similar in communities throughout Guatemala, Mexico and Belize, where MEF has partnered with organizations and individuals to provide scholarships. The goal is to ultimately increase the number of students who will qualify to attend university. This has started to happen in Todos Santos, Guatemala and the Chuj region of Chiapas, Mexico, where two university scholarship programs were launched this year. In Cajolá, whose scholarship program started two years ago, a university scholarship program will start in 2008.

In most cases, the quality of education in rural communities is poor. To guarantee success as scholarship students advance in their studies, MEF programs provide additional support through tutoring, mentoring and helping students adjust to urban life.

## 2007 Scholarship Programs Summary

### University (64 students)

*Guatemala:* FEP Maya, Guatemala City and Todos Santos

*Chiapas, Mexico:* Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA in San Cristóbal de Las Casas and in Tziscac (Chuj students)

### Middle and High School (114 students)

*Guatemala:* Jacaltenango, Nebaj, Todos Santos, Cajolá, Chichicastenango, Nahualá, Guatemala City, Maya Traditions scholarship program in the Lake Atitlán region and Ben & Lois Paul Scholarships (Tz'utujil students)

*Chiapas, Mexico:* Chuj region

*Belize:* La Lagunilla, Toledo District (Q'eqchi' students)

### Elementary School (10 students)

*Guatemala:* Todos Santos and Esperanza Juvenil in Guatemala City



*Eduardo Jiménez, scholarship coordinator, interviewing students in Cajolá*

# Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural “Paxil”

Information provided by Xhun Ijom / Juan Guzmán,  
President of the board of Colegio Paxil and by Diego Santiago Ceto, Vice President



Colegio Paxil is a básico (middle school-level) private school located in Nebaj, Guatemala, that recruits talented students from low income families living in rural communities of the Ixil region. The school promotes tolerance amongst different cultures and ethnic groups, and strives to enhance and reinforce the education received at home by maintaining close ties between parents, teachers and the community. To facilitate interaction between students and community, Colegio Paxil organizes community service projects within the region. This year, MEF provided scholarships for 59 students from 23 communities of the Ixil region, as well as funding to purchase text books and to defray some of Colegio Paxil operating costs.

School activities began in January of 2007 with a gathering of teachers, students and parents. As part of the cultural and traditional events organized by the school, a two-day ceremony to celebrate the beginning of the New Year according to Mayan tradition took place at the end of February. Students, staff and members of the community joined several Mayan priests and spiritual guides in this ancient tradition.

Three meetings with the parents took place during the course of the year. Aside from keeping them informed about their children's academic progress, regular meetings allow parents to participate in school activities and projects.

At the end of July, in order to learn first hand ancient Mayan history, science and culture, students went on a field trip to the archaeological site of Zaculeu, in the Department of Huehuetenango.



*Students in Zaculeu, Huehuetenango*

Students also participated in workshops presenting topics on leadership, organization, human development, life in a multicultural society, and community participation. Workshops emphasized non violent approaches to address current social issues.



*Students taking notes at a workshop on leadership*



*Group activities among students from Colegio Paxil and other schools*

Thanks to the donation of computer equipment from FEPMaya, Colegio Paxil has been able to offer computer courses this year, but only to a limited number of students. The school hopes that additional computer equipment will be made available through other donations and wishes to expand this important program.



*Students in the computer lab at Colegio Paxil*



## Another Milestone for FEPMaya (Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya)

From modest beginnings in 1992 with just two students, FEPMaya has been the backbone of MEF's university scholarship program in Guatemala. A dedicated volunteer committee and small staff has selected, guided and nurtured hundreds of students over the years, striving always to maintain the highest levels of academic excellence. This was done from a moldy, dilapidated, rented building in Guatemala City. Then, in 2003, FEPMaya gained official recognition as a not-for-profit organization in Guatemala, with an engaged board of directors, scholarship selection committee, academic coordinator and active volunteers.

This year FEPMaya took a giant leap into the future. On January 10, 2007, representatives of FEPMaya signed a purchase and sales document and now own a building and property in Mixco, a safer area near Guatemala City. The architect who inspected the building and the lawyer who prepared the legal documents are both former recipients of

FEPMaya scholarships. Current scholarship students helped with renovations, painting and moving, and on January 27, 2007, an inauguration event was held at the new facility. The celebration was attended by current and former students, board members, selection committee members, friends and invited guests. Armando Alfonzo, MEF board treasurer also attended the ceremony. The highlight of the day was a Mayan ritual performed by the priest Eduardo Pacay to bless the momentous occasion.

As eloquently expressed by Enrique Sam Colop, one of the original founders of FEPMaya:

*"... remembering how the program was born, a tiny infant, and to see that it now has achieved its own legal status and has its own building, makes us feel thankful to all who have worked so hard to make this dream become a reality. We are motivated to put our best efforts into making sure that FEPMaya continues to grow and to benefit the Maya people and Guatemala."*



*Mayan ceremony at FEPMaya's new facilities*



*Students receiving their first scholarship installment for 2007*

## Belize High School Scholarship Program

In collaboration with the Julian Cho Society  
2006–2007 Report

The Julian Cho Society (JCS) is a non-profit, non-governmental membership organization dedicated to the conservation of the environment and indigenous lands of southern Belize, based on the principles and values of Julian Cho, a leader of the Maya movement who fostered the rights of indigenous peoples in Belize and supported their struggle for justice, democracy, and sustainable development. JCS believes that education is an integral part of achieving this goal and seeks to facilitate opportunities for Maya youth and adolescents to pursue higher education.

At the beginning of the school year in August 2006, MEF, in collaboration with JCS, initiated the first ever Maya scholarship program in southern Belize. Five out of seven scholars supported this year have successfully been promoted to second year. The scholars continue to demonstrate the highest level of academic achievement. All students engaged in a community service project throughout the year and have recently joined the Maya Youth Task Force of Southern Belize.

# Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope Girls Hope)

Information provided by Kristin Ostby de Barillas,  
Director of Latin American Operations

Esperanza Juvenil's (Boys Hope Girls Hope Guatemala) mission is to help academically capable and motivated children-in-need to meet their full potential. In Guatemala, Esperanza Juvenil provides value-centered, family-like homes, opportunities and education for over 50 children and youth. The children attend private schools in Guatemala City in the morning. The afternoon is reserved for extracurricular activities, including Spanish, Math, English, computer, music and Mayan culture and language classes at the Esperanza Juvenil Educational Center in Guatemala City.

The Maya Educational Foundation partnered with Esperanza Juvenil in 2006 to support eight Mayan girls who would not otherwise have the opportunity to continue with their education. The girls are of Tz'utujil, Kaqchikel and K'iche' descent and come from various regions of Guatemala. The girls have thrived academically and socially at Esperanza Juvenil, and MEF plans to increase the number of Maya students supported in 2008.



One of the highlights of 2007 was sending six Esperanza Juvenil scholars to Washington, DC to participate in the Inter-American Development Bank multimedia exhibit on Guatemala. Josefa and Edna, two of the MEF scholars, took part in this wonderful trip and returned to Guatemala to share their experiences of the Smithsonian museums and fresh snow with their friends and family.

Another highlight of the year was the inauguration of the new Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope Girls Hope Guatemala) Educational Center that took place on October 20. The Educational Center will house an elementary school for the primary level students, with an 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. school day and a space for the older children to attend classes and tutorials in the afternoons. The Center includes a computer lab; a library with excellent Spanish, Mayan language and English books; a multi-purpose dance room; a kitchen, a garden and five classrooms.

For more information, please visit  
[www.esperanzajuvenil.org](http://www.esperanzajuvenil.org)



*Students with volunteer*



*Josefa Reanda makes friends  
in Washington DC*



*Students at the computer lab of  
the new educational center*

This scholarship program does not just help a Maya child in high school but rather complete families who place their hopes in the advancement of a family member going to high school. The assistance is expanded even further to the community from which the sponsored child comes, for they feel a sense of pride when a community member graduates from high school.

Cristina Coc, Director of Julian Cho Society, says: *"Our vision for this scholarship program is like planting corn seeds which will provide our communities with a bountiful harvest in the near future. Together, in education, we strive to build stronger societies, who can be better able to address the numerous social, economic and cultural issues that plague this developing world."*



*Students in Belize, January 2007*





## Yax Te' Books

In alignment with our mission to preserve indigenous culture, in 2006 MEF began a collaboration with Yax Te' Books. The mission of Yax Te' is to produce and disseminate books and other materials that serve educational and cultural preservation goals for the Maya, in order to promote literacy, cultural awareness and global citizenship. Yax Te' Books is one of only a handful of publishing houses today that produces materials in indigenous languages of the Maya region. MEF is proud to support their activities.

The Co-Directors of Yax Te' Books, Laura Martin and Nadine Grimm, have continued their mission of promoting Mayan culture and distributing books by Mayas with a variety of activities and collaborations during the year. In October, Dr. Martin presented two lectures on Mayan weaving and identity in connection with an exhibition of Mayan textiles at the Anderson Gallery at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. She also participated in a "living exhibit" with Kaqchikel visitors, Master Weaver Domitila Curruchich and Florencio Calí, who were in residence at the gallery throughout the month. During the exhibit, many visitors saw and purchased copies of Yax Te's publication *The Clothing of Indigenous Women of Sumpango Guatemala*.

Through collaborations with other organizations, Yax Te' is supporting the development of Mayan Cultural Vacation Schools in Guatemala. These schools offer children cul-



turally-based instruction and activities during school vacations in November and December. The theme for this year is Mayan Culture and the Environment. Using a variety of materials and techniques, including some developed by Nadine Grimm, teachers learned how to integrate drawing and other art techniques into multidisciplinary activities that respond to different children's learning styles while promoting important Mayan values and cultural traditions.

Also this year, Yax Te' Books began distribution of the latest work by Q'anjob'al novelist and scholar Licenciado Gaspar Pedro González: *El 13 B'aktun: La nueva era 2012 (El fin del ciclo desde la óptica maya contemporánea)*, a timely account of Mayan philosophy and calendrics. Yax Te' is also making available, through an arrangement with Fundación Proyecto Lingüístico Francisco Marroquín, copies of the dictionary and grammar of Q'anjob'al, long out of print and unavailable.



For a complete catalog of books available and a gallery of activities, please visit [www.yaxtebooks.com](http://www.yaxtebooks.com)

### Maya Vacation School - August 2007



Participants paint natural forms using dry sticks



Personal books were made from recycled materials

# English Language Program

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Thoughts from a high school senior and program volunteer from Hanover, New Hampshire:

*“For me the whole experience was much more than teaching... It was a social learning encounter for both the teachers and the students. My favorite time was the recreational portion of the day. After classes the students had a real opportunity to ask us questions about vocabulary, while getting to know us in a more relaxed environment playing soccer games, basketball games, and hiking.”*

Pete Morrow

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Since 2003, MEF has sponsored a very successful program in Guatemala, in which volunteers teach English to Maya students who need to know English in order to advance in their studies or careers. The volunteers pay their own transportation and accommodations as well as the students' room and board for two weeks in December. The success of this program has led to a similar program in Mexico in 2006. This year, MEF has taken the English Language program one step further, by providing scholarships to enable four students in Guatemala and two students in Mexico to continue their English studies throughout the year at private language schools. MEF is grateful to the efforts of the volunteers who planted and nourished the seeds of this program.

Joanne Scobie, program volunteer for two years writes: “On December 2, 2007, 14 volunteers will meet at Hotel Los Pasos in La Antigua, Guatemala, to finalize details before meeting our Mayan students the next morning. We are 12 adults and two high school seniors with varying degrees of Spanish fluency. Our task is to teach conversational English. Each of us knows that for

the next two weeks, our abilities to tailor English conversation to students' needs will matter more than any Spanish facility we have brought. Some of us have traveled here to participate each of the four years of the program's existence. Yet, an air of anticipation always prevails.

Each teacher is matched with a student for a week of morning tutoring. During the second week, we exchange students. Almost daily, there is opportunity to do small group work, play language games, and take field trips. This year, we are planning to offer afternoon short book, article or story reading to facilitate comprehension and conversation. There will be field trips for us all to learn more about Mayan/Guatemalan culture. Evening movies at the hotel and sing-along events provide social opportunities.

The program begins each December with excitement, much pre-planning, and perhaps some nervousness about what we will find in a foreign country. It ends with camaraderie, new friendships made, and increased comfort with new language skills.”



*Volunteer teaching English to a university student in Antigua Guatemala*



*Students and volunteers, December 2006*



## Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads)

Oxlajuj B'atz' (OB) is a collaborative project funded by MEF, between two fair trade organizations, Mayan Hands and Maya Traditions. It has brought workshops to more than 300 poor Maya women weavers and artisans in fourteen Guatemalan highland communities since 2003. The purpose of OB is to effect change by empowering the women to improve the quality of their lives through their own efforts. The long-term goal is to create a resource center for women weavers and artisans in Guatemala where they can learn new skills that will help them succeed in their work.

Over the years, OB has introduced new techniques, such as pine needle basketry and machine sewing. Interested women received help to purchase sewing machines. These new skills allow them to have more control over what they produce and reap higher profits to benefit their families. Often the additional income is allocated to education for the children in the family.

This year, with the help of funding from the Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund and contributions by each woman of approximately US\$ 3.50 (one day's wages), OB was able to purchase eco-filters. Now 200 households have access to clean water, saving on the cost of boiling water or buying bottled water.

Learning about medicinal plants continues to be a priority for the participants. Workshops were held by



the Family Association of the Americas, an organization that uses drawings and hands-on practices to teach plant remedies. Women have reported good results curing common ailments and also an economic benefit because they do not have to buy medicines. Future medical campaigns in specialized areas like eye exams, dentistry and gynecology are being planned.

Visits by the program coordinators to the communities this year focused on exercises to strengthen and improve group organization. OB participated in and helped to organize a meeting among several women's organizations in Guatemala that have similar philosophies, in order to exchange information and resources, with the long-term goal of creating a loose association to benefit all. The first of what is hoped to be a regular series of meetings took place in La Antigua in June 2007 at a center for learning and training for Mayan Women. Representatives from thirteen organizations participated.

Plans for next year include more advanced work in small business administration. The goal is to help individual groups become self-sufficient and ultimately seek out other opportunities for work. Workshops in micro-credit programs will be offered for those who are interested.

For more information, visit [www.mayanhands.org](http://www.mayanhands.org) and [www.mayatradsitions.com](http://www.mayatradsitions.com)



*Workshop in Panajachel*



*Group activity*



## Sna Jtz'ibajom (The House of the Writer)



Sna Jtz'ibajom / Cultura de los Indios Mayas is an association of ten indigenous actors and writers based in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Their mission is to preserve and enhance indigenous



knowledge, culture and tradition, to promote native languages and literature, and to inform people about current social issues, their past and their rights. MEF has long supported Sna's work of education and outreach, scholarships and Mayan literacy courses. Sna administered MEF's university scholarship program for 14 students in 2007.

Juan de la Torre, Director of Sna Jtz'ibajom, reports that "Sna continues to carry out its diverse cultural projects, especially its indigenous-language publications and their Spanish translations. In February we published three books in the oral tradition: one from Zinacantán (in Tsotsil), one from Chamula (Tsotsil), and the third from Tenejapa (Tzeltal). Our goal is to strengthen, promote and develop appreciation for indigenous languages and literature. In July we started literacy classes in Tzeltal and Tsotsil for about 120 students in six communities.

Our theater performances are in high popular demand in communities, schools and universities. From January to October of 2007, we performed twenty educational and cultural plays. We present our plays not only in rural communities and towns but also in urban centers and outside Chiapas. Also, we staged photography exhibitions in San Cristóbal de Las Casas and in the cultural centers of Zinacantán, Chamula and Tenejapa. We produced bilingual radio programs, audio and videotape recordings, and photo archives. We try to help other organizations that request help with filming cultural and traditional events.

In the Maya-Zoque Arts and Sciences Program, part of the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas, Sna participates in researching the scientific, cultural, social and artistic knowledge of the Maya and Zoque people. The goal is to develop a model for scientific and artistic progress with special focus on indigenous people. We are also participating in a conference series *Reviviendo nuestra palabra* (Reviving our Word), which is taking place in different municipalities and towns in Chiapas.

All our projects benefit from the strong institutional relationships that we have developed with other organizations in our region. Efforts to revitalize our languages and cultures and the projects carried out by our Writers and Actors association have relevant impact on the development of our indigenous communities and society as a whole."



*Mayan literacy class*



*Training of instructors, literacy program*



*Book presentation in Nabenchauk, Chiapas, October 2007*



*Theater performance in a community in Chiapas*

## A New Collaboration: MEF & Maya Traditions

Maya Traditions/Tradiciones Mayas de Guatemala (TM) is both a fair trade textile business and a non-profit social service organization working with indigenous Maya women in the highlands of Guatemala. Its mission is to create opportunities for the women to celebrate their culture and to preserve the ancient textile tradition of backstrap weaving. Through their business and educational programs, Maya Traditions seeks to empower women to advance their economic status, to become community leaders, and to improve the well-being of their families. At the end of 2006, MEF began to support the educational programs within the social service area of Maya Traditions: a scholarship program, workshops for color and product design, and the promotion of Maya herbal knowledge and traditional healing through health education.

Marcelle Renkin, Coordinator of Education and Jane Mintz, Founder report that “the Tradiciones Mayas Scholarship Fund was created in 1997 in response to the needs expressed by the Maya weavers, who had great financial difficulty paying for the education of their chil-



dren. We saw scholarships as a way to benefit the women as well as their families. Our goal is to make scholarships available to all the children of the five weaving groups with whom TM works. In 2007, 125 scholarships were provided: 67 at primary school; 31 at middle school; and 27 at high school. The Maya Educational Foundation funded 18 of these scholarships for schools in 14 K'iche', Kaqchikel and Tz'utujil communities.

A dynamic component of the scholarship program is a two-month community service project (CSP), which allows the students to “give back” by teaching the women weavers for the two months of vacation at the end of the school year. The CSP requires students to participate in biannual workshops. The first workshop explores topics requested by the students such as cultural identity, discrimination, Maya history, youth issues, gang violence, alcoholism, and family disintegration. The second workshop prepares the scholarship recipients to give classes in their vacation time on topics requested by the women such as basic mathematics, spoken and written Spanish. The benefits of the scholarship program over ten years have shown an increase in the well-being of the women and their families.”

For additional information, please visit  
[www.mayatraditions.com](http://www.mayatraditions.com)



*Scholarship students at a workshop preparing for the community service*



*Luis, a gifted K'iche' scholarship student and high school graduate, teaches in Patanatic, Sololá about women's rights and the importance of voting.*



*Elementary school scholarship students from Chirijox, Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán*



# Amigos de San Cristóbal

*"We are gratified by the high percentage of repeat and generous donors who continue to support our projects. With the needs of the poor in Chiapas exceeding any one NGO's capacity, our umbrella organization continues to focus on projects which can improve education, health and economic well being, administered by competent and dedicated people."*

Lourdes Herrasti, President of Amigos de San Cristóbal, August 2007

Amigos de San Cristóbal is a group of local volunteers consisting of Mexican nationals and foreigners who live in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. A non-governmental, not-for-profit organization, Amigos finds and develops funding for proven charities which address the unlimited needs existing in Mexico's most impoverished state. In October of 2006, in keeping with its mission to support educational initiatives, MEF began a collaboration with Amigos and approved a grant to help fund three of Amigos' projects:

Through its program *Yó'tan Jnopjun* (Corazón del Estudiante/Heart of the Student), **Germinalia** provides scholarships to indigenous young persons from remote regions of Chiapas, who cannot afford to live in the city and pay for university expenses. Germinalia has been very successful in terms of preparing individuals to return to their communities as strong civic minded citizens. This year, MEF's funding helped provide a one year scholarship to the Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas for a deserving candidate.



**Madre Tierra México** is an organization focused on capacity building and development of human resources in indigenous areas that are characterized by low levels of education and information. MEF's funding will help train and educate participants in the "Sierra Health Promoters" program, which provides six workshops over a 12 month period. Participants from eight remote communities will learn about preventive health measures and be taught to provide medical attention as needed.

**Melel Xojobal** is an organization which has a strong track record of providing education for Maya children of street vendors, who otherwise would not be in school. MEF's funding was used in the production of educational materials which emphasize individual rights and mutual respect.

For more information visit [www.amigosdesc.org](http://www.amigosdesc.org)



*Rancheria Stan and Community*

*Temporary "homes" made of reclaimed tin found on river banks and trash bags for walls, August 2007, nearly two years after the devastating storm*



*Homeless victims of Hurricane Stan in southern Chiapas pose with visitors from Amigos de San Cristóbal in their community, which is served by the Sierra Health Promoters program*

# CIRMA (Center for Research of the Mesoamerican Region)

After almost 30 years of service to the Mesoamerican and International community, this social science research center in La Antigua, Guatemala, continues to focus on its mission with energy and strong leadership:



- to preserve and disseminate the intellectual and cultural heritage of Central America in CIRMA's library and its historical and photo archives while giving the public access to these resources;
- to promote research that will lead to new knowledge and perspectives about the region's past and present;
- to promote informative and constructive dialogue to help the region's population groups transcend the complex ideological and ethnic barriers that divide and debilitate present-day Guatemalan society, with the long-term goal of bringing about social change and a more just society for all.



*CIRMA's interior court and patio*

Within Guatemala, CIRMA continues its massive effort to promote dialogue and reflection on the problem of racism and ethnocentrism through interactive expositions, dialogue at the community level, and university activities. CIRMA's multinational, multidisciplinary and multiethnic staff carries out this work and, due to its own makeup, has the opportunity to experiment, confront and transcend many of the deep challenges facing Guatemalan and Central American societies.



*University scholarship students looking at a document in CIRMA's Historical Archive*

CIRMA houses some of the largest and most important bibliographic, documentary, and photographic collections in Central America—in its Central American Social Sciences Library, its Guatemalan Historical Archive, and its Guatemalan Photographic Archive—and has received two presidential awards, in 1998 and 2003, for its unceasing efforts to rescue, repatriate, organize, and preserve documentary and photographic materials important to the region.

MEF supports CIRMA's work to preserve, maintain and improve these outstanding collections. More than 2,800

donors have contributed materials to the collections, with an average of 7,500 visitors per year. Since 1996, 29 exhibitions of documents and photographs were organized and seen by more than 150,000 people in 17 cities and nine countries. In 2007, CIRMA reports an increase of 30 to 40 percent in usership for its photographic archive and historical archive. Among the visitors are international and national experts in the field of Latin

American history, delegations from Russia and Japan, the Guatemalan government, and many others.

New collaborative venues have opened up for CIRMA. Grant agreements have been signed, among others, with the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme to stabilize, organize, describe, transfer, and digitalize CIRMA's glass plate photo collections, and with the United States Institute of Peace to organize five photo and eight document collections that deal with Guatemala's Internal Armed Conflict.

In addition, CIRMA's global outreach for 2007 included its Study Abroad program, its recent new ties to Yuri Knorosov University in Russia, and the very successful exhibition *Imagining / Imaginando Guatemala, 1850–2006*, with photographs from the photographic archive collection. September 20 marked the opening of the exhibition at the Art Museum of the Americas of the OAS, in Washington, DC.

For more information, visit [www.cirma.org.gt](http://www.cirma.org.gt)



# FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya)



MEF has collaborated with FOMMA in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Mexico, in the educational aspects of its work. In addition to its well-known theatrical work, FOMMA offers vocational workshops and literacy training, and coordinates MEF's university scholarship program for 14 students.

Miriam Laughlin reports that the theater group has been particularly active in 2007, traveling to communities in the far reaches of the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Plays performed included *Viva la vida*, a play about death in childbirth, and *Crecí con el amor de mi madre*. Isabel Juárez Espinosa and Francisca Oseguera traveled to Buenos Aires where they presented scenes from various original plays. Also this year, FOMMA worked on their most challenging play to date, García Lorca's, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, adapting it to their own experiences in Chiapas.

Petrona de la Cruz has published two new plays this year, *Desprecio Fraternal* and *La tragedia de Juanita*. In September Isabel gave a talk in New York at the presen-

tation of *Words of the True People, Anthology of Contemporary Mexican Indigenous Theater*. A handsome volume by that title, edited by Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frischmann, and published by the University of Texas Press, includes plays by both Isabel and Petrona in three languages.

Meanwhile, the Hemispheric Institute for Politics and Performance is forging ahead with its promise to provide a roof for the new theater and Mayan Cultural Center. In addition to a theater, the building will offer ample space for workshops and offices.

Thanks to a grant from the Blossom Fund to MEF, FOMMA was able to offer courses in literacy, computers, tailoring, and childcare. These popular workshops help Maya women discover better options to improve the quality of their lives, ultimately leading to financial independence and increased self-esteem and pride about their ethnic roots. By strengthening the women, the program contributes to the stability of the Maya family and invariably affects and strengthens Maya society as whole.



*Women receiving basic foods supplies*



*Literacy workshop*



*Group activity*



*Theater troupe at the end of a performance in New York*



*Tailoring workshop*

# Chiapas Photography Project News

Since 1992, the Chiapas Photography Project (CPP) in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, has provided indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico with the rare opportunity to speak for themselves and to represent their own culture and history through photography. Education, outreach, collection, and research are all part of CPP's efforts. MEF is glad to support CPP, and this year has received a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, which has been assigned to the CPP endowment fund.

The 1995 creation and development of the Archivo Fotográfico Indígena (AFI, Indigenous Photography Archive) has been CPP's principal activity. Photographic works by over 200 men and women from ten different ethnic groups are represented in the AFI. Created and maintained by indigenous photographers, the archive now houses over 75,000 color and black and white images. Book publications, exhibitions, and talks are some of the outreach and education activities carried out by the photographers.



This year CPP published a limited edition portfolio to commemorate the achievements of the Maya photographers in the Chiapas Highlands. A portion of the income from the sale of the portfolios will be used to support the CPP endowment fund, which needs to grow to ensure long-term stability for CPP.

The Chiapas Photography Limited Edition Portfolio, *Mirror to Our World*, consists of 12 black and white images, numbered and signed by the photographers, and boxed in a hand-woven textile slipcase from Chiapas.

For more information about the portfolio, please contact Carlota Duarte, [cduarte@rscj.org](mailto:cduarte@rscj.org)

To learn more about CPP activities, please visit [www.chiapasphoto.org](http://www.chiapasphoto.org)

*Li Xtumine nutsbil lok'el yu'un sk'op riox  
Dominga, expulsada a causa de su religión  
Dominga, expelled for her religion*

Photograph by Xunka' López Díaz, 2001  
Chiapas Photography Portfolio



## Lok'tamayach (Mayan Photographers of Chiapas)

Created out of CPP in 2002, and still collaborating with AFI, Lok'tamayach is an independent organization of about 27 indigenous photographers, men and women from several ethnic groups, in San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Its priority is to promote artistic photography by indigenous photographers in the state of Chiapas for themselves and their communities.

Emiliano Guzmán Meza, Lok'tamayach member, photographer and teacher, reports: "This year, thanks to a grant from the Maya Educational Foundation, Lok'tamayach is



able to offer a series of photography workshops that will culminate in the installation of a photo exhibition in San Cristóbal next year. In addition to other skills, the workshop participants learn to use automatic as well as reflex cameras. Classes are held on Saturday afternoons, so that they do not interfere with work commitments and other weekday activities of the photographers."

For additional information, contact [loktamayach@yahoo.com](mailto:loktamayach@yahoo.com) and visit [www.chiapasphoto.org](http://www.chiapasphoto.org)



*Activities at a recent photography workshop*



# Notes from a Donor

I “discovered” MEF and its activities thanks to a note in the back cover of Ronald Wright’s book, *Stolen Continent: 500 Years of Conquest and Resistance in the Americas* (Mariner Books, 2005). Through support to MEF, I am helping a Mayan student to become an archaeologist, and so, in some ways, I can say that I’m becoming one myself.

I am utterly convinced that knowing and keeping alive traditions and past cultures is the real foundation on which a people can build its future. Moreover, learning and instruction are the most important ways to improve a people’s standard of living, as well as breaking down barriers between cultures.

By helping I feel I’m receiving more than I’m giving. I also feel that, eventually, helping a fellow human being fulfill his or her dreams and improve his or her life and the lives of other people, gives meaning to my existence in the balance of humanity.

Carlo Olivieri, October 2007, Roccatederighi, Italy

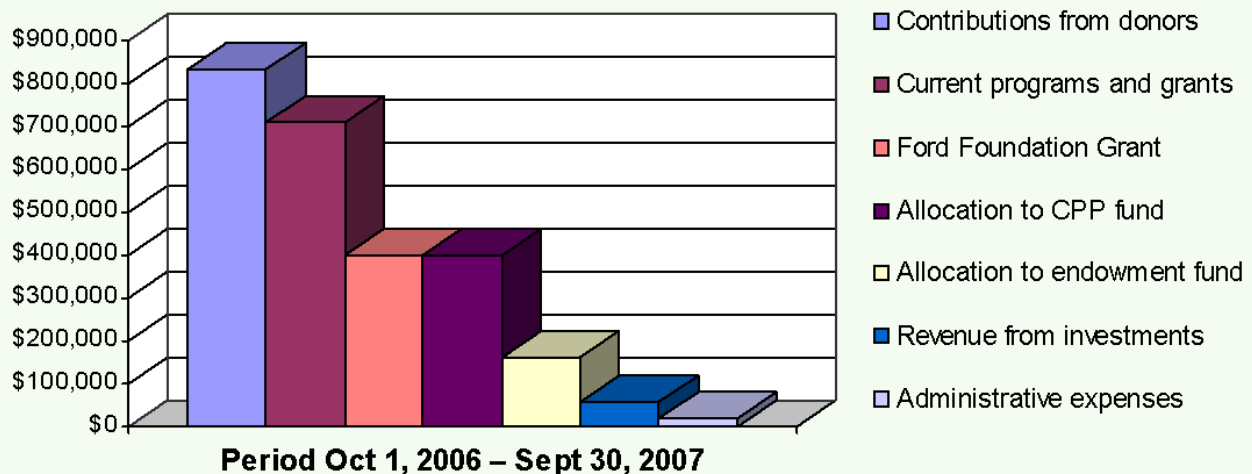
In addition to supporting a scholarship student, Carlo Olivieri has organized two exhibitions of photographs from Lok’tamayach, and books and postcards from the Chiapas Photography Project (see p. 14). The first took place in July in Roccatederighi, and the second was scheduled for the end of October and beginning of

November, in the town of Sassofortino. Proceeds from the sales of the photographers’ work are being donated to MEF to support the Chiapas Photography Project. MEF is inspired by the generosity and enthusiasm of this caring man.

## Money Matters

MEF’s finances for the period of October 1, 2006–September 30, 2007

Contributions from donors	\$ 831,760
Ford Foundation Grant to Chiapas Photography Project	\$ 400,000
Revenue from the investment of MEF’s portfolio	\$ 56,582
<b>Total income</b>	<b>\$ 1,288,342</b>
Support to current programs and grants	\$ 707,743
Allocation to CPP fund	\$ 400,000
Administrative expenses	\$ 19,703
Allocation to endowment fund	\$ 160,896
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,288,342</b>



# How You Can Help

There are different ways you can help MEF:

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 donating Frequent Flyer Miles to offer travel opportunities for Maya students, scholars and volunteers

by making a financial contribution

<b>How your donations help</b>	\$ 160 supports the education of a university student for one month.
	\$ 80 supports a student in high school for one month.
	\$ 40 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 a Maya 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

Route 106, P.O. Box 38, South Woodstock, VT 05071, USA

mayaedfund@aol.com • www.mayaedufound.org

Tel: (802) 457-1199 • Fax: (802) 457-2212

Yes! I want to support the Maya Educational Foundation projects

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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