

# Maya Educational Foundation

Providing educational opportunities



## 2009 Report to Contributors

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Dear Friends,

We have had another successful year, thanks to the careful planning and cheerful cooperation of our program partners. Even though the economic outlook remains unpromising, our work continues to provide important educational assistance to Maya children and adults in southern Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize. This letter highlights a few aspects of this year's work. The details are in the report itself, and I urge you to read it all.

Our Belize scholarship program this year is expanding to provide scholarships for ten students in the Tumul K'in Center of Learning. This unique school, located in the Blue Creek Village in the Toledo district of Belize, serves 60 students from an all indigenous population and stresses inter-cultural understanding. The Julian Cho Society (see p. 7), which currently manages other MEF scholarships in Belize, will coordinate this new program.

Growing out of an initiative of the English Language Program participants (see pp. 14-15), work has begun to develop and equip a bi-lingual (Kaqchikel/Spanish) library in the town of Tzununá, a rural community in the municipality of Santa Cruz la Laguna. As a result, this library has become a new project of the MEF (see p. 24).

We have been pleased and heartened by several successful collaborations between our partners to strengthen and expand the impact of their programs. The women of Cajolá participated this year in programs run by Oxlajuj B'atz' in the area of weaving techniques and design to aid in the marketing of their textile goods (see p. 19). They have also benefited from workshops on capacity building in order to manage their new egg farm. Fundación Tradiciones Mayas (see p. 12) offered a series of workshops in color and design for Oxlajuj B'atz' (see p. 19). FEPMaya students participated in a seminar organized by CIRMA (see pp. 4 and 21). The students from Esperanza Juvenil (see p. 13) visited FEPMaya and attended an enrichment session discussing the Popol Vuh. In Mexico, as a result of our relationship with Amigos de San Cristóbal (see p. 16), we are exploring ways to assist other programs in Chiapas. All these linkages cross-fertilize and enhance our work.

On the home front, we announce with great pleasure the addition of two new members to our Board, Dr. Pablo Chavajay, a psychologist originally from San Pedro la Laguna and now on the faculty of the University of New Hampshire, and Mitchell Denburg a long-time resident and businessman from La Antigua, Guatemala, as well as a gifted photographer who was a pioneer of the photo archive at CIRMA.

As our work becomes better known, more and more groups ask us for help. We turn down some because their work doesn't fall within our mission, but, thanks to your generosity and your continued support, we haven't had to turn anyone away whose work is vital and urgent and necessary. The Board and staff continue to do this important work, enabled and encouraged by your gifts of money, time, energy, and love. For this we are endlessly grateful to you. We are counting on you again this year.

With much affection,

Marilyn M. Moors

for the Maya Educational Foundation Board.

# Outreach to Students in Remote Areas

## New Scholarship Programs: Livingston, Michbilrixpú and Chenalhó

As we indicated in last year's report, we have been exploring new program initiatives in remote areas of Guatemala, Belize and Mexico. This year we have begun two new, small scholarship programs in Guatemala, one for four students in Livingston, and one for three students from Michbilrixpú who attend school two hours away in Salacuim, Alta Verapaz. In both places, students who manage to finish primary school are considered very lucky. The existing schools in both Michbilrixpú and Livingston are overcrowded and under-funded facilities lacking basic supplies and books. Education is by rote and, unless very motivated, students respond with boredom and apathy, with failing grades, absenteeism, and high drop out rates.

In **Livingston**, MEF currently aids the Asociación de Amigos para el Desarrollo de Livingston "Marcos Sánchez Díaz" whose mission is to provide educational opportunities and cultural preservation activities for the Garinagu, the Q'eqchi' and the Mopan, three indigenous minorities neglected by the Guatemalan government and by other NGOs supporting Maya groups in the Livingston area. The Asociación is currently supporting scholarships for promising students and the community library "Beluba Luba Fürendei," a small library open to children in school and to those whose parents cannot afford school for them. The library is the only free resource for children not in school regularly, but it is struggling to survive financially and could easily disappear for lack of funds. In 2009, MEF provided four scholarships, one for a *diversificado* student attending school in Jalapa, and three for middle school students, as

well as general support for the children's library. MEF also provided books in Garífuna, Mopan, Q'eqchi' and other Mayan languages to the library.

In **Michbilrixpú**, the only school is a one-room building which looks like a shack. It benefits, however, from the commitment of its only teacher and the backing of the whole community. The entire community is related by kinship, most descendants from the great-grandparents of the three scholarship students. They were the only three to complete primary school in 2008 and move from sixth grade to *básico*. They attend NUFED (Nucleo Familiar Educativo del Desarrollo) and must live in Salacuim during the week. At the present time this is the only option for Michbilrixpú students who are ready to attend a middle school or beyond.



Children and volunteer at  
Beluba Luba Fürendei Library, Livingston



Teacher and students in front of  
the grade school in Michbilrixpú

In both communities, the students have been doing well this year, and the scholarships have encouraged them to continue. There are many more applicants in Livingston and a few more in Michbilrixpú. As has been our custom, we start these programs small to see that they get firmly established and managed well before we expand them. The need is great, and as we begin to address it, we want to make sure that your support is in place, is well utilized, and gets to those communities where it makes the most effective impact.

## 2009 Scholarship Programs Summary

### University (69 students)

*Guatemala:* FEPMaya, Guatemala City and Todos Santos

*Chiapas, Mexico:* Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA in San Cristóbal de Las Casas and in the Chuj region

### Middle and High School (125 students)

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

*Chiapas, Mexico:* Chenalhó and Chuj region

*Belize:* Toledo District (Q'eqchi' and Mopan students)

### Elementary School (65 students)

*Guatemala:* Todos Santos, Maya Traditions and Esperanza Juvenil



Claudia Pérez Pérez, high school student

## Scholarship Program in Chenalhó

This year, the Maya Educational Foundation has begun a scholarship program for students living in and around San Pedro Chenalhó, a township in highland Chiapas, Mexico. The program will reach out to the most deserving and marginalized children in the area. Two high school students and one in middle school are currently enrolled and attending classes.

Since the Zapatista uprising in 1994, Chenalhó has seen much political violence as paramilitary activity has been the prevalent government response to the growing social justice movement in this township. Acteal, one of Chenalhó's northernmost hamlets, was the site of a massacre in 1997 which saw 45 women, children and men killed, all members of a Catholic social justice organization called Las Abejas (The Bees). Despite continuing threats to peace and

justice, the majority of the town's people are dedicated to peaceful co-existence. Many residents are involved in alternative economic and educational projects, including coffee and weaving cooperatives and autonomous schools. This township is an example of many such efforts in Chiapas to resolve conflicts and live in peace.

MEF Board member, Christine Eber, has been conducting research and applied work in the area since the mid 1980s and is aware of the great need for monetary assistance for young people to attend school past the sixth grade. Her parents, Linnea and Woodrow Eber, who visited Chenalhó in 1987, were both educators. Woodrow was a professor of accounting at Central Michigan University and Linnea a kindergarten teacher who embraced children with her whole heart and was passionate about seeing them realize their potential.

In their honor, MEF has established a scholarship fund to help Tsotsil students from the Chenalhó region. Although small now, we have great hopes that this program will grow through your generous contributions to MEF. With hard work, the students can bring home the skills and talents they need for personal growth and for the development of their communities.

Just imagine what a difference it would make for the township of Chenalhó to be able to offer educational opportunities to ten more students, year after year.



# FEPMaya Scholarships

The Fundación para los Estudios y Profesionalización Maya (FEPMaya), a Guatemalan non-profit organization, has had a busy and productive year. FEPMaya administers the MEF scholarships (*becas*) for 35 university students and offers the students a safe place to gather and to participate in its rich supplemental program of “parallel education” where students learn about their Maya roots and heritage. Lucía Sebaquijay, the becas supervisor, reports that in addition to the 35 university students, MEF scholarships also aided five students studying English, often needed for specific course work or diplomas. Twelve new scholarships were approved for 2009, among them several extraordinary cases and women seeking higher education.

The parallel education offerings this year were seminars and workshops on topics like choosing and carrying out a research project, indigenous history, and Mayan languages as reflected in present day speech, including internet blogs. One student presented a talk on healthy nutrition. Regular monthly meetings and an annual meeting requiring student participation foster community spirit and aid in developing self-confidence and professional skills. The students report to us how much they value, in addition to the financial help, the strong moral support given by FEPMaya staff and their fellow students, and the opportunities to master English.

Former scholarship student Flor Cotzoyay Yoc, who graduated with a law degree, was selected to be the new FEPMaya director. She is well aware of the economic, moral, and psychological support provided by fellow students and FEPMaya staff. Through this program, she received the tools to reach her professional objectives and a deeper



understanding of the richness and diversity of her Maya cultural heritage and the realities facing indigenous people today. She has been hard at work this year to strengthen FEPMaya’s organizational structure. She writes:

FEPMaya has become a source of hope for Maya men and women in Guatemala because of its focus on university education for indigenous people. The program rounds out the students’ university education with its seminars on social, psychological, political, cultural, and national issues of importance to the students. FEPMaya also stresses the worth and dignity of the students’ Maya origins, languages, identity and conscience so that, in their adult life and work, students can contribute to building their communities and their country, and make a difference in the world... Only through education can we create an inclusive and plurinational Guatemala.

For herself, FEPMaya was instrumental in her becoming a lawyer, in strengthening her ethnic identity as a Kaqchikel woman, and in enlarging her social awareness, prompting her to fight for the rights of the indigenous and excluded people in Guatemala. She says, “It’s possible that without a beca from FEPMaya, I would not be the woman I am today, proud of my identity, my language, my culture, and all the elements that make me the professional I am. Thank you to all who make FEPMaya possible. Its work really bears fruit, and I am proof of that.”



FEPMaya students and Esperanza Juvenil students discussing a manuscript on Xibalba



Tulum Bartolo Pérez Pais, Chuj student from Ixcán Quiché graduating as a lawyer and notary in November 2009

# Luis Juárez Quixtán – An Extraordinary Student and Musician

Seven years ago, a MEF board member attending a meeting with FEPMaya students was introduced to Luis Alberto Juárez Quixtán, a remarkably talented Maya composer and guitarist from Quetzaltenango. Funding shortages had deprived him of a FEPMaya scholarship, but he asked if he could meet the students and play some of his compositions for them. All in the gathering were awed and delighted by his brilliant performance.

With much dedication and resolve, he continued honing his skills and, a few years later, received scholarship funds from MEF and Aporte para la Descentralización Cultural (ADESCA), a promoter of Guatemala's cultural and artistic patrimony. Initially, Luis attended L' École Normale de Musique in Paris. Now, after three years attending several highly ranked music schools in France, he is a concert guitarist, well versed in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century guitar music and a composer and improviser in his own right.

Dividing his time between Paris and Guatemala, Luis frequently gives concerts when he is home and teaches music in Quetzaltenango and Guatemala City. He was invited to compose and perform music for the recently released film *The Myth of Time*, a full-length movie set primarily in Sololá with a cast of international and Guatemalan actors.

This year MEF approved a grant for Luis to complete another year of study in France. Upon his arrival in Paris, he was invited to become a member of a French guitar ensemble, which performed at the International Guitar Festival in November.

We expect great things from this exceptional young man. His example shows what other students can achieve if they develop their talents and skills and dedicate themselves fully to their studies.

For samples of his music and performances, please visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWpfnnS5UGc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWpfnnS5UGc) or [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LGFHbj0J8&translated=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LGFHbj0J8&translated=1).

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**POR LUCÍA HERRERA**

## Luis Juárez Quixtán ofrecerá un concierto en el que estrenará una de sus composiciones

**De origen quetzalteco, Luis Juárez Quixtán es un guitarrista que ha luchado por conseguir sus sueños, lleva tres años de estudio en la Escuela Superior de Música de París y, aunque continúa su preparación académica en Francia, considera que ya está preparado para presentarse ante un público.**

Antes de regresar a Francia, Luis ofrecerá un concierto mañana, a las 20 horas, en Casa del Águila, Distrito Cultural 4 Grandes Norte, vía 5, 1-23, zona 4. La admisión será de Q70.

Dentro del programa, el músico y compositor estrenará su obra *Rebellez*.

**«¿Cómo han sido estos últimos años en París?»**  
Me he dedicado a estudiar en la Escuela Superior de Música, además, este año ingresé en otro conservatorio, para ampliar mis conocimientos, y también estoy estudiando música antigua de los siglos XV y XVI. También participé en un ensamble de 36 guitarras que abrió un festival en Francia, y este año formamos un ensamble de improvisación en el que participan seis franceses, un venezolano y yo; con ellos ensayamos mucho y ya hemos presentado como nueve conciertos.

**«¿Quién es ahora Luis Juárez Quixtán?»**  
No soy nadie, pero intento tocar lo mejor que puedo la guitarra. Luego de que tomé un año, desentendiéndome de la música, y me dediqué a tallar madera y a leer para tener más claridad, todo es más fácil. Comencé a ser más personal, a estar agradecido por las cosas.

Toda la experiencia me ha hecho más sensible, me ha abierto más la mente y he aprendido a no limitarme a llevar todas las reglas escritas de la música. Además, sigo escribiendo, tengo en mente la publicación de un libro que seguro va a ser traducido al francés.

**«¿Cuales son sus planes para el futuro?»**  
Regreso a París el 20 de octubre, solo estoy esperando la respuesta de una beca, por eso no me he ido. Voy a seguir con el grupo de improvisación con el que queremos ir fuera de Francia. Los otros años me dedicué a estudiar y a prepararme. Ahora ya me siento listo para salir ante un público, tengo la necesidad de hacerlo. En Guatemala estuve muy motivado a escribir y a experimentar mucho, escribí arpeggios de varias obras guatemaltecas.

**«¿Qué presentará en este concierto?»**  
El estreno de mi obra *tonal Rebellez*, una palabra que creo no existe en español, que utilicé en un cuento, pero en francés es "despertarse". También, un arreglo mío del Rey Quiché.

**Luis Juárez Quixtán interpretó un fragmento de su composición.**

**De Xela a Paris**



## Jacaltenango Scholarship Program

The MEF program in Jacaltenango has been in place a long time, supporting Popti and Q'anjob'al speaking students so that they can attend middle and high school. Jacaltenango has schools where students can earn *diversificado* degrees and graduate with job skills as elementary school teachers, agronomists, accountants, mechanics, and computer technicians. These vocational secondary schools are in high demand and potential students are sometimes turned down to keep the schools from overcrowding. This was the case with one of the scholarship applicants this year.

The program coordinators, Mercedes and Victor Montejó, have provided significant support to the scholarship student by opening their house and offering rooms free

of charge to those who come from outlying communities, enabling these students to graduate with marketable skills at a lower cost to us than elsewhere, a very effective use of MEF funds.

The Montejos report that two young women graduated as teachers, both with Magisterio degrees, and that for 2009, two continuing students and four new ones received scholarships. This program has, so far, been able to meet the needs of students living outside Jacaltenango, but to help these students go further, room and board expenses must be found for schools and universities in Huehuetenango, Quetzaltenango, or Guatemala City. We need your support to help these students continue.



# Todos Santos Scholarship Program

MEF, cooperating with the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, has had a strong, long-standing scholarship program in Todos Santos, a Mam speaking municipality high in the Cuchumatán mountains. Economic pressures have stripped the town of most young and middle aged men who have left to find work elsewhere (many coming to the U.S.) in order to send money back to their families. The ten students in the scholarship program are from poor families without even that level of support. One student told us that his father left to go to the U.S. and has never been heard from again.

Within the township, Todos Santos provides primary and middle schools, but students desiring a vocational *diversificado* degree, a high school degree, or to attend a university must leave their families in Todos Santos and live in Huehuetenango or Quetzaltenango, an undertaking too costly for poor families. To qualify for a MEF scholarship, a student must show economic need, study hard, and have the moral support of his or her family. Families have to at-

tend meetings and stay in regular contact with the program supervisor, Felipa Jiménez. For scholarship renewal, students are required to maintain good grades.

Student Jun Kanek Pablo Pérez graduated with honors from high school in 2008. He began a program in architecture this year at the university in Quetzaltenango, but a serious illness and insufficient funds prevented him from continuing. His health has improved and the doctors have assured him that he can resume a normal life. If MEF can attract the contributions for adequate funding for his university studies, he plans to try again next year.

Felipa Jiménez reports that this year's group includes two new students, and that everyone else is on track to complete their educational programs without problems and with adequate grades. Of the three students who graduated this year, one was given the medal of excellence, another became a computer technician and the third one a school teacher.



*El Colegio "De La Salle"*

Otorga  
el presente Diploma

*H.*

*Cirilo Pérez Pablo*

Por haber concluido sus estudios en la carrera de

*Perito Contador  
con Orientación en Computación*

Huehuetenango, noviembre de 2009

*Guillermo A. de la Cruz*  
S.E. Angel a la Haza de Cifuentes  
Coordinador del Programa

*John Horacio Jasso Ruiz Zúñiga*  
Director Administrativo



Todos Santos students and parents  
with scholarship coordinator and MEF board member

*I remain very grateful for the opportunity of a scholarship for the past three years. Thanks to a program like yours, I was able to study and better myself, having become an accountant with a specialty in computer science. I hope that the vacancy left after my graduation is soon occupied by someone in need and a great desire to better him/herself.*

Cirilo Pérez Pablo,  
student from Todos Santos

# Belize Scholarships

*The scholarship program is fundamental to our effort to find access to quality education and to build future leaders for our community and our country Belize.*

Cristina Coc, Julian Cho Society

The Julian Cho Society (JCS) and the Maya Educational Foundation have completed another successful year of collaboration to assist underprivileged Q'eqchi and Mopan students in southern Belize. In this third year, we supported ten full time scholars attending the Toledo Community College and the Julian Cho Technical High School. Attendance would not be possible for these students without MEF's financial support which pays for school fees, uniforms, and textbooks.

The JCS, a non-profit, non-governmental, civil society and indigenous rights organization, works primarily in the defense of indigenous people's rights to land, education and justice in Belize. JCS has upheld the basic human rights of Q'eqchi and Mopan Maya people and has been active in seeking their security on their lands. Director, Cristina Coc writes:

Throughout the school year, the JCS staff and volunteers evaluate the progress of our scholarship students. We meet with parents to discuss their children's academic standing and their need for additional support or help. We attend school meetings to keep informed of changes in school or Ministry of Education policies. When we realized that some of our students were struggling in certain subject areas, we developed, with the help of Jennifer Simi, a volunteer, a peer tutoring program to rectify these problems. The students committed themselves to this work and have made good progress. Through our Youth Program, the JCS has included the students in extra training in human rights, cultural awareness, and expressive arts. The students and their parents 'give back' through community service projects.

A recent development in this program has been the decision, with the help of MEF, to support ten additional students in the Tumul K'in Center of Learning in Blue Creek Village, also in the Toledo District. This facility is unique in that it serves about 60 students, all indigenous, with a curriculum that emphasizes mutual understanding and cooperation. In reserving two of these new scholarships for Garinagu and Creole students, MEF and JCS wish to reinforce the intercultural initiatives offered by Tumul K'in.



Elvira Pop, honor roll student



Parent/student meeting with JCS staff



Students learning to weave and make pottery at the Tumul K'in Center of Learning



# Grupo Cajolá



Grupo Cajolá was formed in 2000 in Morristown, New Jersey as the result of a tragic traffic accident which left a young man injured. Unattended in the U.S., his family in Guatemala brought him home where he later died. The Morristown Maya from Cajolá decided that this should not happen again and they organized themselves

to watch over each other and other fellow countrymen faced with problems of illness, accidents or death while in the U.S. Over time, the work expanded to include the ways they could benefit their hometown of Cajolá. In 2005 a group from Morristown returned to Cajolá and formed a self-help and development organization there which was named Grupo Cajolá en Cajolá. These two groups work with each other and with another group of Cajolenses living in Atlanta.

MEF supports Grupo Cajolá's scholarship program which began in 2006 with five students and currently has twenty (eleven girls and nine boys), all in middle and high school. This year, three students finished their middle school and another three their high school education. For 2010, the scholarship program will help three students go to university. The program requires the students to participate in meetings to develop their commitment to education, to their community, and to the Maya culture. At first these meetings were monthly, with topics like good study habits, and what it is like to be a human rights lawyer. Currently, the students attend a weekly four-hour class covering mathematics (a nearly universal weakness), politics and Maya cosmovision.

Grupo Cajola in Cajolá coordinates several projects, a scholarship program, a chicken farm, an internet center and library, and a weavers' cooperative. Through its connection to MEF, Grupo Cajolá has taken advantage of the programs of Oxlajuj B'atz' (see p. 19) to develop quality woven products for sale. An Oxlajuj B'atz' field worker conducted workshops with weavers, and taught administrative skills like organizing work schedules and administering funds. A second Oxlajuj B'atz' field worker met with the chicken farm group to help structure a cooperative to run the egg farm.

MEF congratulates Caryn Maxim, a long-time Grupo Cajolá inspiration and supporter, on being chosen for the "Outstanding Contribution to the Community" award of the Morristown Neighborhood House, in recognition of her work on behalf of the Cajolense community.

For more information, visit their website [www.grupocajola.org](http://www.grupocajola.org)



Learning to use sewing machines



Receiving chickens for the egg farm



Weaving cloth on a mechanical loom



Scholarship students

*With my heart I say to you, donors of the scholarships, THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the economic, moral, and emotional help that you have given me..., because if it hadn't been for this, I wouldn't have been able to complete my studies. But today I can say, I am the new change in my society and in my country. ...the scholarship can open new fields of knowledge for us. ...you have been bridges for many people.*

Ovidio Jiménez Ramos, Cajolá student who graduated this year as a teacher



# Benjamin and Lois Paul Scholarships

Ben and Lois Paul were two renowned anthropologists who worked in the area of San Pedro la Laguna on the western shore of Lake Atitlán between the late 1940s and the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their contributions, both to anthropology and to the lives of the people of the area, were so significant that the Tz'utujil people named a school in San Pedro for them and observed three days of mourning when Ben died in 2005. Ben was an early supporter of the Maya Educational Foundation, and to honor them we have established a scholarship fund in their name. For four years we have awarded scholarships to Tz'utujil speaking young people.

There are five current students in the program, four from the Guatemalan Costa Sur, a region south of the lake where the Maya people have been ignored and neglected more than in other parts of the country. In the Costa Sur, Maya are largely outnumbered by non-indigenous people and feel the bite of discrimination more keenly. This year's new students come from Aldea la Concepción, near San Antonio Suchitepéquez, a small community squeezed between sugarcane, cacao, and coffee *fincas* (plantations), and also squeezed by a lack of schools and health care. Students must travel seven kilometers to attend a regular school. Their parents work in the *fincas* for the minimum wage, less than \$5 a day.

Program director Ajpub' Pablo García writes:

Because of the logistical and financial strains... the boys and girls mostly do not go to school and decide to work with their parents on the *fincas*. [However], the students we are helping are examples for others showing that the way to get ahead and leave poverty behind is through education. Education will allow them to find a path to a better life in the near future, first for the students and later for the family and the community. It is a pleasure for us to work with MEF and to help advance these young people in their development and education.

Of the two women students who graduated in 2008 with bi-lingual teaching degrees, he says:

The door that MEF opened for these two teachers was a great gift for the students and their families. One of the women is already working under contract for the Chicacao municipality, the other is working in a school nearby. The support MEF gave to them is a big step in the students' lives because now they have already succeeded in helping their families and they can continue to work or study on their own. Thank you to all who have helped in one way or another so that these young women were able to achieve their dreams of being educated professionals.

Ajpub' also serves on the Board of Directors of Esperanza Juvenil (see p. 13) where six other Tz'utujil students have full scholarships.

Tz'utujil scholarship students



Andrea Rocche (center)



Carlos Quila Morales



Delfina Pop Socop



Roberto Vicente Chocoj

## Upcoming Scholarships

This year, the MEF board of directors approved a grant to Pueblo a Pueblo, a non-profit organization working in the Santiago Atitlán region of Guatemala. Through their Child Education Program, they will monitor scholarships for 20 Tz'utujil Maya

sixth grade students in the Panabaj and Chukmuk elementary schools in 2010. Pueblo a Pueblo provides services in the communities still struggling from the effects of Hurricane Stan. Learn more about their work at [www.puebloapueblo.org](http://www.puebloapueblo.org).

# Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural Paxil

Colegio Paxil is a private school in the poor but bustling town of Nebaj in the Ixil speaking region of Guatemala, currently serving 45 students of diverse backgrounds in the three middle school grades (*básico*). Nebaj has seen the development of a number of new private middle schools, some of them free, and most of them run by Protestant missionaries. MEF continues to help this struggling school because it alone puts a great emphasis on Ixil Maya traditions and on the promotion of cultural values and intercultural understanding. In addition to its academic curriculum, the school involves students and their families in a variety of cultural events throughout the year. A grant from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation enabled the Colegio to acquire musical instruments and offer music instruction and textile classes to its students.

Students, teachers, parents and grandparents came together this year to celebrate Maya rituals. At the end of the Mayan calendar year, all asked for blessings from their spirit guides so that their work and studies would go well in the next year. In February, they went to Canton Xebac, the seat of the indigenous *alcaldia* of the three Ixil municipali-



ties, to receive Laval l'q' (10 l'q'), the bearer of the new year. In a gathering that included Maya from all over Guatemala and foreigners from China and Bolivia, Colegio Paxil was the only school to participate in this special celebration. Students and their families also celebrated the Day of Friendship, took part in the Day of Sports and a day of Thanksgiving.

In April, grandmother Doña Xhivla'j gave a talk at the school, telling the students about her lack of education but how her children and grandchildren have studied hard, with some even earning their undergraduate *licenciatura* degrees. She spoke about the cultural values of the Ixil Maya people, about spirituality, healing with medicinal plants, and about the Maya value of hard work.

The teachers at Colegio Paxil work for very little pay since most families are poor and can barely pay their children's tuition. MEF is impressed with the dedication of the board members and the teachers, with the parental involvement and with the students' willingness to embrace their cultural heritage. This special school, now in its seventh year, is worthy of our continued support.



Celebrating the Maya new year



Celebrating the Day of Friendship



Participating in the O'q'ii (the five sacred days) ceremony



Grandmother Xhivla'j addressing the students



Cultural night



Sports tournament among nearby schools



# Chuj Scholarships and Literacy Project in Chiapas

The Chuj Maya live in a region that includes parts of western Guatemala and eastern Chiapas, Mexico. They maintain strong ties despite the border, drawn in the 1800s, and the effects of the civil war in Guatemala which forced many Guatemalan Chuj to flee to Mexico and live as refugees in the 1980s and 90s. Now, about 6,000 Chuj live in 36 settlements in the area of Tziscão, the largest Chuj community in Mexico.

Most of the Chuj refugees from Guatemala are now Mexican citizens, but the Mexican government continues to deny the Chuj, both those born in Mexico and those naturalized later, their own cultural heritage. They are forced to live in confined communities with little land for farming in a region where there are few other job opportunities. The few government-built schools do not offer any intercultural education and they are located far away so that most students walk an hour or two each way, a grave safety concern, especially for girls.

In 2006, MEF began a scholarship program with the Sociedad Cooperativa “Productores Alternativos de la Selva” (PAS) to assist Chuj students in this area. Seven students are currently enrolled, four young women and three young men. PAS supports two and MEF five, including the first and only Chuj woman from Chiapas to pursue a university degree.

The Chuj have a keen awareness of their recent history, their ancestral heritage, and their cultural wealth, but they know that if nothing is done to keep the Chuj language alive, that heritage and history will vanish, and younger generations will lose their identity as Chuj. Many people want to learn to read and write Chuj, so MEF is assisting them by financing the compilation and production of a Chuj language manual and related materials. The compilation has been completed and the printing and distribution will soon follow. A few adults and one of the students will organize literacy classes and train others to teach Chuj, the first step to maintaining a bi-lingual core of Chuj-Spanish speakers and preserving their past and future.

Lena Pascual Gómez,  
Chuj from San Lorenzo,  
La Trinitaria, Chiapas,  
graduating from the  
Escuela de Partería  
Profesional, July 2009



## In Memoriam



### Lorna Opatow

We fondly remember Lorna Opatow who passed away unexpectedly at the end of 2008. Lorna was Vice President and Treasurer of the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, which supports many projects that improve the lives of indigenous women and children in Latin America.

We very much appreciated Lorna's unwavering support, her good humor, outstanding work, her insights and helpful comments. We admired her great commitment to the cause of the indigenous women and children of Guatemala and beyond. We miss her.



### Jane Mintz

We are sad to report the recent passing of Jane Mintz, a social worker and weaver who founded Maya Traditions in 1988 to help indigenous women improve their lives through meaningful work, fair pay, and access to the fair trade global marketplace. She also initiated health, education and artistry programs benefiting many women

and their families in Guatemala. Jane's passing leaves a huge gap because she made an impact on the lives of so many people through her actions, her friendships and her commitment to weave cultural identity with opportunity. Her work and vision will carry on through trusted colleagues and friends of Fundación Tradiciones Mayas (see article on next page).

# Fundación Tradiciones Mayas

Maya Traditions (Fundación Tradiciones Mayas or FTM) was created to provide opportunities for Guatemalan women artisans and their families through fair trade for their products and the implementation of social, health and educational programs. In 2009, with support from MEF, FTM was able to offer 125 scholarships to the children of their women members: 59 for elementary school, 33 for middle school, and 33 for high school.

FTM's scholarship programs furnish additional support to these students through the work of its program coordinator, Marcelle Renkin, who makes regular visits to the communities where the students live, holding discussions with the students and their parents. Through individual and group conversations, she reinforces the students' motivation, assists with study techniques, and helps them overcome problems of living and studying in isolated communities with limited library or Internet access.

The scholarship students, in turn, are required to attend two annual workshops, and, during their vacations, create and implement a service project which will benefit their mothers and other women artisans in their communities. In April, FTM collaborated with WINGS Youth



program (<http://wingsguate.org>), whose mission is to improve the lives of Guatemalan families by providing family planning education and access to reproductive health services, to present a workshop to the older students on sexual and reproductive health, an area in which the students lacked information and decision-making skills.

The students asked many questions and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to learn more about these issues.

In November, 32 students attended a two-day workshop on Environment and Climate Change, an especially relevant topic since Lake Atitlán has recently been covered by blue-green algae. Their community projects this year will deal with ways in which everyone can make positive changes to help the environment.

The 33 high school students will soon be ready for college, and Maya Traditions and MEF want very much to be able to find the funds for those who want to continue their studies at a university. It will take the support and generosity of more donors, and we hope to be able to assist them. Your help is needed.

For additional information and to learn about other FTM projects, please visit [www.mayatraditions.com](http://www.mayatraditions.com)



FTM students  
at a workshop  
on environment  
and climate  
change



The color  
wheel and design  
creation workshop





# Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope Girls Hope Guatemala)

MEF has worked with Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope, Girls Hope Guatemala) for several years and currently supports 13 Maya children at their educational center. Their mission is to provide motivated and talented children in need with the opportunity for quality education in value-centered, family-like homes. At the present time, 52 children and youth live as residential scholars, receiving academic, emotional, physical and spiritual support year-round while also having regular contact with their families. Esperanza Juvenil also has 21 children participating as day scholars and seven young people studying at the university. The latter give back to the program by helping with administration and serving as mentors and role models for the younger scholars.

At the primary level, children attend the Esperanza Juvenil Elementary School. Middle and high school residential students attend private schools in Guatemala City and receive tutoring and academic reinforcement at Esperanza Juvenil daily. In addition to their schoolwork, they receive art, music, dance, soccer, and swimming lessons. They go on campouts with their Scout troops, and participate in local churches. They go on cultural and educational trips, have visits from local and international leaders, and repay the community through volunteer work.

Directors Kristin Ostby and Lucas Pinzón write to thank MEF and its friends for their ongoing support and



report that, since January 2009, a number of Maya children from the capital have joined Esperanza Juvenil as day scholars. They have seen a large increase in the number of applicants, in part because their program has become more widely known, but also because the economic crisis has hit Guatemala's poor especially hard.

To help meet this need, Esperanza Juvenil is growing. It will open a new girls' home in December 2009 to serve 13 girls with six spaces reserved for Maya girls. Its educational center will soon double in size, because various grants and the pro-bono service of an architect have enabled them to purchase the building next door and make plans to connect it to the existing building. They hope it will be ready next summer. Esperanza Juvenil has also received permission from the Ministry of Education to open a middle school, and will thus be able to offer a 7<sup>th</sup> grade in 2010 and add the two following grades in the next two years.

MEF congratulates Esperanza Juvenil on this most outstanding program. Our ability to take advantage of their expanded space will depend on your generous contributions to MEF to give Maya students the remarkable step up this program offers.

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



Residential program



Elementary school



University scholarships

# A Look Back at the First Five Years of the MEF English Language Program 2003–2008

By Jane Greenberg

It all started in 2003, in Lebanon, New Hampshire, at the home of Eulalia and Enrique López, of Q'anjob'al origin, and their two children. Eulalia was my English student, and I admired her ambition and her desire to learn English. Each week, when we met for conversation, she told me parts of her life story. The story amazed me. It showed a woman's courage and strength at a young age. We became friends. During one session, Eulalia introduced my husband Bob and me to her friend, Armando Alfonzo of the Maya Educational Foundation.

It was then that the first seeds of what would become MEF's English Language program were planted in our heads. Armando asked if we might know of an English teacher willing to go to Guatemala to teach some of the FEPMaya university scholarship students that were supported by the MEF program (see p. 4). We didn't know of a particular teacher looking for employment, but we suggested we could find volunteers who would be willing to go and teach for free.

Bob and I made posters and held meetings in Norwich, Vermont and Hanover, New Hampshire. We contacted friends and former colleagues from as far away as California. Eventually, we found ten interested people, wrote a curriculum for a two week English language course, and held organizational meetings to discuss travel requirements, teaching approaches, etc. In December of 2004 we found ourselves at a small hotel in La Antigua, Guatemala. Lucia Sebaquijay, from FEPMaya had recruited 24 students, so we had two per teacher that first year. The students stayed in homes of families in Antigua. We taught in the mornings and took a few afternoon field trips together to places like a macadamia nut farm and the homes of two students who lived in Maya towns nearby.

I'd been a pre-school and kindergarten teacher, and Bob had done some teaching at the university level. Thus, first day "jitters" were not new to us, but we were all nervous to some degree. What if our students didn't return to our classes the second day? What would we do then? We spent

our first morning getting to know the young Guatemalan men and women who were our students and found that all of us had a lot to learn about them, Guatemala, and the culture and history of the Maya people. None of us was prepared for the stories of their young lives. Like Eulalia, they demonstrated courage and strength, and their lives had, each one, been touched by *la violencia*, Guatemala's 30-year civil war. Some fled their homes for Mexico, or hid in the mountains, or watched their family members taken away never to be seen again. And yet, in spite of these hardships, they shared a belief in the importance of developing their abilities so that they would be able to give back to their communities and families.

The second day of class, all the students returned. Some even arrived early, ready to meet with their teachers. As the two weeks flew by, we were amazed by the dedication and progress of our students. They were so polite and so appreciative that it wasn't until we read their evaluations, that we learned they wanted to practice their English in the afternoons for conversation as well as in the mornings.

For the next four years of the program, we usually had 14 or 15 volunteers, and we each taught only one student at a time, changing student-teacher pairs at the end of the first week. The curriculum evolved, as we discovered more effective methods for teaching, while trying to incorporate the suggestions and needs of our students. We added afternoon programs and evening events too, for example, book discussions, movies, conversations about health care and politics, and basic grammar for beginning level students. We have played sports together, held parties, taken salsa lessons, sung and played music, and have even been led by our students on tours of Antigua. We often were gifted with the return of a student for a second year. Close bonds developed between teachers and students, and many of us visited their homes and families after the two-week sessions ended.

What can our students really learn in two weeks of English classes? No one can master a language in such a

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*It was a real privilege to visit the English Language Program in La Antigua in December of 2008. I spent a couple of days getting a sense of the group and their activities. There was such a wonderful dynamic, whether the activity was a lively phonetics class with the whole group or focused tutorials with one teacher and one student. I was tremendously impressed with the abilities and enthusiasm of everyone, the volunteers and in particular the students, who have been challenged by so many obstacles in life to get a university education.*

Carol Hendrickson, MEF Board member



## English Language Program (continued)

short time, but, our students, each one with a different level of English ability, all learned to stand in front of a group and give a short –sometimes a long– talk in English. They hear English spoken by a native speaker, and they practice diction. For some it is the

impetus for further and more serious English language studies that they will need for graduation and for study or a fellowship in another country. They all learn that we teachers from the United States are interested in their lives and support them in their roles as active

Maya Guatemalan citizens.

The students have touched our hearts with their stories, courage and friendship. We love learning of their progress towards their degrees, getting jobs, scholarships for further study, and their new life stories that often include spouses and children. Many teachers have returned to teach for several years. It is impossible to express how the students have touched our lives. Laurie Levinger, a five year volunteer teacher was so moved by the students' life stories that she wrote a book, *What War? Testimonies of Maya Survivors*, that captured their testimonies of *la violencia* and has now been published in Spanish and English (see Yax Te' Books, p. 23). Karen Nielsen, another five year volunteer teacher, has worked with local people to create a library in the small town of Tzununá on Lake Atitlán (see p. 24), not far from where many of our students grew up. And each of us has been shaped and enriched by the experience of knowing and working with these extraordinary young men and women.

In 2010 ELP volunteers will gather in La Antigua in January for another two weeks of English instruction. The volunteers will be led by Laurie Levinger and Jean Beckord, both dedicated teachers from previous years. Bob and I are grateful to them and to MEF for giving us this experience. And, of course, we are most grateful to Eulalia and Enrique López, who first introduced us to the Maya Educational Foundation.





# Amigos de San Cristóbal

Amigos do San Cristóbal was formed in 2004 to improve the lives of the many disadvantaged residents of Chiapas, Mexico in the areas of health, education and economic well-being. Amigos is a membership organization and the dues of members support administrative expenses so that almost all donations can be assigned to one or more of the non-governmental organizations with which they work. Grant requests are solicited, and projects are selected and funded on an annual basis. The Amigos Board works actively to expand both their membership and their donor base, in addition to seeking grants from other organizations so that they can extend their outreach.

MEF accepted Amigos as a program in 2006 and has supported Amigos projects focused on education. One is **Hogar Comunitario (HC)**, a group assisting women and their children who are victims of domestic violence and providing a transitional home to pregnant women in need. In 2009, HC conducted more than 150 workshops on health and personal safety topics. It also organized classes for children of single pregnant women, helping them to develop their physical and social skills, to learn mutual respect, and to motivate them to become positive contributors to healthy family life.

Another Amigos-supported organization this year was **Germinalia**, a group providing mentoring to students from rural and indigenous areas of Chiapas. Through its program *El ingenio*, Germinalia helps students develop skills in the areas of language and linguistics, mathematics and science, technology, artistic expression, social sciences, human development, and the environment. They focus on students with educational problems and offer tutoring, along with study support, motivation, physical and emotional health and safety education. The program's success has led to its adoption for high school and secondary school students and for some non-students as well.



Amigos also helped **Sueniños**, a learning center working with impoverished children from the outskirts of San Cristóbal de Las Casas. Sueniños after school programs provide an important physical and social component of the learning experience, focusing on early

childhood education and development. The success of their programs led to the creation of *Suenicos*, an after school pilot project intended to work directly in community schools. At the school in Colonia 5 de Marzo, both the young participants and their parents have been enthusiastic about the “read and play” program for 5 to 7 year old children, which seeks to improve motor skills, teaches shared responsibility, and instills the joy of reading.

**Madre Tierra México** works to promote good health and sanitation among a population of 3,862 inhabitants of 42 small mountain communities in the High Sierras in southern Chiapas. This year, ten volunteer “health promoters” received one week of training each month and returned to their home communities to teach and train their fellow villagers in good health and sanitation practices. On November 21, 2009, Madre Tierra achieved one of their dreams and proudly celebrated the opening of their *Casa de Salud Campesina*, a clinic which will contain a pharmacy and will provide basic health care for people in the rural areas they serve.

For additional information about Amigos de San Cristóbal, please visit [www.amigosdesc.org](http://www.amigosdesc.org)

Sueniños  
students



Madre Tierra's health promotion and community development



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



Sna Jtz'ibajom (The House of the Writer), a long-time MEF partner, is located in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. For 25 years it has worked to strengthen and promote their Maya Highland heritage through the revival, teaching, and development of Mayan languages and the Maya culture. This year, Sna's main activities were focused on literacy, on the production of an anthology, and on the continuation of their work in theater, radio, video productions, and photography. They also supervise MEF scholarships for 16 university students.



Sna's literacy program is in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year, teaching children, young people and adults to read and write their spoken Tsotsil and Tseltal Mayan languages. This encourages and strengthens both the languages and the speakers' feelings of cultural identity. Sna held two teacher training courses and gave six-month courses in nine communities within the Tenejapa, Zinacantán, and Chamula municipalities. These communities were chosen because they lacked educational and cultural activities and had few opportunities for development. The demand for these classes was great and, instead of 180 students, Sna finally enrolled 203, all of whom graduated. To date, close to 8,000 individuals have learned to read and write a Mayan language in this program. A donation of US \$45 allows one individual to participate in the entire six month course.

Sna Jtz'ibajom is proudly celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary by compiling a bilingual anthology of its foundation and history. The text, in Tsotsil and Tseltal with Spanish translations, will describe their 25-year effort to rescue and strengthen the cultural values of the Maya in Chiapas, and will contain oral traditions recorded from interviews with elders and community leaders.

Sna's radio productions this year included programs on environment, culture, education, and music and culminated in three CDs of music from the three Maya municipalities. These were presented at school and official events reaching over 400 attendees. Sna made video documentaries about the *Ch'ulmetik ta Banabil* ceremony and the *Ceremonia curativa en la Cueva de Tz'ajal ch'en* in Tenejapa which will be used for educational purposes. They also continue their photography of community events and theater performances. They are also engaged in a project of organizing and classifying their photo images for future exhibits in indigenous communities.

For more information, visit their website <http://anthropology.si.edu/maya> or <http://psch.org.mx/snajtzbajom>.



Gathering of Maya and Zoque thinkers and promoters



Theater play, *When Maize Was Born*



Literacy classes



## FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya)



FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya or Strength of the Maya Woman) is located in San Cristóbal de las Casas and was founded in 1994 as a cooperative by two Maya women playwrights. Since then, this active NGO has worked to provide support to indigenous women, their children, and other indigenous adults with few resources through programs and workshops aimed at promoting productive, educational, and cultural skills.

This year, with funding from MEF, FOMMA taught classes in tailoring, baking, literacy, and basic computer skills. Some of the participants have been able to start their own businesses. Classes in Tsotsil and Tzeltal, the main Mayan languages of the region, allow Maya people, young and old, to learn to read and write in their own language. Day-care is provided for children while their mothers study.

FOMMA administers MEF scholarships for 15 university students and four students in English language programs. They also supervise five graduate students currently receiving Ford Foundation grants. As part of their scholarship responsibilities, students assist FOMMA's programs in various ways, teaching in the literacy program,

leading workshops, undertaking administrative work, and helping in the nursery. Thus they become valuable and active partners in FOMMA's work.

Theater is a very important vehicle for empowering women at FOMMA. Theater workshops produce short plays on the plight of indigenous women and give women a chance, through their participation, to share individual experiences, to come together to defend their rights and to increase their self-esteem. The focus on body movement and discourse helps women overcome their shyness and fear of speaking in public. The women have traveled far and wide with their plays impressing many audiences in Mexico and abroad.

In 2008, FOMMA, in partnership with the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, inaugurated the Centro Hemisférico/FOMMA, a collaborative research center and performance space in San Cristóbal. The Centro has networked with local artists, artist collectives, and many other indigenous and women's organizations, cultural advocacy groups, universities and regional institutions to form productive and stimulating partnerships for collaboration in Chiapas and abroad. Centro Hemisférico/FOMMA now draws a wide range of people who come to perform, exhibit, and hold conferences in this new space. In the past year, these groups hosted roundtables on topics such as human rights and the problem of violence against women. All these activities broaden the resources available to indigenous women in the Chiapas area.



For additional information, please visit  
[www.hemi.nyu.edu/fomma](http://www.hemi.nyu.edu/fomma)  
[www.institutohemisferico.org](http://www.institutohemisferico.org)

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**FOMMA** Av. Argentina #14, Esq. con Real de Mexicanos  
Barrio de Mexicanos, San Cristóbal de las Casas  
Cooperación mínima \$50  
Cupo limitado. Para registrarse, por favor llama al: **678-6730**



Theater play



# Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads): The First Five Years

Oxlajuj B'atz' (OB), or Thirteen Threads, a resource center for Mayan women's education and empowerment based in Panajachel, Guatemala, has been a project of MEF since its inception. Proudly completing five years of operations this year, OB reports that what started out as an 18-month pilot project, designed to provide resources to 16 groups of artisans already working with two fair trade organizations, Mayan Hands and Maya Traditions, has turned into a viable, useful and valued organization in its own right.

Today, OB has expanded to serve over 400 Mayan women from 21 rural Guatemalan communities. OB facilitators make monthly community visits, communicating in the appropriate Mayan language (K'iche', K'aqchikel, Mam, Tz'utujil, and A'chi). This year, the focus has been on group administration for self-sufficiency, and includes themes on group division of responsibilities, management of funds, decision-making, and resolution of group conflicts.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, administered by MEF, OB has added six new women's groups over the past year, while continuing to support its original 16. Each new group is centered around at least one income-generating activity, whether it be weaving or basket-making, or any of a diverse array of projects. For example, OB now has groups working on candle-making, natural shampoo production and even chicken raising. The word is out and more and more local communities have begun seeking assistance from OB in hopes of receiving capacity-building assistance, too (see article on Grupo Cajolá, p. 8).

When interviewed, participants consistently express sincere appreciation for the skills and knowledge that OB has given them. Over the past year, OB has offered sew-



ing classes (funded by the Como Foundation), a soap-making workshop, and rug-hooking training using recycled materials, all designed to advance the women's skills and generate more income. The response from the rug-hooking workshop, taught by US-based artist Mary Anne Wise, was so positive that a three-week follow up workshop is planned for January and February of next year.

The non-profit, Build-A-Nest ([www.buildanest.com](http://www.buildanest.com)), has also begun working with four of OB's groups. NEST provides loans for supplies, as well as training, and then participants repay these loans with their artisan products. In September, NEST supported a week-long natural dye workshop at the Indigo Arts Center in Antigua for three women from each group.

OB, as an organization, is growing, as well. An ambitious proposal of goals and objectives for the next three years (2010–2013) has been developed, presenting a variety of innovative and creative ideas for transitioning into a more democratic and sustainable operation. To prepare for this new phase, OB recently welcomed a Development Coordinator who will focus on developing a plan for financial sustainability, and has begun working with a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to design a plan for measuring the impact of its work.

The plan for the future is a tall order; no doubt there will be many challenges. However, everyone is inspired to see it through to fruition. OB hopes to continue to inspire you as well, and wishes to thank you for your continued support of this exciting and ever-evolving project.

For more information, please visit the Oxlajuj B'atz' website, [www.oxlajujbatz.org](http://www.oxlajujbatz.org). You can also follow the project on Facebook and Twitter.



Natural dyeing



Soap making

# Lok'tamayach

A grant from MEF allowed Lok'tamayach, an organization of Maya photographers in Chiapas, to hold a series of weekly workshops designed to teach photography skills. Thirteen Maya adults



completed this series, and their work was shown at a public exhibition in January 2009. The grant also permitted Lok'tamayach to begin sorting and storing its collection of negatives and prints.



Sorting out the collection



Participants of the photography workshops

The mission of the Chiapas Photography Project (CPP) is to provide opportunities for Mayas in Chiapas, Mexico to master the art of photography and to use it to document their lives and cultures. For the past four years, the CPP has been a program of the Maya Educational Foundation which has managed an endowment fund for them to provide a stable base of support for their work.



Among their activities this year, the Archivo Fotográfico Indígena (Indigenous Photography Archive - AFI), located at CIESAS in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, has implemented a new classification system, making access to its collection of over 75,000 photos more efficient. In April 2009, they completed a portfolio project, creating spiral-bound personal portfolios of black and white images by photographers from the four major Chiapas ethnic groups. AFI also advanced their literacy project, *ABCDarios/Cuadernos de Lecto-escritura/Chiapas Maya Language Primers*, to strengthen and support Tseltal and Tsotsil language usage and promote literacy in those languages and in Spanish as well. Two Maya women from the group coordinate this project.

Recently, four Maya women photographers were invited to participate in *Mudanzas: Migraciones Múltiples*, a collective exhibition organized by the Museo de Mujeres Artistas Mexicanas to be shown in several Mexican venues and possibly in the United States.

In October 2009, the decision was made to discontinue the endowment fund so that the CPP could have a more flexible use of the funds for existing and future activities.

Two suitable sponsoring organizations have been identified, and MEF is in the process of transferring the endowment funds to them. Carlota Duarte, the founder and director of CPP, will keep donors informed about the accomplishments, activities, and new undertakings of the CPP.



Carlota Duarte at photo exhibition in San Cristóbal de Las Casas



# CIRMA (Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica)

For thirty years, CIRMA, a non-profit social science research center, has served a community of regional and international scholars of Mesoamerica and Central America. Its mission is to preserve Guatemalan historical memory, to develop and promote academically sound research, and to train leaders in the social sciences. CIRMA's resources and activities contribute to the creation of new knowledge, the development of critical thinking, and the encouragement of those constructive dialogues that build a more tolerant and just society. Entering its fourth decade, CIRMA is now focused on two pivotal areas to revitalize and strengthen the institution: inter-ethnic relations and historical memory, both with the potential for public education and societal change.



historical decisions and the political reasoning behind them. It also provides users with a tool to visualize possible present or future trends.

## The Latin American Photography Museum

The foresight and financial generosity of the Photo Archive's founder has allowed CIRMA to begin planning for a photography museum to house the archive. Possible sites are being studied and plans include rooms for permanent and special exhibits and the creation of a study center for scholars and students.

## Academic Education

CIRMA will build on its long experience with its International Scholarship and Study Abroad Programs and will continue collaboration with national and international institutions to work toward offering undergraduate and graduate level degrees in the social sciences.



CIRMA's courtyard in La Antigua

MEF supports CIRMA's three highly respected archives: the Social Science Library, the Historical Archive, and the Guatemala Photo Archive. The extensive holdings in each of these collections are open to the public. CIRMA is undertaking the conversion of physical data into digital format and, with the assistance of funding from Japan, is expanding and upgrading the Photo Archive facilities.

Director Lucrecia Paniagua reports that despite reduced funding in recent years CIRMA is moving forward with the following projects:

### The Virtual Museum of Historical Memory - "Guatemala's Live Memory: A History to Change History"

This interactive virtual exhibit traces Guatemala's political history from 1808 to the present, allowing users to traverse various eras of Guatemala's past and pose questions, analyze data or formulate their own assessments of



## Opening of the Presidential Archive Collection

In January 2010, CIRMA will open a new archive with the personal documents of former President Juan José Arévalo Bermejo, received in October 2009. CIRMA hopes to expand this archive to include collections from other former Guatemalan presidents.

To learn more about CIRMA's work, visit [www.cirma.org.gt](http://www.cirma.org.gt).



Juan José Arévalo Bermejo

## A Note of Thanks

MEF extends its gratitude to a wonderful group of people who have volunteered in different programs at different times. Most especially, we would like to thank

- Jane and Bob Greenberg who created and managed the annual English Language Program in Guatemala for five years, and the entire group of English language volunteers who gave up two weeks, some for five years in a row, at their own expense to teach English to FEP Maya students.
- Laurie Levinger who wrote a book about some of the students MEF supports, with their testimonies of the effects of the Guatemalan civil war on their lives, and who has held readings and fund raisers for MEF.
- The volunteers from the English Language Program who periodically hold fund raisers and sell artisans' crafts in the U.S., to support various projects in the Mayan region.
- Karen Nielsen who has been instrumental in implementing the library project in Tzununá.
- Steve Homer who single-handedly created the English language program for students in Chiapas.
- Iyar Mazar, a college student who worked in the FEP Maya office in Guatemala City for a whole summer.
- Stephanie Lozano who spent her vacation this year teaching English to the staff at CIRMA in La Antigua and to FEP Maya staff and students in Guatemala City. She taught two classes for beginning and intermediate level in both places, paying particular attention to those students working in physical therapy and medicine. She indicated that this was a great experience for her.
- Torie Olsen, writer and photographer who recently presented her magnificent photographs from Chiapas and Guatemala in Woodstock, Vermont. She accompanied the show with a reading about the Maya men weavers of Nahualá, who continue the generations old tradition of creating the *rodilleras*, unique garments they wear to this day. Torie generously donated a portion of the sale of her photographs to the Maya Educational Foundation.
- Mercedes and Victor Montejo for all the years they have devoted to the Jacaltenango scholarship students.
- Carlo Olivieri for the support he provided to the Chiapas Photography Project and Lok'tamayach through exhibits of their work in Italy.
- All the volunteers who have helped and continue to help Maya Traditions, Oxlajuj B'atz, FOMMA, Sna Jtz'ibajom and other MEF projects in a wide variety of capacities.
- Anyone whose name we may have omitted who has contributed skill, talent and energy to MEF's mission.

We are awed and inspired by your involvement and we cannot thank you enough!

## Why We Established the MEF

By Chris Lutz, Co-Founder

Together with a handful of Guatemalan and other U.S. citizens I co-founded the Maya Educational Foundation in 1992. The antecedents of the MEF, however, go back to the 1980s, an especially violent period for the Maya and even for some non-Maya, myself included. We had become deeply concerned for their grossly unequal and impoverished status within Guatemalan society. In early 1981, my wife, Sally, our young children and I were forced to leave our life and work in Guatemala, returning to the U.S. in voluntary exile after receiving death threats for working with a few Maya Kaqchikel communities.

At that time, we and others began to help a few gifted Maya students attend graduate school in the U.S. and obtain PhDs. We soon realized, however, that these limited efforts could not have a significant impact and that what we had spent educating a few grad students in the U.S. could help scores of students in Guatemala. By the early 1990s, through informal meetings (especially among members of the Guatemala Scholars Network) our small group decided to establish a foundation that could help Maya students at all educational levels in the Maya region itself rather than bringing them to *El Norte*.

With a tax-exempt foundation established and with the help of friends, supporters, a small dedicated staff, and our board, we began to expand our donor base. Gradually, we were able to increase the number of student scholarships and other educational programs we chose to fund. In January 2002, due to a wider base of support from individuals and other foundations, we received an advanced ruling from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) establishing the MEF as a public charity, a status that will continue only if we are able to maintain and expand our donor pool.

I firmly believe in our mission to support educational opportunities among the Maya of Guatemala, Mexico and Belize. I also believe we have only just begun to reach out and establish contact with our potential community of donors. As my colleagues at the MEF and I have come to realize, the educational needs of the Maya and other smaller indigenous groups of the region are immense. We hope that we have developed some programs and funded others that do and will make a difference in the lives of individuals, families, and their communities. We are convinced that we have helped to establish educational models that can be expanded by the MEF with more donations, or replicated by other individuals and organizations that see the utility and value of what we have developed and supported.

The needs are great, but there is also great satisfaction in doing this work. Come join us if you have just found out about the MEF and want to support educational opportunities in the Maya region, and many thanks if you are already a donor.



## Yax Te' Books

*Thank you for sending the book of stories that is written in two languages. I very much liked the story of The Bird that Cleaned the World. I showed the book to my parents and they also liked the stories.*

Argelia EBM, student from Tecpán

Yax Te' Books, a project of MEF since 2006, now has a new home at Temple University in Philadelphia under the capable leadership of Hana Muzika Kahn. Dr. Kahn has instituted an advisory committee for Yax Te' in order to undertake an examination of its future needs.



Yax Te' is the only US-based book distributor specializing in Maya authors. Its mission is to produce and disseminate books and other educational materials to promote Maya cultural preservation and enhancement. Yax Te' publishes in Spanish, English and various Mayan languages, and specializes in works by contemporary Maya writers and materials that foster understanding of those works. It supports the use of these publications in classrooms in the United States, in Maya communities, and around the world. Yax Te' also provides training in the use of these products in order to promote literacy, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. Proceeds

from sales support the production of new materials and their free distribution to appropriate audiences.

In 2009, Yax Te' became a distributor for *What War? Testimonies of Maya Survivors* by Laurie Levinger, a volunteer in MEF's English Language Program (see pp. 14–15). In October, Temple University hosted a book reading by Laurie, which was followed by a long discussion and many moving reactions by students and faculty in attendance.

At the request of MEF, Yax Te' this year donated books to several libraries in Guatemala, to Livingston where MEF has established a new scholarship program (see p. 2), and to Tzununá (see p. 24). Yax Te' also donated books to a school outside Tecpán, and the students have sent enthusiastic thank-you letters expressing how much they love reading each day.

Visit [www.yaxtebooks.com](http://www.yaxtebooks.com).

## Money Matters

Supporters have asked us how MEF is doing in terms of fundraising during this period of financial uncertainty. Historically, in times of financial crises, charitable contri-

butions decline by about 15 %, and this has been true for MEF for the past two years, as the figures in the table below show under "Contributions received."

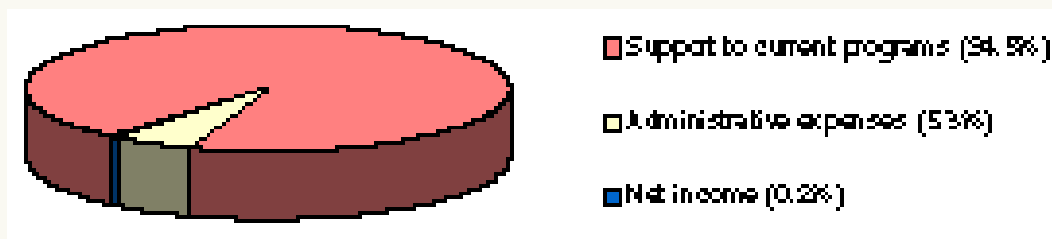
### Three-Year Comparison

	Nov 06–Oct 07	Nov 07–Oct 08	Nov 08–Oct 09
Contributions received	763,220	642,882	560,278
Revenue from investments	58,419	62,790	57,466
Total income	821,639	705,672	617,744
Support to programs	692,227	562,870	583,932
Administrative expenses	20,551	25,114	32,572
Net income	108,861	117,688	1,240

The amount of funding MEF provided to its programs appears on the fourth line of the table. The figures show that MEF disbursed more funds during the most recent period than during the prior year.

Net income figures in the last line of the table show that MEF has operated without a deficit for the past three years. To maintain this trend, MEF will continue to implement and monitor cost saving measures and, at the same time, increase its fundraising efforts.

### Expenses Nov 08–Oct 09



# Biblioteca Comunitaria Tz'unun'ya

## A Community Center for Social and Educational Change

Tzununá is a remote Guatemalan town of 3,000 inhabitants located on the southern shores of Lake Atitlán. It can be reached by boat and, only more recently, via a dirt road. As a result of its long isolation, the town still lacks some of the basic educational services available to other Sololá townships.



For the past two years, Karen Nielsen and other English Language Program volunteers have been supporting the efforts of María Castells Arrosa, a Tzununá resident and business owner who has enthusiastically promoted the creation of a community library and resource center for her town.

In the United States, Karen raised awareness and funds and also secured MEF endorsement for the library project. In the meantime in Guatemala, María and fellow resident Ignacio Tepaz Sipac did a lot of research and took courses from Child Aid in library science, which enabled them to catalogue the 235 books that they had received so far plus new donations from individuals and groups like Yax Te', Editorial Cholsamaj, the Instituto de Lingüística of the Universidad Rafael Landívar and the MEF. They also held meetings with teachers and community groups and convinced the local authorities to provide a space and cover some utilities costs. Thus,

the library turned into a true community project, with a committee of local residents in charge of overseeing operations.

Biblioteca Comunitaria Tz'unun'ya opened its doors on August 18 and Tzununá was no longer the only town around the lake without a library. Then on September 16, the whole community and its leaders were invited to see the books, to discuss the future of the library, and to receive a lesson on the Dewey decimal system from Ignacio. The response from the town and its leadership was very positive. María wrote Karen: "It is proof that we are on the right path... and we believe that the library is a very important project for the people of this town. Thank you all for believing in this dream from the very beginning!"

A book wish list for the Biblioteca is posted at Amazon.com and can be accessed through <http://www.mostlymaya.com>. More information is available from MEF or from [biblioteca@tzununa.org](mailto:biblioteca@tzununa.org).





## How You Can Help

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

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

### Your donations at work

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

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

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## Maya Educational Foundation

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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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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