



Maya Educational Foundation

20th Anniversary Edition

2012-2013 Report to Contributors



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

Ixil Maya student from Nebaj, Quiché, graduating as a Clinical Psychologist



Maya Educational Foundation

P.O. Box 1483, Wellfleet, MA 02667, USA

www.mayaedufound.org

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FEPMaya student
graduating as a lawyer

For information on all our projects and more photos, please visit our web site www.mayaedufound.org

Dear Friends,

The Maya Educational Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Under the leadership of a small group of Guatemalan Maya and U.S. citizens (most of them members of the Guatemala Scholars Network), the foundation came into being in 1992 in response to the changes taking place in Guatemala as the war wound down and peace negotiations replaced armed conflict. We discussed how best we could play a constructive role aiding our friends in rebuilding Maya communities wracked by killings, genocide, displacement, and exile. Some young people, anxious to take up their lives again, asked us about assistance for their educational endeavors. We started small, with five or six students in Guatemala and one or two in the U.S., and have grown through the years as you have joined with us to make schooling possible and to bring hope out of horror.

Over the past 20 years, with the help of MEF scholarships, 145 Maya young people have received their university degrees and scores more have fulfilled their dreams of a secondary education. MEF programs now take place in several cities and many towns in Guatemala, in Chiapas, Mexico, and in Belize. We have provided support for doctors, lawyers, engineers, nurses, a midwife, agronomists, and social scientists, along with bilingual teachers, accountants, primary teachers, and more. Currently MEF assists about 60 university level students and about 90 more at lower levels. Most of the students come from families that live in stark poverty and struggle very hard to continue their education. Their commitment to that process inspires us to make their education possible.

In the days ahead, MEF's commitment must match that of these students. We must find ways to fund their scholarship stipends at a higher level. We must reach out to those Mayas who are working and attending university on a part-time basis. We must continue to support those programs that prepare students to compete in institutions not amenable to their presence. Your thoughtful participation, your generosity, and your gifts will make this possible. In the past year, several large anonymous donations and the new scholarships for two Chiapan Maya women to become community health workers have enriched our program and increased our outreach. MEF's future success depends on more of these and on the flow of smaller gifts, recurring monthly contributions, responses to our mailings, and those gifts marking special occasions, like the marvelous gift given in my honor by the Guatemala Scholars Network and MEF friends.

This is my last report to you. After 20 years on the MEF Board, I have submitted my resignation and it has been accepted. Old age is upon me, and I find that my energy levels and mental acuity no longer meet the challenge of this work. I am honored to have held this position and enriched by those of you I have met in the course of this work. The Board is in good hands. Dr. Christine Eber, professor emerita of anthropology, New Mexico State University at Las Cruces is the new MEF Board President. Her expertise is in Chiapas and she is the author of the new book *The Journey of a Tzotzil-Maya Woman of Chiapas, Mexico: Pass Well Over The Earth*, written with "Antonia" and published by the University of Texas Press. She will be assisted by Dr. Carol Hendrickson, professor of anthropology at Marlboro College, whose work has been centered around women and textiles in the area of Tecpán, Guatemala. The new Vice President of the Board is Dr. J. Pablo Chavajay, originally from San Pedro La Laguna in Guatemala and now associate professor of psychology at the University of New Hampshire. Dr. Brenda Rosenbaum, also a twenty-year veteran, has retired from the Board but will stay involved through her work with Mayan Hands and her mentoring of FEPMaya board members. Our thanks to her for her many years of service.

In saying farewell, I extend my gratitude to you, our supporters and contributors who have made all this possible. ¡Que les vaya bien!

Marilyn M. Moors

Marilyn Moors

Celebrating MEF's Board Members

by Elisabeth Nicholson

We rarely mention MEF's Board of Directors, the heart and governing body of MEF, but I would like to take just a moment this year, on the occasion of MEF's 20th anniversary, to do so. This all-volunteer group sets the course for MEF, reviews and adjusts it when necessary, and meets every year. Each of the nine members and honorary members brings special talents, experience and interests to MEF. Although we have had some changes and turnover on the Board over the last 20 years, some members have been with MEF since the beginning and it is time to express our appreciation to all of those who have served and to those who are still serving. Thank you for your commitment to MEF!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.

Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead



MEF Board members and staff at the 2012 meeting in Amherst, Massachusetts.

From the bottom up, left to right: Brenda Rosenbaum, Marilyn Moors, Chris Lutz, Catherine Docter, John Farrow, Carol Hendrickson, Mitchell Denburg, Christine Eber, Pablo Chavajay, Robert Greenberg and Elisabeth Nicholson.

Fond Farewells

In August, MEF accepted the retirement from the MEF Board of two of its long-serving officers, Board President, Marilyn Moors, and Vice President, Brenda Rosenbaum. We will miss them dearly. We wish them the best for the future and thank them for the time, care and attention they have given to MEF projects over the years. They both brought effective leadership and focus, as well as valuable insights and empathy to our work and helped make MEF a success! We also appreciate that they will be honorary board members and will still help MEF in the future when needed.

¡Muchísimas gracias!



Marilyn and Brenda

Thanks go to Christine Eber for accepting the President's position and Pablo Chavajay for taking on the office of Vice President. We are grateful to Carol Hendrickson for agreeing to assist Christine and give a special nod of appreciation to our Treasurer, Robert Greenberg, for his hard work, and to John Farrow. We also want to thank our Board members in Guatemala, Mitchell Denburg and Catherine Docter, who have helped with the reorganization of CIRMA and FEPMaya. Heartfelt thanks go to honorary board member Chris Lutz for all he has done to support MEF and CIRMA. Last but not least, I want to commend my colleagues Guisela Asensio, Kathy Schellong and Armando Alfonzo for their excellent work.



Director announcing scholarship fund

At the end of the Board meeting we were happy to be able to announce that a fundraiser in Marilyn Moors' honor had resulted in over \$7,000 in donations for a scholarship for a Maya university student in Guatemala. We thank especially the Guatemala Scholars Network members for their overwhelming and positive response to this fundraiser and for pledging an annual gift to this Fund.

It takes a team to make MEF's work happen and to fulfill its mission. Thank you one and all!

The Core of MEF's Work

University Education for Maya Students in Guatemala, Mexico and Belize

The original mission of the Maya Educational Foundation in 1992 was to support higher education, primarily university study, for students from Maya communities in Guatemala. At that time a university education was almost unattainable for students of Maya descent. Typically, these students came from extremely poor households in remote communities far from institutions of higher learning. They faced many challenges, including speaking Spanish as their second language and struggling with low self-esteem due to real and perceived prejudice. Almost every student experienced harsh discrimination when in Ladino-dominated environments. These barriers, combined with the high cost of housing, food and travel, kept a university education out of reach for most Maya young people.

MEF's first *becas* (scholarships) gave students a real chance for a higher education and soon began to show results. We now have recipients who have graduated with professional degrees in medicine, architecture, biology, history, anthropology, law, archaeology, medicine, dentistry, psychology, education and more.

Over MEF's twenty years, its scholarship programs have expanded from Guatemala to also serve students in Chiapas (Mexico) and Belize. Students come from cities and rural areas and range from those in university to a few groups of younger students.

From just a couple of students in 1992, MEF now assists hundreds. Today MEF not only supports scholarship programs but also other projects and initiatives that benefit the students and their families: for example, English classes, indigenous language courses and workshops on health and other topics. Forming partnerships with like-minded non-profit organizations in the countries where MEF works always was and is essential for on-site supervision, follow-up and success.

MEF Scholarship Programs and Partners

In Guatemala, MEF works with a number of non-profit organizations to carry out its scholarship programs and other educational and cultural projects. Our partners include FEPMaya, Maya Traditions, Grupo Cajolá, Oxlajuj B'atz', Entre Amigos Lagun Artein, Asociación de Amigos para el Desarrollo de Livingston, Esperanza Juvenil, CIRMA and Colegio Paxil.

In Chiapas, Mexico, MEF partners with FOMMA, Sna Jtz'ibajom and Productores Alternativos de la Selva.

In Belize, MEF works with the Julian Cho Society.

Later on in this newsletter we will provide more information about our partners, but first we want to share with you photos of our students and some of what they write to us.

MEF scholarship students



University students at FEPMaya, Guatemala



University students at Sna Jtz'ibajom, Mexico

Photo by Steve Homer



University students at Julian Cho Society, Belize



What students are saying

Students from Grupo Cajolá, Guatemala



Roselia: "I am very grateful for the scholarship since without it I would not be able to continue studying because... my family is just getting by and there is no money for schooling."



Sindy: "With your help I will be able to go on to study in the university. I want to be a psychologist so that I can help people who have various types of illnesses."



Rubelsy: "I am working to be a professional with a degree in pedagogy so I can teach children as much in school as on the street, and thus my town will prosper, with many different kinds of professionals. I want to work so everyone can read."

Your support of between US\$180 and \$200 a month will enable a Maya student to study at a university in Guatemala, Mexico or Belize. Well-educated, these young people are making a difference in their communities and societies.

Sna Jtz'ibajom graduate Magdalena, Mexico

"...regarding child birth work, it is the care from the start of labor to the birth of the baby where our indigenous sisters here find it very important to be attended by female medical staff who understand and know how to speak their language. So it has been easy for me to interact with them because I myself am a Maya woman and a medical doctor."



FOMMA student Silvia Maribel, Mexico

"It is difficult to discuss domestic violence, especially when the women think it is normal and they have learned to accept it. The women I deal with have given me their support and confidence and the experts in violence against women have given me interviews, hoping that I can help the women who are staying silent, especially since I can speak to them in their own indigenous language."



Colegio Paxil student María,
Guatemala

“My name is María and I am 17 years old and an Ixil Maya... I want to become a medical doctor so I can cure people who are sick. I like going to Colegio Paxil because it's a nice place and I learn how to read and write the Ixil Maya language. I like English, sports and learning about my Maya culture. Thank you for helping me with my tuition.”



Guatemala has one of the highest poverty rates in Latin America, with more than 60% of the population living below the poverty line. In rural and indigenous populations that figure is more than 80%. Although education is one of the best ways to break the cycle of poverty, few families are able to afford to send their children to school.
(Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística)

FEP Maya student Lisbeth Floridalma, Guatemala

“Thanks to the special courses of parallel education provided by FEP Maya, I feel confident and knowledgeable about the Maya calendar and Maya identity, and about the issues stemming from the conquest and how the colonizers and colonized in our country live, something not always considered very important. I'd also like to mention that my little sister had to do a big report about the Maya calendar and I was able to help her with it, thanks to what I had learned at FEP Maya. I'm grateful to them for helping us to expand our cultural knowledge.”



20th Anniversary Pledge

Now, in 2012, a significant year for the Maya and for MEF, we want to recommit to MEF's original core work of helping Maya students in Guatemala, Mexico and Belize to obtain a university education, while honoring and encouraging Maya traditions and culture.

We have made great strides but much remains for us to do.

The need is immense.

If you can and want to help towards this goal, please do.

It is a truly rewarding investment and experience.

Contact us if you would like to help and we will give you the details. Thank you!

Partners and Programs in Guatemala

FEPMaya



FEPMaya's Consejo Directivo

FEPMaya (Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya) is located in a modest building in Mixco, a half hour from Guatemala City center. It is an NGO that developed out of the original MEF program, Programa de Becas Mayas. Today this organization has a board or consejo directivo that consists of former students who have graduated from university. It is a very active group, striving to become more self-sufficient.

The Consejo is eager to increase student numbers and begin fundraising within Guatemala. The members report that the hardest part of their work is to have to say “no” to the many highly motivated students who apply for becas. FEPMaya has appealed to MEF for more funding to provide more scholarships. Students typically take five to seven years to graduate from university. In the coming years MEF is committed to

helping FEPMaya increase the number of students, but gradually, in order to continue supporting current students.

Esperanza Juvenil

One of MEF's partners in Guatemala is Esperanza Juvenil (Boys Hope Girls Hope Guatemala). Its mission is to help academically-capable and motivated children-in-need to meet their full potential. Esperanza Juvenil serves over 120 children, 60 of them in their residential facilities in caring, family-like homes. All of the students receive a 21st-century education and have opportunities to discover and develop their talents. Esperanza Juvenil is committed to the youth it serves and offers support through university and the transition to independent living. Since 2007 MEF has provided scholarships for Mayan children at Esperanza Juvenil. MEF scholars live in the Esperanza Juvenil homes and study at its Educational Center during their elementary and middle school education. After middle school, the scholars attend top private schools in Guatemala City and then go on to university. MEF covers the educational costs for each of the selected scholars. MEF currently supports 18 scholars. Esperanza Juvenil's Director Kristin Ostby writes:

“If not for Esperanza Juvenil, the majority of the children in our program would not attend school. They would care for younger siblings or work. Guatemalan children suffer from malnourishment and a tremendous lack of educational opportunities. According to the United Nations, Guatemala now has “the fourth highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world and the highest in Latin America and the Caribbean.” An astonishing 50% of Guatemalan children under age 5 are chronically malnourished. Many of the children who come to Esperanza Juvenil have to adapt physically to a diet of three healthy meals and two snacks per day. They are often accustomed to a cup of coffee and tortilla for breakfast and black beans and a tortilla for lunch.”



A few of the MEF scholars at Esperanza Juvenil

Colegio Paxil

Colegio Paxil (Colegio Bilingüe Intercultural Paxil), a private middle school in Nebaj, Guatemala, stands out for its strong commitment to the preservation of Ixil Maya culture, while also welcoming Ladino and other Maya students. Though the school is poor, the teachers, parents and students are united in their wish to honor their Maya heritage. In addition to the students doing all their regular course work, they participate in special Maya ceremonies and calendar events.

The number of students increased from 62 in 2011 to 73 in 2012 (59 Ixil, 11 K'iche' and 3 Ladino students). Given that the Guatemalan state a few years ago opened

tuition-free public middle schools in the area, this increase in the number of students at Colegio Paxil is truly remarkable. It shows that the Maya youth and their families are willing to make the sacrifice to pay some tuitions in order to attend a school that pays attention to their culture, traditions and language. Since most families are only able to pay a little bit, MEF helps with tuitions and teacher salaries. Special thanks this year go to an anonymous donor in California and to the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation. Colegio Paxil would no longer exist if it were not for this outside support. Here is what one student writes:

Dear MEF sirs and madams:

I, Sabina Manuela, am 15 years old and speak Ixil. I come from an indigenous community called Sumal Chiquito, 23 km away from Nebaj. To get to Nebaj, we have to ride on the back of a truck on a dirt road for two hours, leaving our community at 4 a.m. My family is campesina, my father died when I was four years old. I attended elementary school thanks to my mother's efforts. I'm the fourth of six sisters and one brother. My family's economic situation is hard because my mother does not have a formal job. My dream is to attend university and graduate as a professional to be able to help my mother and my sisters and to contribute to my community's development.

I like studying at Colegio Paxil because they continue with the teachings of my grandparents' values, such as respect, practice of Maya spirituality through ceremonies, playing autochthonous Ixil music, making Maya weavings and practicing writing and reading in my Maya language, Ixil.

The support you give me through the program has been very important. I don't pay a monthly tuition. Without your help, I would not be studying because my mother cannot pay for my educational expenses. Currently, I'm paying for a room in Nebaj because I cannot commute to my community due to distance and lack of resources. Thank you for your unconditional support!



Maya Traditions

Based in Panajachel, Guatemala, Maya Traditions or Fundación Tradiciones Mayas has worked with women artisans and their families in rural Guatemala since 1992. Maya Traditions promotes fair trade and preserves the ancient art of back strap weaving with 85 artisans in six cooperative groups. It has a long-term commitment to the weavers and their children, providing them with access to health care, business development and scholarships for the artisans' children.

MEF started to work with Maya Traditions in 2007 and began to support their scholarship programs. This year they benefit more than 130 students at primary and high school levels. 2012 is a milestone for Maya Traditions as it marks the first year of a university level scholarship in memory and honor of its late founder, Jane Mintz.



Students in a workshop on environmental issues

Oxlajuj B'atz'

In 2004 Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads) began as a women's educational resource project and has grown into a strong Guatemalan NGO with its own Women's Center in Panajachel. Oxlajuj B'atz' provides skill training workshops to over 20 women's cooperatives in rural Guatemala, with courses taught in the Mayan languages and with follow-up visits. Training is provided to interested women groups who choose the topics from four focus areas: artisan and product development, small business, health and democracy and team building. The mission of Oxlajuj B'atz' is to empower women, and more than 500 women have benefited from its outreach programs.

Last year, Oxlajuj B'atz' added the weavers group **Cooperativa Cotzal** to the groups it serves. Located in San Juan Cotzal, Quiché, the cooperative consists mostly of widows who need to become more self-sufficient and want to pass their skills and talents on to interested students.

With generous support from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, the group is in the process of building a complex with a weaving school, visitor center and housing for some of its elderly members. We thank Oxlajuj B'atz' and the Daniele Agostino Foundation for supporting this group.



Women of the Cooperativa Cotzal



Cooperativa members carrying timbers for their new building

CIRMA

MEF supports CIRMA (Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica), the renowned non-profit Center for Mesoamerican Research in La Antigua, Guatemala, in three areas: its Historical Archive (including the Presidential Archives), Photo Archive Guatemala and Social Science Library. After some rigorous restructuring last year, CIRMA is refocusing on its original mission of uncovering and preserving national historical memory through building and making its collections accessible to a wider, interested public.



Inauguration of Presidential Archives

A Canadian donor recently pledged sufficient funding to allow three Maya women, who work in CIRMA's Archivo Histórico, to study archive management at the Escuela de Historia at the Universidad de San Carlos. The women are scheduled to start in early 2013 and will

dedicate their Saturdays for the three-and-a-half year program. The generous donor asked for these scholarships to be named for the late Prof. Oscar Horst, a friend, a scholar of the Maya and a dedicated supporter and donor of books, photos and other materials to CIRMA. Prof. Horst taught from 1956 to 1987 at Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo) in the Department of Geography and carried out extensive field work in both Western and Eastern Guatemala over many decades, well after his retirement from his teaching position at Western Michigan.

CIRMA's goal during its thirty-four years of existence has been to return, recover and preserve books, documents, maps and photos and to make these materials and the study of their content available to national, regional and international students and scholars. Since a large portion of these materials relate to Guatemala and the Southern Mesoamerican region's indigenous culture and history, it only seems logical that Maya students and professionals play a major part in this project at all levels.



Prof. Oscar Horst

We hope that the Oscar Horst scholarships will establish a precedent, and that more indigenous people, especially Maya, will consider and be able to pursue careers in library science, information technology and archive administration. There exists a large but relatively unknown quantity of materials, especially in indigenous languages, to be gathered, respected, preserved and, of course, studied. With your support, MEF and CIRMA can help to further these goals.

For 20 years, you and the MEF have helped Maya students achieve their goals.

Let's continue, together!

Entre Ríos

A grant from the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation last year allowed MEF to begin giving support to **Asociación de Docentes en Acción Educativa Rural/DARE**, located in Entre Ríos, Sayaxché, Petén, Guatemala, a 14-hour car ride from Antigua.



Asociación DARE members and scholarship recipients at 2012 visit

The members of this impressive non-profit organization have been pioneers in promoting educational opportunities for their people and the region. They were formerly refugees in Chiapas and Campeche, Mexico, and only returned to Guatemala 15 years ago. Since then, they have promoted education for 24 communities and eight different ethnic groups, including non-Maya.

DARE members have a vision and are enthusiastic and committed to the goal of better education for all in their communities. After establishing middle schools, they are now in the process of creating a *diversificado* school (high school). The teachers, parents and students are very grateful for this year's funding, which has helped them purchase teaching materials, supplement teachers' pay and provide scholarships for 15 students (for high school and university).

Partners and Programs in Chiapas, Mexico

Sna Jtz'ibajom (House of the Writer)

This writers' group in San Cristóbal de Las Casas has fought for almost 29 years for the preservation of Maya culture and promotion of literacy. The group's members have produced many plays and performances, written books, grammar and language manuals, taught literacy and indigenous language courses, and carried out video and radio projects. The members just returned from their second theater tour this year to Mexican and Guatemalan communities where their provocative play "Katun 13 AJAU" was well-received.

MEF launched a university scholarship program with Sna Jtz'ibajom in 1998. It has seen over 25 students graduate and currently supports 16 students in a variety of disciplines, including agronomy, physical education, communications, anthropology, law and nursing. MEF also provides funding for indigenous language courses in Tzeltal and Tzotzil-speaking communities in Chiapas, enabling Maya children and adults to read and write in their own languages. Hundreds of children and adults have participated in and graduated from these courses.



Photo by Steve Homer

Member of Sna Jtz'ibajom

FOMMA (Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya/Strength of the Maya Woman)

Founded in 1994 by two women playwrights, this active NGO in San Cristóbal has become a strong resource for indigenous women and children. Using theater as a tool for social action in Chiapas, FOMMA's plays explore societal ills and injustices, like alcoholism, domestic violence and abuse of power by politicians and clergy. These topics resonate strongly with the audiences, especially girls and women. This year the FOMMA theater has traveled to indigenous communities throughout Chiapas as well as to national and international events. The women produced a new play entitled "Buscando Nuevos Caminos" about immigration and violence towards women, and also created a radio show which aired throughout Mexico and parts of Central America. The Ford Foundation has chosen FOMMA as a model for other indigenous women's groups in Latin America.

In addition to theater, FOMMA hosts workshops on bilingual education and women's health and domestic relations, and offers training in marketable job skills such as baking, sewing, literacy, computers and indigenous languages.

Since 1998, MEF has partnered with FOMMA to provide a university scholarship program, which currently serves 17 students and has graduated over 30. The students in turn give back by supporting and being involved in FOMMA programs.

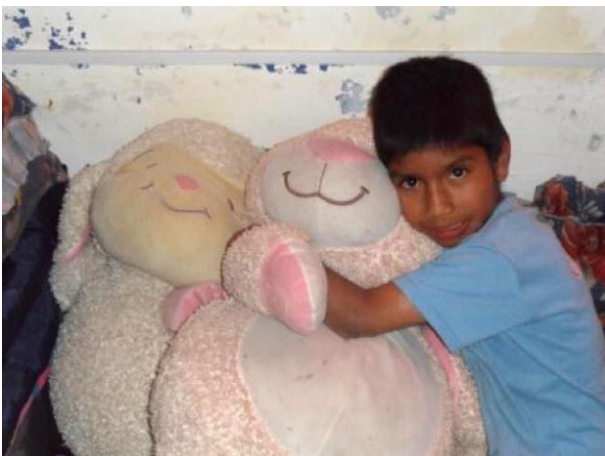


Photo by Steve Homer

Theater performance by FOMMA

Amigos de San Cristóbal

MEF has worked with the Mexican NGO Amigos de San Cristóbal on educational projects since 2004. This year support goes to four projects: **Escalera**, for 12 scholarships to students in the ten poorest municipalities of highland Chiapas; **K'inál Antzetik**, to support nine young women in their academic studies and leadership skills, allowing them to participate in radio and audiovisual broadcasting workshops; to **Melel Xojobal**, in support of nine disadvantaged indigenous children and adolescents in San Cristóbal, providing them an education to improve their quality of life; and to **La Casa de las Flores**, which serves the street children of San Cristóbal, and provides a safe place for children to eat, bathe and learn new skills to better their lives.



Boy at La Casa de las Flores



Young women at K'inál Antzetik

Chuj Program

With the help of the Mexican NGO Productores Alternativos de la Selva, MEF now supports eight Chuj Maya students from communities around Tzisco in the Montebello Lakes region of Chiapas for secondary school and university. The supervisors report that the students are doing well and have met with other university students to exchange experiences. For the next school cycle, they are planning to create workshops and site visits related to conservation and better use of resources. Afterwards they will share their experiences with their communities.



Photo by Steve Homer

Chuj students and supervisors, Mexico

Chenalhó Program

Another MEF scholarship program in Chiapas is for students from San Pedro Chenalhó where MEF supports six students at the secondary level this year, up from four previously. Program supervisor Antonio Pachitán is proud to report that, after finishing his social service in Tzacum, in the municipality of Chalchiuitán, Chiapas, Héctor Arias Guzmán will graduate this year from nursing school. Antonio says that Héctor's success has inspired the rest of the students, who are convinced that they, too, will accomplish their educational goals.

The Chenalhó program confirms what we see in other MEF programs, i.e., that female students have a much more difficult time than their male classmates continuing beyond middle school. Many parents still favor educating their sons, expecting that their daughters will not need a higher education to fulfill traditional roles as wives, mothers and household managers.

Ceiba Marisol Pérez Velasco is currently the only female scholar in MEF's Chenalhó program. She is pursuing a career in nursing with a focus on nutrition and hopes to use her skills to help her community. The scholarship committee is currently looking for at least one more female student with the potential and courage that Ceiba has shown. In recognition of the unique challenges that girls face in Mesoamerican communities, MEF has made their inclusion in its programs a priority.



Chenalhó student, Mexico

Partner in Belize

With the help of the **Julian Cho Society (JCS)**, a non-profit in Punta Gorda, Belize, MEF provides scholarships to 12 students in the Toledo District for secondary school and university education. MEF began to support this program in 2006 to offer opportunities for disadvantaged Maya families to send their children to high school and, more recently, to university.

JCS was founded in 2004 as an indigenous rights organization in memory of Julian Cho, a renowned advocate for the rainforests and indigenous peoples of southern Belize. It serves all 38 communities in southern Belize where the Q'eqchi' and the Mopán Maya people live. JCS's primary focus remains to advocate against the injustices and human rights violations in the Maya

communities by continuing to help Maya people secure title to their ancestral lands.

A scholarship provides all fees and tuition for the scholar, along with textbooks and uniforms. JCS facilitates the application process and selects students together with a team of elders and community leaders. JCS also coordinates payments for school bills and purchases and distributes textbooks.

In conjunction with the scholarship program, JCS members have fostered the Maya Youth Coalition, which creates space for young Mayas to build on their indigenous identity and culture, leadership capacity and human rights.



MEF students in Belize

We are fortunate to be working with these and all our partners. They deserve and need your support. For more information on these organizations, please visit our website mayaedufound.org

English Language Programs in Guatemala and Mexico

MEF university students who require English proficiency and those who want to learn English receive support to take classes at language schools in Guatemala and Chiapas. Students benefit immensely from MEF's English Language Program (ELP) which offers them courses taught by volunteers from the U.S. In 2004, Jane and Robert Greenberg created the first ELP for Guatemala; in 2006, Steve Homer started the ELP in Chiapas, Mexico. The students enjoy the classes and one-on-one conversations and learn a great deal in the time that the ELP volunteers spend with them. A graduate in Guatemala, Héctor Nemar Marroquín Díaz, wrote in a report for FEPMaya that he learned more English in the two-week ELP course than he did in three years at school. The intensive learning also motivates the students to work hard at their English long after the courses end.

For ELP Guatemala, special thanks go to Laurie Levinger and Lianne Moccia, the leaders of the current and past ELP courses in Antigua. The 2012 ELP now has 16 students and 8 U.S. volunteers who will be in Guatemala in early December to teach English for two solid weeks. We cannot thank them enough!



Photo by Laurie Levinger

ELP-Guatemala students and volunteers

Por experiencia propia puedo decir que los cursos que voluntariamente imparten maestros estadounidenses a estudiantes mayas, han sido mas eficientes en dos semanas que el curso de inglés recibido durante tres años en la educación básica.

Héctor Nemar Marroquín Díaz

For ELP Chiapas, Steve Homer is going to be in San Cristóbal for more than two months this year. This is his eighth time!

This time, in addition to teaching the students in San Cristóbal, Steve will also travel south to Tziscão to teach English to the Chuj students at Productores Alternativos de la Selva.

Thank you, Steve, for your continued, amazing efforts!

ELP-Chiapas students and teacher



We are also very grateful to new volunteer Marcia Siegel who taught English for ELP Chiapas in April of 2012 and will return next April. Marcia reports: "I found the students very impressive. Many were finishing the thesis required by universities in Mexico for graduation. I'm very happy to have had this opportunity. I did have a great time and remain interested in teaching for MEF again."

MEF salutes its past and present ELP volunteers for their time and investment in our students.

Outreach to More Remote Areas and Younger Students

Statistics about Guatemala and Mexico from the World Bank, UNESCO and USAID tell the stark reality that we have found to be true in all the indigenous population groups we serve. As discouraging as this reality is, we see it as a call to action and as a motivator for the work we do, including MEF's outreach programs.

- Almost 31.7% of Guatemala's near 12 million people are illiterate, with illiteracy rates up to more than 60% in the indigenous population.
- Only 30 to 40 percent of students who begin primary school in Guatemala complete this six-year education level.
- Children who do not attend school are concentrated in rural areas and a disproportionate number of them are indigenous.
- Many children drop out due to the lack of access and largely inadequate facilities.
- With more than half the population of Guatemalans living below the poverty line, it is hard for school age children's families, especially indigenous families, to afford the rising cost of books, supplies, school uniforms and transportation, all of which are not supplemented by the government.

(Sources: UNESCO, USAID)

MEF's outreach programs to remote areas where we also serve younger students have enabled the children to go further in their education than their parents.

While some go all the way to university, others decide not to continue their education, even with much encouragement and support to do so. For example, a young girl in Todos Santos, Guatemala, who was able to complete primary school last year, thanks to a scholarship, is happy to be working in a small store now. Other former scholarship recipients in Jacaltenango, Guatemala have graduated from the local vocational high school with *diversificado* degrees and are now employed as teachers and accountants. MEF takes pride in being able to support diverse educational opportunities for young people and in supporting them along paths that they determine for themselves.

In Livingston, Guatemala, MEF partner Asociación de Amigos para el Desarrollo de Livingston is happy to report that two students graduated from high school last year: Tiffany Bonilla and Lisandra Norales.

Lisandra is now part of the university scholarship program along with Carlos Marcelo Caal Mendoza, who also graduated from high school as a MEF scholarship recipient.

The program encourages students to participate in cultural activities held by the community and promotes recognition, respect and intercultural experiences among them. The program offers volunteer work in the development of such activities during the year. The students also attend writing workshops to improve their skills.



Students in Livingston, Guatemala

Scholarships for Tz'utujil Students

In Guatemala, the Ben and Lois Paul scholarship program supports seven Tz'utujil students from San Pedro Cutzán and San Antonio Suchitepéquez (Suchitepéquez Department) and from San Pedro La Laguna (Sololá Department). We thank the generous individuals who supported this program this year, especially Meera Patankar who ran a half marathon in Vancouver and generated more than \$1,300 in donations.

Our supervisor Ajpub' Pablo García Ixmatá reports that two students, José Roberto Vicente and Delfina Pop Socop, graduated from high school this past year. Three more students will graduate as elementary-school teachers by the end of 2012; they will be the very first professionals in their families. He also reports that the students attend Maya culture workshops two or three

times a year. All graduates from the MEF program are currently working and helping their families. One of them, Concepción Lacam, is working for the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas as a bilingual teacher and produces official documents in the Tz'utujil language.



Tz'utujil students, Guatemala

the opportunity to attend school. She assures us that the scholarships have been granted only to children who really need them. They are doing their best to stay within the required grade average, though it is not easy for students who are malnourished and, in addition to their school work, have to do strenuous work for their families at home. She reports that all the students are motivated and working hard in school to better themselves. She was happy to share that two girls have graduated this past year: Loida María Cruz is now a kindergarten teacher and Juana Marina Martín Pablo became a bilingual teacher.



Todos Santos student and family, Guatemala

Other MEF outreach support in Guatemala goes to students in **Michbilixpú**, Alta Verapaz and students in **Cajolá**, Quetzaltenango, as well as to **Tzununá** on the southern shores of Lake Atitlán, Guatemala for a community library and university scholarships.

Todos Santos scholarships

The MEF scholarship outreach in Todos Santos, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, is going strong, owing in large part to the generosity of the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation and, since 2010, the Shelton Davis Scholarship Fund donors. There are currently 21 students in the program, spanning from primary to university levels.

Supervisor Felipa Jiménez thanks all of us for helping these students who would otherwise not have



Michbilixpú students, Guatemala

Celebrating our Donors

MEF has been able to accomplish all that it has in the two decades of its existence only because of your support. Without it, there would be no MEF. We are grateful for your generosity and your belief in MEF's work. We can't say that it was always easy, but we think it was well worth the effort when we look at the students and graduates and the projects that have endured and grown stronger over the years.

We want to thank you for all you have given to MEF and its projects over the years. Whether in the form of time, attention, money, energy or useful donations such as books or computers, all your contributions have helped to make a positive difference in Guatemala, Mexico and Belize.

We would like to mention some of the organizations, groups and individuals who have been vital in their support to MEF and are making our work possible:

The Plumsock Fund; the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation; the Jane Mintz Trust; Dining for Women; the Chiapas Highland Maya Fund; the Civil Society Institute; the Fredy Rosenbaum Foundation; the Guatemala Scholars Network; the Julius Silman Charitable Trust; GreaterGood.org; the Delta Foundation; the Laughlin family; the Lutz family; the Shelton Davis family and friends; all the foundations and donors who prefer to remain anonymous; the authors who donate book royalties to MEF; the family who donated Maya textiles and photos; all of the donors who make regular contributions to MEF; the English Language Program volunteers in Chiapas and Guatemala; the donor who made it possible for FEPMaya students to attend a Maya hieroglyph workshop; the donor who will underwrite library science studies for Maya women; the donors from far away –England, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Malaysia and Japan, to name a few countries–, and the donors from our neighbors –Canada, Mexico and Guatemala–; the groups who hold fundraisers for MEF projects (we have had MEF supporters give talks, do readings from their works, stage photo exhibits, organize crafts sales, run a marathon and more). Last but not least, we want to mention the donors who decide to give contributions in honor of someone's birthday, the holidays, a wedding or –especially poignant– in someone's memory.

We are honored to work with you and we hold you up as our beacons of hope in a world that often seems dark and ominous. You help us shine a light in countries where there is much poverty and hopelessness. As long as our projects leaders and students don't give up, we won't either.

We need to do more and, with your help, we will. We hope you will continue to accompany us into MEF's next decade. Your support and encouragement will be vital along the way.

We thank you very much!



How You Can Help

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

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

Your Donations at Work

- \$ 190 supports the education of a university student for one month.
- \$ 95 supports a student in high school for one month.
- \$ 50 supports a student in middle school for one month.
- \$ 30 helps parents send a child to elementary school for one month.
- \$ 50 covers the cost of teaching an individual how to read and write his or her native language in six months.

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

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

Maya Educational Foundation

P.O. Box 1483, Wellfleet, MA 02667, USA
mayaedufound@aol.com • www.mayaedufound.org
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