

Maya Educational Foundation

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www.mayaedufound.org



30 years — 1992-2022
Changing Lives through Education

2022-2023 Report

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 students from remote areas.



MEF scholarship students at FEPMaya, Guatemala

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate MEF's 30th Anniversary as a nonprofit organization, we acknowledge that without the support of people like you, our donors, achieving MEF's mission would not be possible. We are very grateful for your support throughout these years and know that your contributions are giving underprivileged Maya students from remote areas of Guatemala, Belize, and Chiapas (Mexico) the chance to pursue their educational and professional dreams.



Clarita studies forensics in Guatemala.

great strides towards their degrees, expecting to graduate in 2023 in clinical psychology and forensic science, respectively.

Our donors and partner nonprofits in the countries we serve play critical roles in supporting MEF's mission and so do our board members. They contribute talent, time, and financial support, and make sure that MEF continues on a steady path forward. Alas, this year two of our members will retire: José Ursúa, our treasurer who has been instrumental and reassuring in all aspects of MEF's finances and portfolio, and Jean-Marie Simon, whose legal advice and ideas were always helpful to us. We thank both of them for their years of dedication and service to MEF and wish them the very best in their new ventures. We will miss them greatly. Aware of member retirements, we had to prepare and search for new individuals willing to serve. We are fortunate and glad to report that Serita Frey, Randhi Wilson, and Kendra Thomas have accepted our invitation to join the board. We welcome each of them. See their photos and bios at www.mayaedufound.org

On behalf of our whole team, I would like to extend my gratitude for your continued interest, commitment, and support.

With warm wishes,


Pablo Chavajay, MEF President

After three years of not being able to travel outside the USA, this past July, I was glad to once again travel to Guatemala and visit with our largest scholarship partner in Guatemala, FEPMaya (Fundación para Estudios y Profesionalización Maya). My visit coincided with their large, in-person meeting with all the students, staff, and board members in Chimaltenango. I participated in a spiritual Maya ceremony (see p.7) and in an event that provided everyone present an opportunity to share and discuss their academic successes as well as challenges. It was wonderful to see the students and hear firsthand their strong commitment and appreciation for the scholarships that allow them to study towards professional degrees.

I also had the opportunity to visit with Marisol Morales, the project supervisor of the Ben and Lois Paul Scholarship program for Tz'utujil students from San Pedro La Laguna, Sololá, and Chicacao, Suchitepéquez. Marisol expressed her satisfaction with the progress students are making. In fact, during my visit in San Pedro, I talked with two of the scholarship recipients who are very motivated and are making

Your Donations at Work

This year your contributions are supporting scholarships and educational programs for 503 Maya students in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize.

Thank you!



Manuela studies business administration.

30 Years and Counting - Persevering Because Our Students Do

The Maya Educational Foundation (MEF) provides educational aid and scholarships for more than 500 Maya students each year. The support from generous individuals and organizations allows us to do this work. Even when there are disappointments and setbacks at times, we continue the work because of students like **Norma Faustina**. She is studying education. She writes: “Every year the university awards a diploma to the students with the best academic performance and Thank God, this year I am one of them, despite the difficulties I have experienced. But my effort, struggle and perseverance were validated and honored by this award.”

We continue this work because of students like **Diego**, from our small Ben & Lois Paul program for Tz’utujil students. He recently graduated as a medical doctor. We are proud of him and are seeing the value of a long-term investment in these university students. We hope you see it, too! Diego says: “I feel great satisfaction to be able to inform you that I finished my Physician and Surgeon degree at the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. I want to express my gratitude for all the support from the MEF throughout my seven years of studies. Your invaluable help has allowed me to achieve one of my most important goals in my life, that of becoming a doctor. I will continue to strive to achieve new goals, I will not give up, I will persevere and be a person who can contribute something to society and in the future help other young people to achieve their dreams, in the same way as you helped me.”



Diego and his proud Mom – Congratulations!

Other recent Graduates

Paola finished college under the supervision and excellent care of MEF partner Esperanza Juvenil in Guatemala City.

She graduated from Rafael Landívar University with a degree in Industrial Psychology. She writes that she was given the opportunity to continue studying, was provided with food, housing, and education, among other resources. She says:

“This year, I have achieved one of my biggest goals that as a child I thought was impossible to achieve. It has been a blessing to have earned my Industrial Organizational Psychology degree from Rafael Landívar University. I am proud to be an example to my family and to those around me. I can now say that I have the necessary tools to create the change that Guatemala needs and to continue making my dreams come true. Thank you!”



In Chiapas, Mexico

Martín, a student at our partner Sna Jtz'ibajom (Sna) says:



“In February, I finished my social service at the Community Hospital of Larráinzar where I spent a year doing different activities, such as giving consultations and providing emergency care, helping with infant deliveries, and working in the ER. I had good doctors guiding me. I currently work in the municipality of Zinacantán where I set up a private office, tending to the general public with medical consults, emergencies, and management of chronic degenerative diseases. I have had a good response from the population, attending pediatric and adult patients with different types of ailments ranging from a sore throat to palliative care for terminal cancer. I am open from Sunday to Friday, but I also visit patients at home. All this could only happen because I was a beneficiary of MEF, a foundation that provides a future for indigenous people.”

Chiapas is one of the poorest and most overlooked regions of Mexico. — We appreciate the special interest and support for this region from the Robert and Miriam Laughlin family, the A&E Borchard Foundation, Christine Eber and friends at Weaving for Justice, Carter Wilson, the Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, the Orr and the Berlin family, as well as Armando Alfonzo, José Ursúa, Steve Homer, and Sue Riba, Wendy Ewald, and Suzanne Ruta whose gift of a few of her husband Peter Ruta's evocative Chiapas paintings generated several major donations for MEF. Thank you!

Martín with his Dad at his graduation



Also in Chiapas, under Sna's supervision, **María Susana** says:

"Thanks for supporting me. If it were not for you, I do not think I would have been able to complete my degree because it was right around then that the pandemic began and I had become unemployed and was unable to absorb the school expenses.

It was a huge relief to know that you had accepted me for a scholarship, and of course I tried hard to make the most of it.

I want to share with you the happiness I feel for having 'finished the race.' Best of all, I was able to obtain recognition for having obtained first place with a 9.6 grade average.

It was worth all the effort I put into reaching the degree and now having a *Licenciatura* in Public Accounting. I am so happy to have chosen this beautiful career. It gave me a lot of new knowledge."

When you invest in the education of a Maya student,
it has a ripple effect on many more lives.

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José Adalberto, shown here with his parents, received a special MEF scholarship that culminated in him becoming a dentist.

Dr. Tom Potts of Buffalo who has donated his dental services to the community of San Pedro Chenalhó for many years, friends at the Latin American Solidarity Committee, and the Western New York Peace Center helped us sponsor José Adalberto as well as the Berlin family who gave us special funding for Maya students in the medical field.

He now still has to overcome the last obstacle of his *titulación* (official accreditation) which is a serious hurdle for many students in Mexico after they graduate, due to costing between one and two thousand dollars! José Adalberto is already working at the Chenalhó free dental clinic for a modest stipend from Dr. Potts and friends in order to save up for that last step.

He sends his gratitude and best wishes to all who helped him reach his dream of graduating.



Congratulations to all our graduates!

MEF Students and Graduates in Southern Belize



Suzette has successfully graduated from the business department at Julian Cho Technical High School, despite the remote location of her village and economic difficulties at home. Her main objective currently is to continue her education and go on to university. Suzette personally witnesses the inequality between genders in her community and has made it her personal crusade to change this.

Since its inception, MEF has encouraged Maya girls and women who wanted to pursue higher education and students from more remote and rural areas who have more cultural and logistical obstacles than those living closer to the cities.

Francilia is the eldest of five children from a poverty-stricken home. Her father is a subsistence farmer, trying to make ends meet. She wants to be a role model for her younger siblings and is the definition of perseverance. Despite the personal obstacles in her life, she is relentlessly pursuing her education, studying Primary Education. She wants to use her newfound knowledge to inspire young children to pursue their own dreams.



Milton is a graduate from the business department at Corazon Creek Technical High School. He is a very active member in his community, signing as a witness to his village inter-boundary agreements and participating in many youth exchanges. He dedicates the time and energy to educate himself further. He sees education as a gift and one that he should cherish and value. Notably, he is the first child in his family to attend high school and now the first to graduate.

30 Years – Because of Our Partners

We have built reliable support systems in Guatemala, Chiapas, and southern Belize. Without our nonprofit partners in the field, we would not be able to provide all the scholarships we currently have in place. We thank each and every one of our student supervisors, selection committee and board members at our partner organizations. They all share our mission of bringing educational opportunities to Maya students and care to see them succeed. See more on all MEF scholarship partners at www.mayaedufound.org



Visit with the FEPMaya board in Guatemala and attending a Maya ceremony with all students



30 Years – Promoting Maya Culture and Languages



Students at CIRMA in Antigua Guatemala, an important guardian of history and culture of the Mesoamerican region



All students at Colegio Paxil in Nebaj, Guatemala are required to speak Ixil, to study weaving and the Maya calendar and customs.

Sna'tzibajom has offered lecto-escritura/literacy courses to Maya communities in Chiapas for many years. Interest has been strong and there is a waiting list. When the children and adults learn how to read and write their own Mayan languages and about Maya history and culture, their pride and confidence increase and they start to feel the special historical and cultural space the Maya people inhabit and can be proud of. Self-esteem especially in the children starts to rise and their hunger for learning more is awakened.

Sna is celebrating 40 years of their cultural and linguistic work in 2023. We send best wishes and congratulations to this Maya writers group and remember Sna's co-founder Robert Laughlin.

We also thank Sna for supervising 35 Maya university students for us in 2023.

The photo on the right was taken by Wendy Ewald during one of the photography classes she taught Maya students this summer. Coordinated with Sna and made possible by a MacArthur grant, it was a great success.

MEF supports three nonprofit partners who preserve the heritage, languages, and culture of the Maya region.

www.mayaedufound.org



30 Years – Gratitude for Our Volunteers

English proficiency is a requirement for many of our scholarship students. This inspired the idea of starting an English Language Program. In 2003 when Jane and Robert Greenberg wanted to help, Armando Alfonzo, MEF's long-time Executive Director, encouraged them to volunteer by teaching English to our Maya students in Guatemala.



2004 saw the first group of ELP volunteers come to Antigua to teach intensive English classes. The two-week experience was so rewarding for all involved that ELP-Guatemala has taken place every year since, led first by the Greenbergs, followed by Laurie Levinger, Jean Beckord, Lianne Moccia, and Randhi Wilson. In Chiapas, Steve Homer volunteered and taught English to MEF students for many years and still helps us now with site visits when he is there.

After the January 2020 course, ELP-Guatemala had to be put on hold because of the pandemic. But now, a group of 13 U.S. volunteers will once again undertake this effort, with one other teacher joining them in Antigua to teach 25 FEPMaya students. We wish them all a good and productive time. We are grateful to all the volunteers including Karen Nielsen and friends who will cover weekend activities with the students while the weekday teachers can take a well-deserved rest. To reinforce English in the

students throughout the year, Randhi Wilson managed to secure year-long online English classes in 2020 for first 30, now 35 Maya students through the Beaverton Literacy Council in Oregon. We thank Randhi and the Council and all the BLC teachers very much for their time and effort. What a great step forward!

Dedicated MEF volunteers give of their time, money, and energy to the Maya students. To honor them and to keep the English Language Program going, you can make a donation at www.mayaedufound.org

30 Years of MEF – Because of Our Founders and Long-Time Supporters

MEF was born from the vision and deep commitment of its founders, among them Marilyn Moors, Fredy and Brenda Rosenbaum, Chris Lutz, Peter Welch, Armando Alfonzo, Irma Otzoy and Enrique Sam, who wanted to create real opportunities for higher education for Maya students in Guatemala when there were almost none. Their vision has been translated into reality ever since. Hundreds of Maya students have been able to graduate with professional degrees and are making their presence felt in their countries. Pride in their Maya heritage and confidence in their own professional skills define our former students. They also share one characteristic: the desire to help their communities move forward. At our partner, Grupo Cajolá in Cajolá, Guatemala, they did not have a single Maya professional with a university degree when we first partnered. Now they have the support of a whole group of trained professionals. See our website for videos and statements from MEF graduates and project leaders.

Special Thanks to

Daniele Agostino Derossi Foundation, Plumsock Fund, the Lutz family, Borchard Foundation, Ewald Foundation, Dining for Women, Annenberg Foundation, Guatemala Scholars Network, the Silman Trust; the families of: Miriam and Robert Laughlin, Shelton Davis, Fredy Rosenbaum, Diane Nelson, Marilyn Moors, and Sterling Crockett; Mitchell Denburg, Carol Hendrickson, Edward Fischer, José Ursúa, Carlo Olivieri, Jean-Marie Simon, Albert Gentle, Robert Lipman, and to all our loyal donors.

30 Years – Because Of You, Our Donors

We are very grateful to all of you who give to MEF and we work hard to deserve your support. In addition to financial gifts and volunteering, we have seen a number of in-kind donations. One creative and ultimately very successful idea was to encourage folks who own Maya textiles they no longer wish to keep to donate them by sending them to our friends at Weaving for Justice in Las Cruces, New Mexico. There they sell them, with all proceeds going to MEF in support of scholarships for Maya students. We thank Christine Eber and friends for continuing this amazing effort.

We admire thoughtful individuals who leave a legacy gift or whose families, in their deepest grief, reach out to make such meaningful bequests in their honor. Jane Mintz, Bob Harman, Lunette Coburn, Anne Wilson, Vincent Phillips, and this year, Stephen Webre, Brian Moors and Diane Nelson, all made provisions to benefit Maya students.



Vilma is a Brian Moors scholar this year, studying education.



Yoselyn pursues environmental studies and is a Diane Nelson fellow this year.



Daisy is a Diane Nelson scholar studying environmental protection.



Floralma, a 2022 Brian Moors scholar, is studying criminology and penal law.

This year, in-memoriam donations for Brian and for Diane are making four scholarships for Maya students in Guatemala possible. Similar to the Shelton Davis Memorial Fund at MEF, which Sandy's wife and children established in 2010 and which has supported between five and eight Maya students ever since, Diane Nelson's family is hoping to create such a lasting legacy in her memory. Contributions will give Maya students a better chance to succeed and will honor Diane's life and work.

By giving the Gift of Education
you will change a student's life forever.

www.mayaedufound.org

We celebrate 30 years of service with you and because of you.

Thank you!

Join the Cause

There are several ways you can help MEF:

- ✓ by making a financial contribution
- ✓ by considering a bequest to MEF
- ✓ by asking family and friends to make a donation to MEF in your honor (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions)
- ✓ by volunteering your time and expertise
- ✓ by making an in-kind contribution
- ✓ by exploring and utilizing employer matches to multiply your donations
- ✓ by spreading the word, liking us on Facebook and following us on Instagram
- ✓ by shopping online and making MEF your chosen charity, e.g., at smile.amazon.com

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

Your contributions give Maya students the chance to achieve professional careers, to overcome poverty, and to prosper in their own countries.

Donate Today

- \$ 750 covers the purchase of a laptop for a student.
- \$ 200 supports the education of a Maya student at university for one month.
- \$ 100 supports a Maya student in high school for one month.
- \$ 50 covers the cost of weekend workshops that teach individuals how to read and write their indigenous language.

Any amount helps.

Make a one-time or recurring donation to MEF by mail, phone, or online at www.mayaedufound.org
Thank you!

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