



Spring Update – April 2011 – Guatemala Friends Scholrship/Loan Program (PROGRESA)

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HARD WORK AND LOTS OF FUN

The second Progresas work tour or Teaching English Experience was held from January 4th to 12th in 2011. Sixteen volunteer teachers spent a week teaching English to 16 Progresas students. Once again we were able to rent space at the Posada Belen, a wonderful old convent located in Antigua Guatemala. Both the students and the teachers ate and slept at this historic retreat center. Classes were taught in the garden and evening programs such as sing-alongs were held in an old chapel.

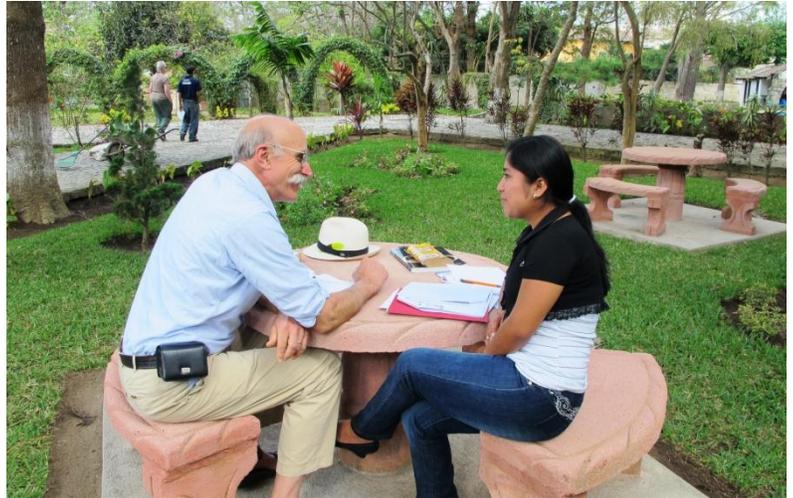
Almost half the teachers and half the students were repeat participants from the year before. (We would have had 90% of last year's students except for the fact that the dates conflicted with the need for all of the teachers to return to their schools.) We were all pleasantly surprised to see how much progress some of the students had made during the year. One student,



understanding the spoken word.

who was a total beginner last year, had worked on his own and using the usalearns.org website. His progress in reading and writing English was amazing but his teachers reported that he was still a beginner at speaking and

During the week teachers and students took off in the afternoons for excursions in Antigua and the surrounding area. Visits were made to an historic convent, a music museum, a coffee finca and of course to the shops, parks and markets of Antigua.



The entire group traveled by bus to visit the Progresas office and the homes of students who lived in the area.

Since many students could not attend the workshop in January, we tried to schedule next year's Teaching English Tour during the first week in December but sadly the Posada Belen was not available, so we have booked the next workshop for January 4th to January 12th of 2012. The early December dates conflict with when the sisters like to hold their own retreat, but we will keep trying to see if we could get a late November or early December date for the end of 2012. If you are interested in participating in this unforgettable experience start visiting our website: www.guatemalafriends.org/tours

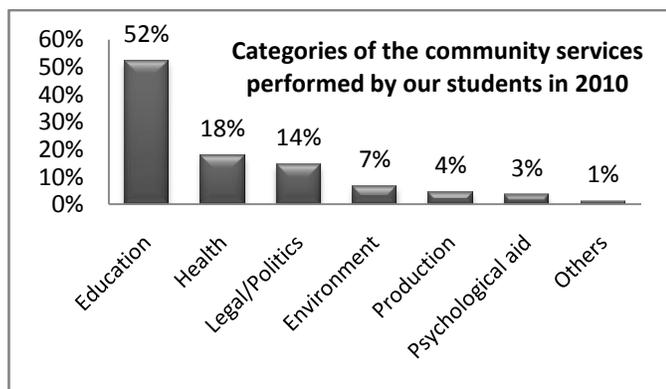
Progresas's Mission Statement:

To provide access to in-country educational and community development opportunities in order to bring choice into the lives of poor Guatemalans and enable them to participate in their country's growth and development.

SECOND YEAR OF OUR COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

As with any new program, there is a learning curve. We are very pleased that during our evaluation of the community service program in 2010 we noted that our corrective actions from the first year were successful and the program has been strengthened. We believe that the current process gives better support to our students. A continuing challenge is our lack of ability to personally supervise all of the projects due to the high cost in time and money and the long distances from many of the students. However, we did visit as many projects as we could in the vicinity of our office in Parramos and maintained telephone contact with most of the organizations where our students performed their service.

In this second year, we were able to confirm that our community service project has been very successful. Many communities and organizations have received significant benefits such as training in different areas, reforestation campaigns, etc. Below is a chart that gives an idea of the type of services performed by our students in 2010.



As you can see, most students performed services related to education such as adult literacy, strengthening reading and writing or math in elementary school children, and classes in reading and writing in indigenous languages. The category with the next highest number of projects was health. These were mainly performed by students of nursing and medicine. In this category, students

participated in vaccination campaigns, medical seminars and training in preventive health and sexual health to name a just a few of the topics covered. Also important were the services related to legal and political training in which students conducted workshops for community leaders, students and residents on various specific laws and civil and human rights.

Not only the communities have received benefits, it has also brought great benefits to our students as they have acquired practical knowledge of their careers and a better understanding of how to assess and meet the needs of their communities. The projects have also provided them with contacts that will benefit them in their chosen careers. Clear examples of this benefit are the two students who were hired by the organizations where they had performed their community service.

The first is **Yuri Lopez**, who studied psychology. She performed community service at a school for children with learning disabilities caused by exposure to domestic violence, hyperactivity or psychological trauma. Through Yuri's intervention with teaching and therapies, the school performance of these children greatly improved. Noting Yuri's success and the benefit to the children, she was hired in January by this school. Yuri is now part of the academic and therapeutic team specializing in children who have behavioral problems and poor school performance.



Yuri López and Nallely Simón

The second case is **Nallely Simon**, who studies law and did community service with an organization called "Generando" which is dedicated to the protection and care of women who have been victims of domestic violence. Her service consisted of giving human rights talks to groups of young students from different high schools in the departments of Chimaltenango, Solola and Sacatepéquez. In February of this year, she was hired by this organization to provide legal and supportive assistance to domestic violence victims in the prosecution of the perpetrators. She also continues her talks to educate young students about their rights and domestic violence.

These examples are just two of the many that clearly demonstrate how our community service program is one of the best ways to achieve the objectives of our organization.

ALUMNI NEWS

Martha Gabriel from Poaquil, Chimaltenango, graduated as a bilingual elementary school teacher in November last year (2010). She informs us that she is still looking for a steady job, but is doing an internship in her hometown. What most impresses us about Martha is her strong sense of responsibility. Despite the lack of a steady job, she has already started to repay her student loans. Examples such as Martha serve to motivate us in our work. The gratitude we see from Martha toward the scholarship program makes us know that she understands that we all must support each other in order to succeed. Thanks, Martha, for your example and good luck in your future endeavors.



Roberto Bulux from Tecpan, Chimaltenango studied in an agricultural technical school and graduated in 2008. After a few months without

work, he got a job with a company that provides agro-cultural products. He continues to work for this company. Despite having a job, it has not been easy for Roberto as he has no parents. Roberto has made great efforts to continue his education and this year is already in the 5th semester studying environmental engineering. Furthermore, Roberto has paid off his educational loan with our program which shows that when there is a will there is a way for responsibilities to be successfully met.



Estanislao and Yolanda Ixchajchal are father and daughter from a community of Totonicapán. Both studied with the help of our program. First, Estanislao studied primary education from 1990 to 1992. Then, Yolanda studied secondary teaching at the university from 1999 to 2001. Estanislao has been an important leader in his community. After graduation, he has conducted, along with others in his community, several projects that have benefitted the community. One of the projects made substantial improvements to a primary school. He has also volunteered in programs like IGER which provides secondary education via radio and others within the field of education. We recently visited the family to re-establish contact. They told us about the achievements and challenges they have faced in their work for their community. They have been a good example of the difference that our alumni can make in their communities by putting their knowledge and leadership into the service of others. We also deeply appreciate their student loan repayment which motivates us to continue investing in Guatemalan education.

Jose R. Matom, a graduate of Secondary teaching in 2005, is living in a community of Ixcán, Quiché. He wrote to us through our Facebook page: *"Hello this is Jose, former scholarship student and*

grateful for your help. I would like to find out about projects that are helping young people, women, and others in need because so far, I have not been able to help. Take care and congratulations on helping impoverished students pursue their studies." He also says that he is now participating in local community government and has the appreciation and cooperation of his neighbors. Apart from the normal obligations that this service requires, he is thinking about organizing some additional activities such as workshops on various topics of interest to his community. Congratulations to Jose and we appreciate your communication and motivation to continue working for the well-being of your community. You can find us on Facebook as "**Progresa Quakers.**" There you can leave messages or find out about our activities.

Juan Miguel Bartolomé is from Playa Grande, Ixcán. In 2007, he graduated as a Specialist in Renewable Natural Resources. His graduation was a great achievement for his family as they no longer have a father and Juan is the first of three siblings. Currently, Juan works in El Estor, Izabal in a company dedicated to the management and reforestation of several farms and plantations. He adds that after only working for two years, he began studying forestry in 2010. This year he is in the 3rd. semester of his new career. We are happy to learn about his achievements since we saw the situation within his family as very serious and in need of help. Now, he and his family have more opportunities as a result of Juan's education. We are confident that as they continue to work together, there is great optimism for their success. Juan is also an example for all our alumni as he managed to repay his student loans in 2009, just two years after graduation.



ELECTION YEAR IN GUATEMALA

In September the president, vice-president, congress and municipal officers will be elected to four-year terms. The campaign period is short by U.S. standards and nothing is official yet, but so far 27 parties have registered their intent to run candidates and 17 of them for the presidency! Two main candidates for president are women. One is the wife of the current president. Since there is a constitutional impediment against that, she and the president have announced their intent to get a divorce. An opinion poll has found that overwhelming unpopular, but since that is the largest party, it may work. Another woman candidate is the daughter of the former military dictator, Ríos-Montt. They are among the leading candidates.

The other perennial issues continue to be drug trafficking between Colombia and Mexico with Guatemala as the conduit, and continued gang violence in the major cities.

CHANGES IN OUR STAFF

Sadly we inform you that Manuel (Meme) Romero is no longer working with us; but we are very pleased to introduce you our newest staff member Joel Arana. *"Hello, My name is Joel Arana, I am happy to introduce myself as the new employee of PROGRESA. I have experience working with nonprofit organizations in Guatemala, as well as a background in web design and web administration. My main responsibilities at PROGRESA are designing a new website and visiting former students in different communities around the country. Thank you! --Joel Arana"*.

Thank you for helping us to change Guatemala through education.

All donations are made to:

Redwood Forest Friends Meeting and are mailed to:

Guatemala Scholarship Program, PO Box 1831
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

All donations are tax deductible!