

# K/GAP *newsletter*

## Students, Midwives & Solidarity

*An Update from Connie Vanderbyden, K/GAP Coordinator*



Greetings to all KGAP friends and supporters! I hope you are all having a wonderful fall, full of color and crisp beautiful days! Fall is the time for me to give you a KGAP and Guatemala update and encourage you to continue to support the work that we have been doing for almost 18 years! At the end of this newsletter you will see a request to hear back from you as to whether you want to continue to receive the KGAP newsletter either by mail or email, twice yearly. PLEASE HELP US update our mailing list by returning the bottom portion of that page in the enclosed envelope. This is also an opportunity for you to include a donation, if you wish!

**Students:** Included in this newsletter is an article by former KGAP accompanier, Jeri Pearson, about some of the high school students from Chaculá who are receiving KGAP scholarships. This program has benefitted more than 50 students over the past 18 years. The best indicator of success is the fact that almost all of them have found employment in Guatemala and are able to stay with their families and contribute to the development of their community. Julee Agar, Youth Initiative Spanish teacher and K/GAP supporter and friend, has written an article about the upcoming youth trip to Guatemala in January, 2013. This will be the seventh youth trip and I am looking forward to introducing the students to Chaculá as part of their 3 week experience in the country.

**Midwives:** This January we will participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> annual midwifery gathering and training during our visit to Chaculá. Viroqua area nurse midwife, Kim Dowat, has traveled to the community for many years and for the past 3 years has organized and led dynamic workshops in neo-natal resuscitation and post-partum hemorrhage along with other important themes. She collaborates with several midwives from Chaculá and a neighboring village who invite many

midwives from the area. I have assisted Kim with English-Spanish translation but many times we have also needed the assistance of a Chuj translator, the local Mayan language. These workshops provide an opportunity for women to get together and share stories, experiences, and questions about their midwifery work. They come from many remote villages, in addition to Chaculá, and truly appreciate the meals, housing, training, and camaraderie they experience. We also learn so much and value the opportunity to exchange ideas and further our knowledge.

**Solidarity:** I want to remind you that KGAP is affiliated with the national organization, NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala). In coordination with NISGUA we have helped sponsor accompaniment in Guatemala for almost 18 years. There continues to be a heightened need for accompaniment in the country as the genocide cases draw closer to seeing their day in court. I have included an article from the NISGUA website ([www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)) about the progression of these all important cases. This website is a wonderful resource for current and past information about the struggle for human rights in Guatemala. When we visit Chaculá, the community members look at all of us as "solidarios", people in solidarity with them. I am always honored and grateful to wear this title because it means that we are working together in an equal and respectful relationship. In the words of Mozambican leader, Samora Machel, "international solidarity is not an act of charity; it is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objective. The foremost of these objectives is to assist in the development of humanity to the highest level possible".

**THANK YOU, K/GAP SUPPORTERS!  
YOU ARE ALL SOLIDARIOS AS WELL!**

Annual Midwifery Gathering, January 2012



## BREAKTHROUGHS FOR JUSTICE, a NISQUA report from 9/17/2012

Thirty years ago, merely criticizing the powers-that-be in Guatemala could land you in jail - or worse. Now, some of those powers-that-be are in jail themselves. Guatemalan war survivors who dared denounce crimes are now reaping the rewards of their courage and persistence. After years of delays, they have scored a number of victories in high-profile legal cases. In the last year:

- Former dictator Efraim Rios Montt, his Army Chief of Staff, and his Director of Military Intelligence have been arrested and indicted for orchestrating genocide against the Ixil Maya people. Rios Montt was denied amnesty for his role in the Dos Erres massacre.
- Former chief of the National Police unit Command Six Pedro Garcia Arredondo was sentenced to jail for the forced disappearance of a student.
- Five former paramilitary members were each sentenced to 7,170 years in prison for the massacre of 256 people in Plan de Sanchez, Baja Verapaz.
- Four elite soldiers and one officer were each sentenced to 6,060 years in prison for the murder of 201 people in Peten.
- Over 400 cadavers have been recovered



in an unprecedented search for bodies clandestinely buried at a military base in Coban, Alta Verapaz.

### Cleansing the Justice System

After years of inactivity in which these key cases were essentially shelved and abandoned, what has enabled this forward motion? Clearly, the witnesses and victims themselves, and their teams of supporters, deserve the greatest recognition. Over the years they have endured not only disheartening legal setbacks but also disturbing threats and even attacks. Yet they have maintained steadfast in their insistence that the crimes that they witnessed and suffered meet with justice.

### Sparking Transformation

For the survivors, these gratifying legal victories serve to honor their losses, their dignity, and their historical memory.

"We are in high spirits," declared a participant in the genocide case. "We know we are continuing a struggle on behalf of history, on behalf of our children and grandchildren." For the full story, go online here:

[http://www.nisqua.org/themes\\_campaigns/index.asp?id=3845](http://www.nisqua.org/themes_campaigns/index.asp?id=3845)

## K/GAP STUDENT DELEGATION HITS THE ROAD ONCE MORE

by Julee Agar, Youth Initiative High School Teacher

This January, as the bitter cold and winter snowfall settles down upon the Driftless Region of SW Wisconsin, 6 high school students and their chaperones will head to the warm lands of the Mayan people of Guatemala for 3 weeks packed full of projects.

The KGAP Student Delegation of 2013 consists of 2 students from Youth Initiative High School, a Waldorf Initiative School--Grace Hallberg Cain, grade 12 and Kate Buche-Pattison, grade 11; 3 students from Laurel School, a Viroqua High School Charter School--Reese Westerhoff, grade 12, Cadan Cummings, grade 12, and Clara Zinky, grade 11; and 1 student representing Kickapoo High School--Daniel Shepard, grade 11. Chaperones for the 2013 trip will be Shawn LaVoie, Emily Colacino, Connie Vanderhyden, Ben and Julee Agar. Emily will be with the students for the full 3 weeks and the other chaperones will interact with students for various portions of their trip.

Approximately 7 delegations of high school students have participated in the KGAP Student Delegation trip dating back into the late 1990's. Delegation trips occur about every other year and have included travel to various regions of Guatemala. Students participate in service work projects, interviews and visits with local leaders, school and youth group visits, and Spanish language intensives. Most years the group travels to San Lucas Toliman on Lake Atitlan for service work and sessions on the economics and politics of Guatemala. We will dearly miss our sessions with Padre Greg Schaeffer of San Lucas Mission who recently passed away. The time spent in Chacula, returned refugee village in northern Guatemala, is decidedly an eye opener for the students and Connie Vanderhyden's integral relationship with this community gives us insight into a world far different from our life here in Midwest USA. Upon returning, the students will give a presentation of their trip on Friday evening, Jan. 25 at Youth Initiative High School.

**SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE** by *Jeri Pearson, former accompanier in Chaculá*

K/GAP supporters have been sponsoring high school students from Chaculá for over fifteen years! It seems incredible that we have helped over forty young Guatemalans get an education and obtain meaningful work within Guatemala to support their families and community. This is such a valuable program, and it will not continue without our support. Please consider donating to the K/GAP scholarship fund this year! We have been supporting ten students at a time for a period of three years, paying for about half of their expenses to receive a high school career-based education. The Guatemalan government is changing some of the requirements for obtaining a primary school teaching degree, which will mean more years of schooling for the young Guatemalans wishing to teach in their country. The K/GAP scholarship

program becomes even more valuable for helping students in their quest for an education. This last year K/GAP helped ten students with scholarships and seven will have graduated in October. Following are some translated excerpts from their letters to K/GAP supporters this year:

**Alfredo Vargas Salucio**

(studying auto mechanics): *"I cannot find words to thank you for the scholarship that you and your companions grant us in order to continue studying. Thank you because it is through this help that many youth that don't have the financial income are able to study a career."*

**Bladimir Montejo Castillo**

(studying teaching): *"I am informing you that this year I have felt very happy during the semester of classes living together*

*with my professors and classmates learning from each one of them what will serve me in my profession and as a Guatemalan citizen. I love the classes that are taught."*

**Tania Judith Vicente Vicente**

(studying teaching): *"I am writing this letter to let you know that thanks to God and you as an organization I have received fundamental financial support in order for me to continue to move forward in my studies and be able to advance academically in order to realize my goals."*

**Elizabeth Sánchez Cardona**

(studying teaching): *"For me it is a great support and be sure that I am taking ultimate advantage of it; I am putting in a lot effort to not let you or my parents down, since without your help I could not continue to move forward."*

**MANY THANKS TO OUR RECENT DONORS**

- |                                |                            |
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**MAILING LIST UPDATE!**

Please fill in this form and return it in the envelope provided. We are updating our mailing list and we are happy to continue sending you the newsletter. We publish twice a year. This is a great opportunity to send in your contribution to K/GAP but you do not have to send a donation to continue receiving the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to continue receiving the K/GAP newsletters by mail.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to receive the K/GAP newsletter via email and my email address is:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please take me off the KGAP newsletter list at this time.

**KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA  
ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT**

**K/GAP is a project of the Kickapoo Cultural Exchange, Gays Mills, WI, a 501c3 nonprofit organization registered in the state of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Contributions are tax deductible. In addition, K/GAP is affiliated with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) a national nonprofit organization that supports many projects and efforts in Guatemala.**

*We count on your generosity to continue supporting accompaniment, healthcare and education in Guatemala! All donation are tax deductible and can be mailed to:*  
KGAP  
c/o Connie Vanderhyden  
E9048 Pierce Hill Road  
Viroqua, WI 54665

*continued on back page  
Scholarship Update cont. from page 3*

**Luis Enrique Perez Montejo**  
(studying general mechanics): *"I am writing to thank you for the scholarship you have given me these three years, which has helped me very much, and because of it I am realizing my dreams and am able to be of better service to my community by being a mechanic."*

**Juan Bernardo Díaz Armas**  
(studying college prep): *"I am writing to thank you for the support you have given me, since because of it I have moved forward in my studies and you have given me an opportunity to fulfill my dreams of becoming somebody in life."*

**Ereidy Mejía Gutierrez**  
(studying accounting): *"I thank you over and over for your support and because thanks to it many dreams that were*



Recipients of High School scholarships

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