

KGAP newsletter

To Our Dear KGAP Supporters and Friends

by Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator

Dear KGAP supporters and friends,

I hope that this newsletter finds you in good health, enjoying time with friends and family as we move into the holiday season.

Every December I make plans for an annual January visit to Chaculá to accompany the village as they celebrate the anniversary of their return to Guatemala on January 12, 1994. I was honored to accompany the community on the return in 1994 and have been able to visit every year since then, including an extended stay of accompaniment in 1996. This January will mark their 24th anniversary! The village has changed so much and it has been an incredible privilege to collaborate over these years and to build such strong friendships and relationships. Many students and adults from Wisconsin and other places in the U.S. have traveled with us to Chaculá. In addition, I feel like all of you have also participated in this relationship through your interest and support over the years. Our friends in Chaculá know that those of us who visit are representing a much wider community of supporters who provide the foundation for our continuing collaboration. **WE ARE SO VERY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR INTEREST & GENEROSITY!!** I have just transferred our annual fund for scholarships and other educational support to the community. In addition, we were able to raise funding to fulfill an additional request for desks and blackboards for the recently constructed classrooms that will house the Chaculá Middle School (Instituto Básico). Once again, our friends from the RPCV (Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin) responded positively to our grant application (\$1,000) and because of your generosity, we were able to raise the rest of the \$3,520 request for this purpose.

This fall we participated in the annual NISGUA tour, hosting Guatemalan youth activist, Alex Escobar, and his interpreter, Becky Kaump. Alex gave several presentations in La Crosse and Viroqua during his visit. In this newsletter you will read an article about a special youth event organized by Shawn Lavoie and Youth Initiative High School students. We are very grateful to the owners of Kickapoo Coffee for offering their beautiful café space for the gathering.

In January, local nurse midwife, Jennifer McGeorge, will travel with us to Chaculá to visit and to teach a workshop for area midwives. She has written an article for this newsletter to keep you informed about this important work, continuing in the footsteps of another local nurse midwife, Kim Dowat, who has led many midwifery trainings in Chaculá over the years.

Both Jennifer and her nephew, Finley McGeorge, traveled to Guatemala with the YIHS student group last March and came away wanting to return and contribute. Jennifer's article explains Finley's role in the upcoming training in Chaculá.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and will look forward to our spring edition, with updates about the January journey and Chaculá community news. Don't forget you can always see photos and past newsletters on our website (www.kgap.org).

Sincerely,
Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator



A Letter From Jubinal

Hello Connie and KGAP friends!

It is a pleasure to greet you and the donors of the fund we received in order to purchase the furniture for the new classrooms of the Instituto Básico in Chaculá. These classrooms were built with funds from our municipality. We are very happy because for 21 years our middle school students have had to use the primary school classrooms to receive their classes. The municipality was not able to provide the desks and other necessary furniture so we requested your assistance and thank you so very much for your support! In January, 2018, our middle school students will be able to attend classes in a much more dignified and comfortable space! We will be able to purchase desks for the students and teachers, blackboards for each classroom, an administrator's desk and chair, and bookshelves for the teachers' resources with this fund. Thank you all so very much to all who have contributed to the continuing educational development in our community, Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá! We hope you enjoy seeing this photograph of our new Instituto Básico!

Sincerely,
Jubinal Carrillo Funes, Instituto Básico Director

Open Hands, Open Hearts

by Jennifer McGeorge, Nurse-Midwife

Twenty-four years ago, Connie and others accompanied the people of Chacula from refugee camps in Mexico to their new home community in Guatemala. They were like social justice midwives helping to give birth to a community and new life. My career in maternal-child health and midwifery spans that same 24 years, and over time I have cultivated aspirations of working internationally and with indigenous midwives. In March of 2017, my dream to come to Chacula with Connie became a reality. We travelled with high school students from Viroqua, including my nephew, Finley. Being a part of their youthful, heartfelt experience was inspirational and gratifying.

Connie arranged a meeting with a local midwife and the health workers at the clinic in Chacula. Their dedication, knowledge, and skill base are impressive. It is amazing to see how much they are able to do with so few resources. We had a lively conversation about midwifery, birth, maternity care, and emergency management. Postpartum hemorrhage is one of the most serious complications of childbirth worldwide. Through the course of our discussion it became clear that one of the barriers they have to appropriate management of postpartum hemorrhage is a lack of refrigeration for medications. With Connie's help, we worked out a plan to help the Chacula clinic get a refrigerator for medication. This will help decrease bleeding and maternal complications, but also improve the working reality of the health workers & midwives--with improved ability to care for their patients, decreased severity of

emergency management, and less traumatic transport to hospitals when this is needed.

The highlight of the trip was going up the mountain to Yalambojoch to meet the mother-daughter midwife team of Maria and Petrona. What amazing women! They have an incredible heritage of midwifery that stretches back their maternal line and enriches their work and the women they serve. Their resources may be few, but their knowledge of midwifery & birth is rich and they make the absolute most of everything that they have. Maria's descriptions of the management of maternal complications demonstrated great knowledge and experience. Petrona has trained as a nurse and the care

they offer is an excellent blend of traditional midwifery and medical skill.

This blend of midwifery and medical skill provides opportunities to improve maternal child healthcare and to build bridges between resource poor and resource rich health-care environments. In January, 2018 I will be returning to Guatemala with Connie to do a training with 20 indigenous midwives on emergency obstetrical skills training & complication management. As part of his senior project my nephew, Finley, will be accompanying me and assisting with the training. He has also raised money for midwifery equipment and to fund the conference for 20 Mayan midwives, to include transport to Chacula, lodging and food.

We are so excited for this great opportunity for learning, shar-

ing, and further exploration of the midwifery tradition of Open Hands, Open Hearts.



Dona Maria, midwife in Yalambojoch

Youth in Action: Defending Life and Land in Guatemala and Wisconsin

by Shawn Michael Lavoie, YIHS teacher and Guatemala Trip Leader

Over 50 people crowded into the new Kickapoo Coffee shop on Main Street in Viroqua. The mid-October night air was beginning to feel crisp, but inside the heat was rising. Alex Escobar Prado, a youth activist from south-eastern Guatemala, was about to begin his presentation and the room went quiet. TJ Semanchin, co-owner of Kickapoo Coffee, welcomed everyone and made the connection between the fine coffees his business serves and the small farmers, many in Guatemala, who grow it. Then Connie Vanderhyden, founder of the Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project (KGAP), welcomed Alex and Becky, his translator who works with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NIS-GUA) in Guatemala City (see nisqua.org for more info). Connie expressed her gratitude for such a big audience, especially for those who were long time supporters of KGAP. Lastly, I introduced the program for the evening: we would hear from Alex about youth activists who are protesting large-scale mining projects and their detrimental impacts on their communities. Then, we'd hear from three fellow youth activists based in Viroqua.

The goal of this event, "Youth in Action," was to spark a dialogue among youth who are engaged in activism. Pretty straight-forward, yet during this intensely reactive political moment, it felt radical to even say the word "activism" out loud. I know many young people who care so much about what's happening to their world, yet are afraid to even speak out, let alone declare themselves activists.

Alex, however, is not afraid to speak out. His presentation was an inspiration for fellow youth and all us adults as well. He works with JODVID (Jovenes Organizados en Defensa de la Vida or Youth Organized in Defense of Life) a youth-led group raising awareness about the effects of mining in Guatemala and organizing direct actions to protect their communities. Their group takes their inspiration from a fellow youth activist who was killed in the fight against the mines. So far they've successfully activated many youth across several regions of the country and have held many large protests and workshops. Of course, their work is far from finished. One of the purposes of the US tour is to raise awareness about this issue outside of Guatemala, as the companies funding the projects are owned by American and Canadian businesses.



When Alex finished, Peter Turino who organizes the LGBTQ student group at Youth Initiative High School (YIHS) spoke about their efforts to address gender and sexuality phobias and abuses in the school and the broader community. Then Tomoki Yoshihama, a founding fellow of Thoreau College, spoke about his experience in the last few years in Japan where he helped to start a youth group to build community after the devastating tsunami. Lastly, Ingrid Wendland, an organizer with the Wisconsin Youth Action Network, spoke passionately about the need to address global warming and the direct action tactics that empower young people to make change.

After hearing from the diverse perspectives of the youth panel, the audience asked several questions and shared their appreciation for the courage and inspiration they see in these young people. One of the final questions, which Ingrid asked Alex, was how do you stay hopeful in the face of such daunting challenges? Alex spoke to the need to overcome, to not get bogged down by the obstacles the world (or the mining companies) put in your way. He spoke about the inspiration and support he receives from friends and family and how that gives him the strength to fight on.

At the end of the evening, we all left more aware of the immense challenges facing us in Wisconsin and the people of Guatemala. In addition, all of us in attendance left with a boost of hope. Youth are leading the way, but it's up to all of us take action to defend life and land.

Thanks to our Recent Donors!

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KGAP
c/o Connie Vanderhyden
E9048 PIERCE HILL RD.
VIROQUA, WI 54665

and be sure to visit our
website:
www.kgap.org

KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT (KGAP)

KGAP 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, KGAP is affiliated with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISQUA) a national non-profit organization that supports many projects and efforts in Guatemala. Visit NISQUA online at nisqua.org