

KGAP newsletter

¡Saludos!

by *Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator*

I hope this KGAP newsletter finds you healthy and safe in the company of family and friends during this stressful time of the COVID 19 pandemic. In May we chose to send out an emergency food-security appeal letter instead of a newsletter and we feel deep gratitude for the tremendous response we received. In this newsletter you will hear from many Chaculenses, describing how they have had to adapt to the pandemic as they strive to take care of themselves and their individual and community responsibilities. As you can imagine, life has been very challenging for the community, isolated and marginalized without governmental assistance of any significance. Beginning in March, they initiated a stay-at-home order for many months and have only recently begun to open up and allow more movement in and out of the community. So far there have been no cases in Chaculá but they are aware of cases and deaths in neighboring villages and plan to continue following strict guidelines going forward.

Recently, Central America has been hit very hard by more than one hurricane. The news from Chaculá is that they have been fortunate so far, receiving heavy rain frequently but no tremendous damage, different from other parts of Guatemala and other countries.

It is hard for me to realize I will not be able to visit friends in Chaculá in 2021, especially since we also had to cancel our plans for delegation visits in 2020. I recently received the news that one of the elders, José Domingo Montejo, has passed away and I was filled with memories and emotion. Don Chepe (short for José) and his wife, Doña Rosa, have been strong community members and great friends of all the accompaniers who have lived in and visited Chaculá over the years. I can't count the number of times I have had the pleasure of visiting them in their very humble home, talking about everything from planting and nurturing vegetables to Guatemala and

U.S. politics. Doña Rosa always prepared tostadas for me, knowing how much I like the very toasty tortillas. I watched them become parents again, as they raised several of their grandchildren when their parents had to live away from home for economic reasons. Don Chepe and Doña Rosa exude a strength and perseverance that goes beyond measure. along with deep kindness, curiosity, love and equanimity.

I wish I could be in the community to honor Don Chepe but know that I will have opportunities to visit Doña Rosa and share memories and affection in years to come. I wanted to share this with the KGAP community, and the following picture, in order to honor Don Chepe in this small way.

I invite you to check the NISGUA website at www.nisgua.org to follow current events in Guatemala. This is NISGUA's 40th anniversary and the focus of the yearly calendar is a celebration of solidarity over this period of time. You can order yours at: <https://nisgua.org/shop-with-nisgua/>

Thank you all for your continuing solidarity! With your support, we will continue to collaborate with health, education, and emergency needs in Chaculá as we go forward into the New Year.

*Connie with Don Chepe (José Domingo Montejo)
photo by Andi Alexander*



Past newsletters and photos can be viewed online at www.kgap.org.

All donations are tax deductible and can be mailed to:
KGAP c/o Connie Vanderhyden,
E9048 Pierce Hill Road
Viroqua, WI 54665

Chaculá Education Updates

Guatemala initiated a strict lock-down in March, 2020, which was taken very seriously in Chaculá. For the most part, everyone stayed at home for many months. Teachers, health promoters and community leaders took responsibility for the safety, security, food, health, education and communication needs. The following letters are translations of letters we have received from educators and students in the community, describing the current situation and expressing gratitude for KGAP economic support for the schools in Chaculá as well as scholarships for Middle and High School students.

All notes and translations in all of the updates in this newsletter are by Connie Vanderhyden.

Adult Education and Literacy Committee

Dear Supporters,

Education in Guatemala is free and obligatory from age 7 to 13, but the educational system isn't able to cover the needs of the population. There aren't enough schools, classrooms or teachers and this causes illiteracy in our nation. Literacy rates are much lower in rural indigenous areas and especially among women. As the committee for the Chaculá Literacy Center, we have been working for community advancement through education. We focus principally on supporting women so that they won't suffer discrimination from lack of education. We are very grateful for your organization's contributions! Thanks to your financial support*, we have been able to continue forward and steadily, step by step, we will advance together!

Sincerely, Eulalio y Humberto, Literacy Center Staff

**KGAP has donated \$700/year to the Literacy Center in Chaculá for 5 years. The committee has informed us that they continued to communicate with their adult students throughout the academic year (January- November), delivering lessons to their homes and keeping the program alive.*



Eulalio at the Literacy Center
photo by Andi Alexander

High School Scholarship Students

The following is a short summary of the letters received from many scholarship students who are struggling to keep up with their studies during the pandemic but continue to send their grades and greetings regularly.

Dear KGAP donors,

It gives us great pleasure to send you greetings and our grades from this current quarter. We can tell you that we did well, passing all courses, although we continue to have distance classes due to the situation we are experiencing. It has been very stressful because sometimes we don't have an internet signal but we have assignments to hand in and classes to attend. We feel like we are losing ground at times because it isn't the same as being present in class with our teachers and peers. We hope the situation improves for the coming year. We want to express our gratitude because without the scholarship that your organization has given us, this wouldn't be possible. Blessings to you and all your families!

Sincerely, Students from Chaculá



Students from Chaculá
photo by Andi Alexander

Chaculá Education Updates, continued

Primary and Middle School Teachers

The Primary and Middle School teachers in Chaculá have adapted to the pandemic situation and stay-at-home community-wide order by taking assignments and worksheets to the families of the students, giving guidance to parents who will be helping their children complete the work, and then regularly picking up the notebooks to make corrections and comments. Middle School students often are able to communicate and work online, using cell phones primarily, as most people do not have computers or internet access at home. Their teachers also visit their homes regularly to deliver assignments and guidance. (Note: The Primary School is government sponsored, receiving funds and directives from the federal government. The Middle School is funded in part by the municipality but mostly by the community, with KGAP and other organizational support.) The following is a combination of the letters received from two of the teachers, Darwin Darinel Funes Díaz and Roselín Manuel Mejía Gutiérrez.

Dear Connie and friends in solidarity,

Please accept our cordial and attentive greetings, with the hope that you and your loved ones are well.

With this letter, we would like to express our sincere gratitude for the unconditional support you have given to the Instituto Básico (Middle School) in Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá. We are aware that the money donated by friends in solidarity is acquired with great effort and, therefore, it is invested in the best way possible to help the young people of Chaculá achieve their educational goals in order to create a better future.

The purpose of this letter is to share the experiences we have had during the process of education at a distance. It is a difficult task to deliver education to the students' homes due to the conditions in which the majority of the families live. Many don't have telephone with internet access, much less the ability to connect to a digital platform like zoom, blackboard, or others. It makes it very hard for the teachers, and even more difficult for students, but we still have done everything possible to take a little bit of knowledge to the homes, where we find the students hidden away because of the pandemic caused by COVID 19. We went all over the community, delivering assignments and worksheets to the students, trying to pull them along so no one remained behind. We let them know that the more difficult a situation is, the more strength is necessary to get ahead. We shouldn't go backwards, but if we do, it should be in order to grab the momentum to propel us forward again! The situation was complicated and no one was prepared for it, but with will-power and God's help, we have succeeded in finishing the school year, retaining the majority of students who now recognize, with joy, that "yes, we can!"

The spirit of solidarity you show toward your fellow humans is admirable. Therefore, we thank you for all the support and hope to maintain our friendship. May God bless you, because you will live through our generations always!

Sincerely, Darwin Darinel Funes Díaz, Roselín Manuel Mejía Gutierrez



*Prof. Manuel Mejía Gutierrez (2nd from right) with students from Chaculá
photo by Andi Alexander*

MANY THANKS TO OUR DONORS!

December 2019 to November 2020

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David Messenbring
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(<i>in honor of Jennifer McGeorge</i>)
Mark Kastel |
|--|---|---|

This chart shows how the KGAP 2020 education fund was distributed. Thank you to our many donors who made this possible!

No.	Description	Quantity	Total
1	19 High School Scholarships	Q6,000 (\$771) per student	Q114,000 (\$14, 648)
2	65 Middle School scholarships	Q350 (44.97) per student	Q22,750 (\$2923)
3	65 Middle School keyboarding classes	Q250 (\$32.12) per student	Q16,250 (\$2088)
4	Administrative expenditures for Chaculá Middle School	Q13,500 (\$1735)	Q13,500 (\$1735)
5	Paint for Middle School (Instituto Básico)	5 buckets of paint @ Q1,500 (\$192.80)	Q7,000 (\$964)
6	Middle School Music Instructor salary	Q400 (51.40) per month for 10 months	Q4,000 (\$514)
7	Replace band instruments-Middle School	Various instruments at different costs	Q1,500 (\$193)
8	Administrative expenditures for Chaculá Primary School	Q3,500 (\$450) for travel expenses for the Director to attend meetings about elementary school issues	Q3,500 (\$450)
		TOTAL	Q183,000 (23,515)

News from Chaculá Health Promoters

As many of you may remember, the Chaculá Health Clinic has served the community and surrounding villages since it was constructed in 1995. In 2003, community leaders and Health Promoters, nurses, and midwives formed a non-profit association, APROSUVI, to be able to solicit funding for health education programs in the area, clinic equipment and staffing. Over the years, KGAP has responded to requests for economic support for a variety of educational trainings and, lately, for the establishment of an emergency medical fund (\$5,000/year). Chaculá is in Huehuetenango, the most populated state in Guatemala, where 85% of the population is indigenous and lives in poverty or extreme poverty. Following is an update from the clinic staff, describing a little bit about the situation over this past year and how the emergency fund has been utilized.

Dear Friends in Solidarity,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank KGAP for your collaboration with APROSUVI and, especially, with the community of Nueva Esperanza Chaculá over all these years. Without a doubt, you have witnessed our survival and, year after year, the development that we achieved since 1994, when we returned to Guatemala. Thank you for your generous yearly economic support, which makes it possible for us to help people who suffer serious health problems. Many times we confront health emergencies and we need to take patients to specialists in the hospitals in Huehuetenango in order to save their lives.

The funds we have received this year were used, in part,

to purchase food for widows, orphans and the very ill. Due to the arrival of coronavirus, survival conditions have been more precarious and it has been necessary to support them with basic food supplies. We also purchased a supply of medicines to prevent and treat people that could contract the virus. In addition, we purchased two sprayer units that have been utilized to disinfect trucks and vegetables and any other products that arrive from outside the community.

The remainder of the funds continue to be used to support patients who are in need of critical care and to provide medicines for elders and for those who are unable to purchase them on their own.

With respect to healthcare, the situation continues to be precarious in the whole country due to governmental policies, the arrival of the coronavirus and hurricane ETA. Chronic malnutrition is growing in families and communities and has always been a scourge in the rural, indigenous areas.

We hope this information helps you understand what is happening in our communities and the needs of our neighbors and relatives. It is unfortunate but our solidarity unites us and gives us the strength to accompany those most in need.

We want to reiterate our thanks to your whole group. You have made it possible for us to help so many people in need in our communities!

Sincerely, Chaculá Health Promoters



*Preparing for food distribution. See related article on back page.
photo by Jubinal Carrillo Fuenes*

Food Security in Chaculá

In May, 2020, you received a KGAP letter explaining that there were deep concerns in the community of Chaculá about food insecurity, due to the pandemic. Inspired by the initiative of Jane Benton, YIHS graduating senior who raised almost \$2,000 for emergency medical and food assistance in Chaculá, you responded generously. We were able to send a fund, totaling \$8,000, to the Community Development Council and Mayors of Chaculá to address this critical need. The first installment of \$5,000 was used to purchase basic food supplies and distributed equally to all families in the community. The second installment of \$3,000 was reserved for specific families and individuals who find themselves in dire circumstances. Following is the translated letter of thanks we have received from the Council (COCODE). The picture on page 5 shows the distribution of food items.

Señora Connie and KGAP supporters,

It gives us great pleasure to send you our warm and cordial greetings, hoping that you all are experiencing success in your efforts, which you take on with enthusiasm and love.

By means of this letter, we want to extend to you our profound gratitude for your economic and sentimental collaboration with our beautiful community, Chaculá. All families have benefited from your generosity and everyone is filled with admiration and gratefulness. We trust that God will shower you with blessings which we hope will grow day in and day out. At the same time, we want to extend an invitation to all the collaborators to visit us one day. You will be welcomed with open arms!

Your actions demonstrate hard work and excellent organization on the part of your team and community members. That is the only explanation for the generous donations that, thanks to your efforts, have arrived at an opportune time.

We thank you all for your big hearts and the noble gesture of your collaborative spirit!

Attentively, Community Mayors and the Community Development Council of Chaculá

KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT (KGAP) see www.kgap.org for more information. KGAP is a project of Youth Initiative High School, a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Contributions are tax deductible. In addition, KGAP is affiliated with the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) a national non-profit organization that supports many projects and efforts in Guatemala. More information about NISGUA can be found at <https://niscua.org>