

KGAP newsletter

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

by *Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator*

I hope this edition of the Fall 2016 KGAP newsletter finds you well, enjoying your work and play with family, friends and colleagues!

Over the past months I have had the opportunity to participate in 3 different social justice conferences. Two of the conferences were at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, where I work in the Office of Multicultural Student Services. I was asked to present about KGAP as an example of Solidarity in Action. The third conference was the annual NISGUA/GAP gathering, this year held over Labor Day weekend in Ft. Collins, Colorado. It was a reunion of some “old” friends and an occasion to meet new friends in the accompanier and sponsoring community network. The central focus of the gathering was a workshop presented by the Catalyst Project from Oakland, California, on racial justice with a focus on white privilege in social justice movements.

NISGUA is currently looking to expand U.S. programming through a racial justice lens. I encourage you to take a look at the NISGUA website (www.nisgua.org) for on-going articles about the work of accompaniment, justice, and accountability in Guatemala as well as the expanded U.S. initiatives. Be sure to look at the Blog posts, as they cover current events and news.

The racial justice workshop at the GAP Gathering reinforced my thoughts about the importance of solidarity in building sustainable, equitable relationships between communities both here in the U.S. and internationally. In my presentations lately I have focused on what solidarity looks like. Following are a few excerpts: I am extremely grateful to be part of the response to the request for accompaniment, which resulted in the creation of the Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) and our sponsoring community, the Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project (KGAP). The Guatemalans have always been capable of carrying out their own struggle for peace and justice and they knew that our presence could lend them space, moral support and eye-witness accounts to further their cause.

KGAP has collaborated over the years with Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá, in an effort to provide accompaniment and to assist in the areas of education and healthcare. Once

again, we have always responded to the needs expressed by the Guatemalans, and have been honored to walk with them as they have made significant advances in the services their community provides its members. Here in Wisconsin, we have worked as a community to raise funds and deepen awareness about the situation in Guatemala and the part our own government played in the genocide and devastation our friends have suffered.

Many students and adults from this area have made the journey to Nueva Esperanza to visit, share, and build relationships. I know that everyone who has come on one of the trips to Chaculá realizes that the community considers all of us “solidarios” and “acompañantes”. We are allies working together for a better, more inclusive world.

I have been reading lately several articles that take a critical look at the traditional structure of charitable or philanthropic giving. Charity itself, giving to those in need, is usually generated out of a positive intent and, especially when responding to disasters or emergencies, can have a very positive impact. However, philanthropist Peter Buffett (Warren Buffett’s son), in an article titled “Philanthropic Colonialism” writes that philanthropy generated out of “conscience laundering”, a desire to “save the day” or to generate investment gains with little regard for culture, geography or societal norms can keep the existing structure

of top down relationships and inequality in place. “We need to constantly challenge and question ourselves to ensure we are responding to things that are happening on the ground” and ask “what are the deeper systemic solutions?” (New York Times, 7/26/13).

The Guatemala Accompaniment Project is one solidarity organization among many. As “solidarios” we challenge ourselves to think about impact as well as intent. We strive for respectful, equal, and horizontal relationships. We acknowledge the need for and are committed to systemic change. We take responsibility for our privileges and strive to be part of changing the structure of relationships between dominant and marginalized communities. We are committed to strive for equality and justice everywhere.



*Don Julio Diaz speaking with Connie Vanderhyden,
photo by Andi Alexander, ©2016*

This is what Solidarity looks like!

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FROM THE TEACHERS IN NUEVA ESPERANZA, CHACULÁ

translation by Connie Vanderhyden

Dear Connie and KGAP Friends,

Here you will find the vision that we have developed regarding the education of the children and youth of our community. This is what we dream of and we do everything possible to support the children and youth, motivating them to develop the awareness necessary to do their very best in order to confront every problem that we experience in our community and our country on a daily basis.

VISIÓN

Provide a comprehensive formation for the youth in the acquisition of skills, abilities, and knowledge that will help them achieve their dreams and develop their full potential in the community they will serve.

Promote a spirit of mutual solidarity between the youth and the people they will relate to in their future professions. Encourage them to develop a competitive edge in all the work they accomplish to be able to provide better conditions for themselves and their families.

As facilitators of the KGAP Scholarship Program, part of our vision is to help students and parents understand the importance of education for the young people from our community and neighboring communities. This is how we can contribute to the struggle to improve and develop our society. The youth who continue to study help shrink the massive migration of minors to the U.S. and Mexico and also diminish the number of young people joining gangs. We are teachers by profession, prepared and up-to-date on participatory methods to facilitate the learning process.

SOLIDARITY IN ACTION, *continued from page 1*

In 2017 I will take two brief trips to Chaculá. In January I will meet with the newly organized education association, comprised of teachers and parents from the community. You will see an article in this newsletter about the Chaculá Educational Vision and Mission, written by the middle school director Jubinal Carrillo Funes.

In March I will take a journey with students from Youth Initiative High School (YIHS) to Chaculá. Shawn Lavoie and Natalie McIntyre will be guiding the group through a 3-week experience in Guatemala. I will meet them and introduce them to the village during the last week of their trip. This will be the 8th student trip to Chaculá over the past 16 years. We look forward to many unique experiences and to further conversations about how we can continue to grow the relationship between Youth Initiative High School and the teachers and students of Chaculá.

Last spring YIHS students and faculty spearheaded a very successful event to raise funding for teacher resource books at all levels in the village schools. These funds were added to the grant KGAP received from the Returned Peace Corps

MISIÓN

Through the comprehensive education of the youth, we contribute to the socioeconomic development of Guatemala. We promote a culture of peace, democracy and participation, organization and community responsibility in the search for viable and practical solutions to meet the necessities and interests of the students with the goal of helping them attain dignified lives as human beings, dedicated to the common good.

Our mission is to make it possible for all students who finish their primary school education to continue their studies and graduate from the middle school level and beyond. This way we are collaborating fully and positively with the assistance we receive from the donors in collaboration with our great friends Connie, Gerina, Martin, and Martha. They are part of our community and have always been present in our struggles. Because of them and all the donors to this excellent project, we have attained many advances in the development of education in our community and neighboring communities.

We bid farewell, extending a handshake as symbol of gratitude to all who are in solidarity with our community of Chaculá. Thank you for the great friendship you have always extended to us!

from,

Jubinal Carrillo Funes and all the students and teachers of the primary, middle and high school in Chaculá.

Volunteers of Wisconsin. Look for the articles and pictures from some of the Chaculá teachers about the textbooks in this newsletter.

KGAP is also hoping to join with another sponsoring community to directly support a newly trained accompanier in 2017. We have been donating to the general NISGUA/GAP accompaniment fund but feel ready to increase our involvement with this important aspect of the work once again.

We consider that you are all participants in this solidarity relationship with Chaculá! With your interest and support, we are able to continue our partnerships and collaboration in this important social justice work.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Please send tax-deductible donations to:
 KGAP c/o CONNIE VANDERHYDEN
 E9048 PIERCE HILL RD.
 VIROQUA, WI 54665

NEWS AND LETTERS FROM CHACULA

translation by Connie Vanderhyden

FROM: Kindergarten and Middle School Teachers

Hello Dear Friends, It is a pleasure to write to you, hoping that you and your families are healthy and that you are having success in all your daily activities!

We are writing to thank you for all the support you have given to our dear community of Chaculá, especially in the area of education. As you know, there are many families with scarce resources who wouldn't have been able to give their children a high level of education. But thanks to the scholarships, many young men and women have been able to attain their goals and dreams. They have been able to finish their studies, graduate and some have found employment. Chaculá now has community members who have different careers: primary school teachers, kindergarten teachers, mechanics, accountants, business administrators, and more. Thanks to you and KGAP they have achieved many goals!

We also thank you for the construction of the playground that provides a space for children and youth to play games and relax. This is also part of their education. We are also grateful for the secure fence around the school yard and the textbooks for teachers based on the National Curriculum of our country. Now we are able to enrich the learning process of the students. It would be magnificent if each student could have their own books as well! This is one of our dreams and we hope that someday we will be able to achieve it. That way the educational process will be even more effective.

A thousand thanks to you and all KGAP friends!

*Miriam Carrillo, Neiver Cano Gómez, and
Alma Julissa Carrillo Pérez*

FROM: Teresa Vargas, KGAP Scholarship recipient

Colonia Nueva Esperanza Chacula. 9/21/2016.

I am Teresa Yolanda Perez Vargas and I am writing to with great respect, sending you my sincere wishes for success in your daily endeavors. The purpose of this letter is to thank you for the support you have given me and to happily inform you that I completed my academic program with a good record. My parents and I are proud of the success I have had and they also want to thank you for the support you have given me. Throughout this experience I have been able to put my educational abilities into practice, becoming a role model and demonstrating leadership skills in the educational center as well as in society.

Thanks to all the donors in the KGAP scholarship program, I have been able to meet and collaborate with people from different backgrounds and, without a doubt, my career path has left me with excellent experience in how to give children a good education. Once again, many thanks to everyone who supports this scholarship program! With your support I completed my studies and graduated as an Early Childhood Intercultural and Bilingual teacher!

Gratefully, I take my leave sending many blessings to all!

Teresa Yolanda Perez Vargas

Update from Teresa: It has been very hard to get a job in my career but right now I am working as communications specialist for a local women's organization. This has allowed me to meet new people and to participate in workshops for women.



Karina Diaz with her family ~ 2016 KGAP scholarship graduate



Teresa Yolanda Perez Vargas with children from the Early Childhood Program

“WE MARCH BECAUSE WHERE THERE IS MILITARIZATION, THERE IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE”

*Maudí Tzay joins hundreds of activists in denouncing ongoing U.S. militarization at this year's
SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH (SOAW) Convergence*

This year's NISQUA tour, “Guatemalan Women Healing Towards Justice: The Case of Sepur Zarco,” kicked off at the U.S.-Mexico border, where Maudí Tzay joined hundreds of other activists at the annual School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) Convergence. Previously held each year in Fort Benning, Georgia, at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly known as the School of the Americas), SOAW moved the Convergence for the first time this year to the border in Nogales, Arizona/Sonora to protest ongoing U.S. militarization.

The crimes against humanity committed by the Guatemalan military during the country's internal armed conflict were carried out with direct support and training by the U.S. govern-

ment. Many of the high-ranking military officials in the Guatemalan military who carried out or ordered the torture, forced disappearance, massacres, sexual slavery, or other crimes against humanity were trained to do so at the School of the Americas.

Today, U.S. domestic and foreign policy continues to be based in the militarization of communities and borders. Maudí Tzay, community psychologist with ECAP and representing the Alliance to End Silence and Impunity as this year's NISQUA tour speaker, spoke at the Convergence, drawing links between the sexual violence faced by women during the armed conflict and the ongoing violence women face during migration between Central America and the United States.



photo by Andi Alexander, ©2016

A LETTER FROM THE NETWORK IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA (NISGUA)

Dear NISGUA family,

In the wake of the recent election of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States, like many of you, we have felt shock, grief, and outrage. We have felt fear for the future of our communities, for the safety of our neighbors, and for the impact this next era will have on communities in the Global South who for centuries have struggled for self-determination, justice, and dignity.

As we've tried to apprehend the terrible consequences of an incoming administration that is so transparently invested in white supremacy, xenophobia, homophobia, and misogyny, we've taken to the streets and found courage in our communities. In this time of political uncertainty, we feel called to ground ourselves in the work that has brought us here, and we recommit ourselves to our shared vision of a world free from imperialist violence and rooted in racial, economic, and social justice.

We are painfully aware of the impacts unjust systems have on targeted people and communities in the U.S. and that these systems exert even more pressure on those we hold relationship with in Guatemala. We recommit to internationalism and solidarity during this time of domestic upheaval and believe that solidarity with social movements in Guatemala is an essential component of our social justice strategy here in the U.S.

As we continue to find our way forward, we must follow the leadership, lessons, demands and resilience of those with daily, lived experience in resisting state violence and repression. We cannot make the mistake of choosing one over the other. Now is not the time to narrow our focus; it is urgent that we hold a broader vision that includes grassroots, global solidarity.

Today, more than ever, it is critical that people of conscience in the U.S. stand firm with conviction against hate and for the collective liberation of all people. We deeply believe in internationalism and in the instructive resilience and courage of 500 years of resistance to colonialism and imperialism that has guided us for 35 years and will continue to guide us in the years to come.

In solidarity, NISGUA staff, board, and network members

MANY THANKS TO OUR RECENT DONORS!

Barry Jensen
Marty Clearfield and Bonnie Wright
Bill Brooke
Maggie Jones
Bill Pfitsch and Andi Alexander
Bill and Susan Townsley
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Paul Bergquist and Carole Austin

Marjorie Dick
Rob Horwich
Marta Engel
Nancy and Ken Schofield
John and Lynda Anderson

IN HONOR OF JERI PEARSON:

Judith Witt-Croswhite and Bruce Pack
Marty Pearson
Jeffry Lewis and Lydia Longwell Lewis
Sandra Lof
Cynthia and Lee Theorin
Susan Pope



photo by Andi Alexander, ©2016



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MAILING LIST UPDATE!

KGAP would like to update our mailing list.
PLEASE send an email to:
connie.vanderhyden@gmail.com
to let us know if you would like to continue receiving the KGAP newsletter.
We hope you say YES but would like to know either way!
Thank you.

If you would rather get the newsletter via email, please be sure to let Connie know and your email address will be put on the digital mailing list.

ATTENTION
DRIFTLESS AREA
KGAP SUPPORTERS

1% Wednesday at the
Viroqua Food Coop will be in
honor of KGAP
on **Wednesday, January 11**.
1% of all sales will be donated
to the Kickapoo/Guatemala
Accompaniment Project.
So if you are a coop shopper,
please plan to shop on January
11 and support KGAP while
buying your groceries!



Chaculá teachers Gumercinda López, Lisbeth Soto, and Jesús Cardona

photo by Andi Alexand©2016

*To find out more about KGAP and to see more photos of Chaculá and
its people taken by photographer
Andi Alexander, please 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 (NISGUA) a national non-profit organization that supports many projects and efforts in Guatemala. To find out more about KGAP, visit our website: www.kgap.org

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