

KGAP newsletter

Warm Greetings to All!

by *Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator*

I hope this newsletter finds you very well, enjoying the holiday season with friends and family! This winter edition of the KGAP newsletter includes information about our education and healthcare projects in collaboration with Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá. As you may remember, KGAP is one of the sponsoring communities in the Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) that finds its home under the national organization, NISGUA. I highly recommend checking out the website www.nisgua.org. There you will find an abundance of important historical and current information about Guatemala and NISGUA on-going projects and collaborations.

It is very exciting for me to report to you that my daughter-in-law, Luisa Rivera, is currently doing research on generational trauma in Chaculá for her PhD in biological anthropology at Emory University in Atlanta, GA. Luisa traveled to Chaculá many times with the midwifery training team and is well known in the community. Over the last few years she has spent several months in Chaculá in preparation for her year of research which has now begun. I hope you enjoy Luisa's introduction to her project and we can all look forward to more reflections and information from her in subsequent newsletters.

I am so very concerned about the current situation for immigrants seeking asylum in the U.S. as well as those living and working here with or without documentation. Every day I read about desperate situations and, as an interpreter at a local health clinic, I witness the difficulties and uncertainties of many members of the local Latino community. I know we can try to affect policy here in the U.S. and must do so whenever possible. I appreciate the great work many organizations are doing to support and assist those seeking a better life for themselves and their families in the U.S.

It is within this context that I am and will be forever grateful for our friendship and collaboration with Chaculá. From the beginning of the creation of KGAP, our Guatemalan friends have made it clear that their primary hope and desire is to live and work in their country, contributing to and building up their own community and region to create a safe and nurturing place for themselves and their families. Over the years, some individuals from Chaculá have migrated to the U.S. and have sent money back, contributing to the development of the community and their families. Most travel back to Guatemala for periods of time before possibly attempting the dangerous journey, once again, in order to work and send money home. Presently, I am told that very few members of the community are traveling to the U.S. for work. I believe this is partly due to the current U.S. policy which is creating an increase in danger and uncertainty. Another contributing factor, I believe, is that the majority of young people are getting an education and

finding a way to either continue to study at the university level and/or find employment after graduation from high school and stay in Guatemala!

KGAP has had a role in this positive outcome and we want you to know how grateful we are for your support over all these years! Our scholarship program has provided incentive and enough economic support to open up doors and possibilities for many students and families from Chaculá.

Thank you, thank you, from the bottom of my heart!

Generaciones

by *Luisa Rivera*

Connie has been asking me to write something for the KGAP newsletter for about as long as I've been going to Chaculá, almost a decade now. I think it's been hard for me to want to do so, because, for a long time, I was unsure I could offer a perspective others hadn't already provided. I started going to Chaculá when I was in my early twenties, still finding my own identity as a Latinx woman in the postcolony. Back then, it seemed to me like a chance to "to make a difference"—doing exactly what I wasn't sure. I interpreted for the midwives Kim Dowat and Jennifer McGeorge, and found my niche in the midwifery workshop, playing the role of the woman in labor—popping in and out of character to interpret the basic hand maneuvers that save lives across the world. We would repeat tone, trauma, tissue—tono, trauma, tejido—ad nauseum, encouraging midwives to memorize the major causes of hemorrhage, to make them second nature, so that, when a catastrophic bleed hit without warning, they would know what to do.

Perhaps more compelling than "really helping", I found that Chaculá reminded me of the life my mother lived in rural Puerto Rico in the 1960's, the concrete floors and tin roofs, the grandmothers with feet like tree roots. When I was a college senior, my mother told me that she'd loved to imagine her clothes were dragons when she rinsed them in the river. I had no idea my parents were that kind of poor—river washing poor. Having grown up middle class in the United States, I found spending time in Chaculá helped me understand things I'd failed to understand about my own family—the quiet ways women resist everyday machismo or the intense longing provoked by seeing your neighbors install new tile floors, while

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Sales of this calendar directly support NISGUA's program work, building mutually beneficial ties between the people of the U.S. and Guatemala to strengthen the global movement for justice. Follow this link to purchase:

<https://nisgua.org/shop-with-nisgua/>



Chaculá High School Student Letters

From Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator: I would like to share some excerpts from a few of the letters we have received from our scholarship recipients. The students send 2 or 3 email letters per year to notify us of their grades and express their gratitude. In Guatemala, high school students may choose to study in a university preparatory track (bachillerato) or a more technical oriented track (diversificado). The majority choose a technical career because they are uncertain of being able to continue studying at the university level. With a technical degree, they have a good chance of finding a job, helping to support their families, and remaining close to their community.

With your support we have been able to assist 96 students from Chaculá attain their high school education since we began the scholarship program in 1997!

We have recently received a listing of all the students and what they are doing at present. Out of all these students, only 4 are living and working in the United States. We are honored to be part of supporting individuals and the community in the struggle to study, work, and live in Guatemala! I hope you enjoy hearing from the following students. (I am not including their grades here but they are all passing!)

Good afternoon Sra. Connie and the KGAP community,

I hope you are well and I send my greetings so I can share my grades from this last quarter.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for the support you have given me to continue studying. Thanks to you and my parents, I was able to take another step to increase my knowledge and arrive at a more advanced level.

Without more to say right now, I will say goodbye, wishing you all the best and may God bless you always!

Lilia Perez
(Graduating in Science & Humanities with a focus on Nursing)

Greetings from Karen Mishelle!

Good day! I hope this message finds you all very well.

I would like to tell you that on Sunday I received my last quarter results and am sending you my grades with this letter. I also would like to let you know that I am doing my internship and I hope it all goes well.

I am very grateful for all the support that you are giving us. Thank you so much and may you be blessed in your lives.

Karen Mishelle
(First year student in Accounting)



Dear Sra. Connie and KGAP community,

I hope you are having a wonderful day, enjoying excellent health. My name is Jesús Benito Andrés Ramírez, information technology student at the INED-Tecnológico in Jacaltenango. It is a pleasure to greet you and express my gratitude and the affection that we feel for all of you. You are always welcome in our beautiful community! I would like to share my grades from the 3rd and 4th quarters of the 2019 school year. I also want to mention that we have only received grades from our academic classes and are waiting for our evaluations of the internships and seminar. We are anxiously awaiting information about when we will receive our degrees that will give us our professional accreditation.

Without more to add, I will say goodbye, wishing you hope and happiness in your daily activities.

Atte.
Jesús Benito Andrés Ramírez.

Dear Connie and KGAP community,

Please accept a cordial and affectionate greeting from Ana Patricia Pérez Carrillo.

The reason for my letter is to thank you for the economic support that you have given me this year so that I can continue my high school education. The support you have given me was a huge benefit for me and my family, who also support me in my studies.

I feel very satisfied that soon I will graduate with an Accounting degree, specializing in information technology. It is important to me to be able to share this with you all since you have had a part in my success.

For the last part of my career I will have a supervised internship where I will put into practice what I have learned over the past three years. Also, the hope is that students will gain new knowledge and experience related to their chosen careers. I will be working for 200 hours in an Accounting and Tax Consulting Office.

With gratitude,
Ana Carrillo

Hello Connie and KGAP community,

I greet you once again, hoping that you are enjoying good health.

I would like to show you my grades from the third quarter and let you know that I am only one month away from graduating as a Qualified Accountant. The only part that remains is my supervised internship in which I will work for a company and apply what I have learned. After this I will graduate which is why I want to thank you since you all were a fundamental part, supporting me economically. I hope that God continues to bless you and that all you enjoy success in all you do.

Affectionately,
Paola

Chacula Healthcare News

by members of APROSUVI, Association for Health Promotion

(Editor's Note): Over the years, KGAP has supported many small healthcare projects in collaboration with the health promoters and midwives who work at the Health Clinics in Chaculá and in the neighboring village of Yalambojoch. Many of you have read about our midwifery workshops and other health education endeavors. In addition, for several years now, we have been able to contribute to the Chaculá Health Clinic Emergency Fund. Here you will read a letter from the Healthcare Association, APROSUVI, informing us about the 2019 fund. As with the schools in Chaculá, the health clinic serves residents from many surrounding villages as well as their own community. In both cases, funding is shared with those in need from the region. We support and feel honored to participate in this generous and important work.

APROSUVI is a legal association that can function in any region of the country of Guatemala. The 16 members include: professional nurses, midwives, and health promoters, the majority of whom come from the community of Chaculá in the municipality of Nentón, state of Huehuetenango.

We work primarily in the northern zone of the state of Huehuetenango, in the municipalities of Nentón and San Mateo Ixtatan. These municipalities have the highest percentage of maternal-infant mortality due to high levels of poverty and geographical location.

We have also worked with health programs in other regions and municipalities in Huehuetenango in coordination with the Spanish organization, MILPAS.

Presently, Huehuetenango is the most populated Guatemalan state and has the highest level of extreme poverty. It has been the state with the largest number of maternal deaths for many years.

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your own were still dirt.

I kept coming back to Chaculá, while getting my master's in public health and then during several years of doing clinical research with trauma-exposed young children and their caregivers at UCSF. Many of the trauma-exposed children we treated came from places just like Chaculá. There is a paradoxical vulnerability and resilience in children and caregivers who experience violence, displacement, and discrimination. As those who have accompanied with KGAP know well, this kind of triumph of the spirit against adversity is vivid in Chaculá. As I began my doctorate in biological anthropology, I knew I wanted to return there for my fieldwork.

My doctoral dissertation focuses on that resilience. I'll be in Chaculá doing my primary dissertation research over the next 12 months. It involves in-depth interviews with grandmothers and mothers about their lives, dreams for their children, thoughts of the past, and hopes for the future. More concretely, I'll also look at something called the "biological embedding" of early life trauma and its impacts on subsequent generations through chronic cortisol measurements, stress-related epigenetics, and child development. My research links the biology of trauma with life history and everyday experiences of frustration, hope, and love.

I am profoundly grateful to KGAP for giving me the opportunity to understand my own life and the lives of others through the lens of Chaculá, and I'm looking forward to sharing my research with the KGAP community, and, of course, with Chaculenses themselves. Acknowledging all we've been given by our ancestors, today my research coordinator, Miriam Carrillo, and I chose the name for our fledgling project: Generaciones.

Currently, from January to September, 2019, there were 57 maternal deaths in different regions of the state. According to data from SIGSA (Health Management Information System), 32 women died giving birth in hospitals, 13 on the way to the hospital, and 12 died in their homes.

In APROSUVI, we are profoundly grateful for all the solidarity and assistance over these past 26 years that KGAP has given to our community. This has made it possible for us to help patients requiring a second level of attention in hospitals. The funds you have sent to us are used to support those who have little resources since they are the ones that need the most help to get to the hospital in emergency situations. Also, the funds are used to help the elders who are often the most vulnerable. This fund from KGAP has been a great help for many people from Chaculá and surrounding villages. We have also been able to help many patients at the clinic with their medications.

Unfortunately, the last two patients that we were supporting died this past October. Don Miguel Méndez suffered from advanced liver cancer and the surgery couldn't save him. The other patient was Nicolas Salucio who suddenly was taken ill, transported to the hospital and diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. He died three days later.

KGAP support helps us continue to serve the communities in our region and we are truly grateful!

In Solidarity,
Your Friends from APROSUVI



Luisa Rivera, wearing the "Mama Natalie"
Photo by Andi Alexander

MANY THANKS TO OUR RECENT DONORS!

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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 NISQUA can be found at <https://niscua.org>