

KGAP newsletter

Season's Greetings to All!

by *Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator*

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health, enjoying the season with your family and friends.

As we all continue to adapt to living in the times of a world-wide pandemic, KGAP continues to forge ahead. Even though we have not been able to travel to Guatemala for two years, we continue to communicate with our friends in Chaculá, collaborate with our national organization, NISGUA, and stay in touch with you, our cherished base of support! Currently, the leaders of Chaculá continue to advise us to wait to visit until the risk has diminished for all concerned.

I am delighted to tell you that a picture taken by Andi Alexander of the 2015 Youth Initiative High School delegation was selected for the NISGUA 2022 calendar, "Joy as Resistance". You will see a copy of the photo in this newsletter and two articles reprinted from the KGAP Summer 2015 newsletter. I also invite you to go to www.kgap.org and click on past newsletters to read the entire Summer 2015 edition. The articles and photos are wonderful. Here is the list of participants from that delegation:

Connie Vanderhyden, Shawn Lavoie, Moira Koons, Andi Alexander, Corin Arndorfer Humphrey, Micah Nordgren, Hannah Eddy, Raina Gravatt, Althea Evans, Will Sherwin, Justys Grenier, Charlie and Arlo Townsley, Aidan Farrell, Lydia Turino, Colin McIntire.

There is a description of the NISGUA 2022 calendar in this newsletter and a link to purchase a copy, if desired. You will also be able to purchase a copy at an upcoming event on December 21st, in Viroqua! Please see the information in this newsletter and thanks to Shawn Lavoie, Dani Lind, and YIHS students for organizing this great fundraising idea!

I have had many conversations lately with several friends and leaders from Chaculá. The pandemic has been very difficult throughout Guatemala but they are feeling optimistic lately as more adults and young people

get vaccinated. They have lost several members of the community to the virus and continue to take precautions to avoid the spread. The schools have not had in-person classes for the better part of the year but within the last month, they were given permission to meet in small groups and hope that will be the case when the new school year begins in February, 2022. We have been assured that students at the primary level and the youth in the Básico Institute are successfully completing their course work with consistent guidance from their teachers. The KGAP high school scholarship students also continue their studies through virtual classes. We have included a letter received from Karen Miselle Mejía García, recent high school graduate.

We are always extremely grateful for your support and interest! This has been and continues to be a long-term commitment of solidarity with the people of Guatemala and would not be possible without all of you! Thank you so much for your collaboration and generosity!

In solidarity,
Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator



Connie Vanderhyden with friends from Guatemala
Photo by Andi Alexander ©2016

***This newsletter as well as past newsletters
and photos of Chaculá can be
viewed online at www.kgap.org.***

A Letter from Jubinal Carrillo Funes

Instituto Básico Director, Teacher and Lawyer

Colonia Nueva Esperanza Chaculá, municipality of Nentón in the state of Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

Greetings CONNIE, and all supporters of your organization, KICKAPOO GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT! I hope that you are having much success in your activities and that all members of your families are staying healthy!

I would like to let you know that the Básico students (7th-9th grades) have been able to successfully complete the 2021 school year with considerable satisfaction in spite of the obstacles presented by the Covid pandemic. All 58 students from Chaculá and the neighboring villages benefited from the economic support provided by KGAP. The chart below names the communities and the number of male and female students from each one.

The teachers were very proud that all the students who registered at the beginning of the year in the Básico Institute completed the school year. We are also happy that not one student left school in order to migrate to another country such as Mexico or the United States. All of our students finished the year successfully with their parents' help and with the economic support we received from all of you. Similarly, we are certain that your collaboration with the education in our community increases the number of students from Chaculá and neighboring villages that continue studying. This avoids the unauthorized migration of young people to the United States and Mexico. We thank you all for your solidarity and contributions to the education in our community! This has given many young men and women the opportunity to finish a career, find work in Guatemala, and create a more dignified and stable life. It has also helped put the brakes on the flow of migration away from the region.

The majority of the high school scholarship students continued the year through virtual classes and successfully completed the year as well. We have several students who graduated this year.

We send cordial regards and an affectionate hug to all involved with KGAP!

Jubinal Carrillo Funes

NIVEL-GRADOS	ALDEA YUXQUEN			ALDEA LAS PALMAS			ALDEA EL AGUACATE			ALDEA LA BENDICIÓN DE DIOS			ALDEA YALAMBOJCH			COL. NUEVA ESPERANZA CHACULÁ			TOTALES		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
PRIMER BÁSICO SECCIÓN A	7	1	8	2	1	3							3	5	8	5	4	9	17	11	28
SEGUNDO BÁSICO SECCIÓN A				1		1	1	1					2		2	5	6	11	8	7	15
TERCER BÁSICO SECCIÓN A	1		1							1	1	2				10	2	12	12	3	15
TOTAL	8	1	9	3	1	4	1	1	1	1	1	2	5	5	10	20	12	32	37	21	58

Many Thanks to our Recent Donors!

Paul and Kathy Fairchild
 Deb Conlon
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 Sandra Stroo
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 Meredith and Tory Taylor
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 Jeri Pearson)
 Marty Pearson (in memory of Jeri Pearson)
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 Tamsen Margan and David Ware
 Maryann Wolters and Michael Olson
 Donald Kuderer
 Dan Badtke
 Deborah Larson Cooter
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At Home in Chaculá

By Shawn Michael Lavoie

This article is reprinted from the KGAP Newsletter Summer 2015

At the end of high school most students are looking out into the world and wondering where their place is. Home has been defined for them their whole life. Now they are beginning to define “home” for themselves. This bi-annual, three-week trip to Guatemala that KGAP has been sponsoring for 14 years brings Juniors and Seniors from Viroqua the farthest away from home and comfort they’ve ever been. Yet, as challenging and foreign as it is, the trip gives them a new sense of their place in the world, a new sense of home.

This year’s group had 12 students and two chaperones, myself and Moira Koons, who had been on the trip as a student in 2007. The 12 students were: Justys Grenier, Micah Nordgren, Hannah Eddy, Lydia Turino, Raina Gravatt, Althea Summer Sky, Corin Humphrey, Will Sherwin, Charlie Townsley, Arlo Townsley, Aidan Farrell, and Colin McIntire. We spent a week doing service-learning at the San Lucas Mission on Lake Atitlan, a week of intensive language learning at The Mountain School outside of Xela, and our final week in Chaculá where we stayed in families’ homes. When we arrived in Chaculá, we had a lot of traveling already under our belts. But our experience in Chaculá took us to the next level. We went from “volunteering” at the Mission and “learning” at the Mountain School to “living” in Chaculá.

The first few days, though, were rough. Houses in Chaculá are not like the houses we’re used to. Bathrooms and showers were obvious points of difference and discomfort. Not to mention, many of the families made room for us to stay by cramming into one bedroom so that we could have a bed. And, of course, there was the persistent language barrier which made meal times awkwardly silent. At first, I really wasn’t sure that students were ever going to feel “at home.”

What overcame the multiple-layers of discomfort was the spirit of generosity and the overwhelming welcome that the families, especially the Basico students who were host sisters and brothers, gave to us. We were treated as family. Kids wanted us to play. The Basico students took us on hikes, taught us new card games, and invited us into their life. Families cared for us and fed us. They shared with us their stories and wanted to know ours. We laughed together. We even cried together.

People are generous everywhere you go, but I know that our welcome in Chaculá was special. It comes from 21 years of accompaniment and genuine friendship. It comes from the continued presence of Connie and KGAP, which has planted the seed of solidarity between our communities. It comes from a mutual respect for human dignity.

So, over three thousand miles from Southwest Wisconsin, our group found a new home and a new community. One reason I lead this trip (now for the fourth time) is that it’s the best way I’ve found to expand students’ perspective on the world, to break out of the U.S. bubble and to truly empathize with the daily struggles of the majority of people in the world. Students learn that they are intimately connected to people and places far from their own place of origin, that their well-being is linked to the well-being of others, that their place in the world is defined by their capacity to build relationships and limited only by their ability to understand and to love. ¡Te quiero Chaculá! Thank you for making your home our home. I hope one day to live in a world where I can host you in my home with as much hospitality as you’ve hosted me.

**Donations are tax deductible
and can be sent to:**

KGAP
c/o Connie Vanderhyden
E9048 Pierce Hill Road
Viroqua, WI 54665

*This photo of Shawn LaVoie and a group of
Chaculá students was taken by Andi Alexander*

©2015



Reflections from our Guatemalan Journey

by Justys Grenier

This reflection is reprinted from the KGAP Newsletter Summer 2015

“The whole week (in Chaculá) we were just guests in a home but the whole town was our home! The whole week felt like a dream as we got to experience such beautiful places, such wonderful people and a feeling of comfort, safety and open hearts. Our eyes were opened to the tragic times that the people of Guatemala had experienced in so many different ways. One of the days in Chaculá we went to a ruin that lay on the site of a town that was massacred and burnt to the ground by the military during the Guatemala civil war. On another day the students brought us to a waterfall and for me personally that was the day that all the walls were broken down and we all got to a new level of friendship with students of Chaculá. When we left there were tears being shed from both sides, but they were tears of joy because of the beautiful connection that had just been made...This trip gave me a perspective on how I should, on how I can, and how I will live my life. I knew to expect poverty when I went to Guatemala, but I was shocked at the intensity, so I guess I now can understand what a third world country really means. Another thing that was hard to see was how hard people worked and how little they were rewarded for those efforts. Overall I will treasure this experience that I had the amazing opportunity to be a part of and I hope to have many more like it in my life.”



Joy of Solidarity: This lovely tree grows on a ridge overlooking the returned refugee village of Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá. Since 1996, the community has partnered with The Kickapoo Guatemala Accompaniment Project (KGAP), one of NSIGUA's sponsoring communities. Along with offering human rights monitoring, KGAP coordinates adult and youth delegations. Here, community member Angel Diaz leads students from the Youth Initiative High School in Viroqua, Wisconsin on a meaningful tour about regional history, ecology and current issues. (From the 2022 NISGUA Calendar. Order info on the back page of this newsletter.)

Many thanks to Andi Alexander for her accompaniment and her stunning photos of many delegations over the years. This photograph (©2015) truly represents the Joy of Solidarity!

website: www.andialexander.com
Instagram: @andialexander

Updates from the community

translated by Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator

From scholarship student, Karen Mishelle Mejía García

Dear Connie and KGAP donors,
I am very happy to send you my final grades and to thank you for all the help you have given me! I have received very good results and am doing everything possible to achieve honors. I would like you all to see that I have been working very hard and doing my best to receive the best possible grades. I am within days of finishing my degree and really hope to continue studying at the university level at some point. Unfortunately, it is very complicated due to our circumstances. I will have to look for work first which will make more difficult to dedicate myself full-time to my studies. I do hope to stay in touch with you since you have helped me so much and I will be forever grateful!

Sincerely,
Karen Mishelle
Mejía García



Timeline for Kickapoo/Guatemala Accompaniment Project (KGAP)

1994-Connie Vanderhyden accompanies the villagers on the return trip to Nueva Esperanza-Chaculá through the help of the Solidarity Organization, Witness for Peace.

1995-Guatemala Accompaniment Project is established in connection with national organizations-NCOORD then NISGUA (www.nisgua.org)

1995-KGAP is established as one of the sponsoring communities (www.kgap.org)

1996, May-August-Connie lives in the village as a human rights accompanier.

1996-2017-KGAP sponsors 23 accompaniers.

1996-2021-1 or 2 annual visits occur, for a total of 240 participants in 34 delegations, including 9 YIHS student delegations. KGAP responds to requests from Guatemala community members with economic support for many Education and Healthcare Projects.

2017-2021-KGAP Collaborates with NISGUA in general support for accompaniment in Guatemala.

From Natalio Vicente, Health Promoter and current member of the Chaculá Board of Directors

Dear Connie and KGAP supporters,

I hope that you and your friends and families are well, enjoying your work and daily activities together. I would like to let you know that the community is doing pretty well. However, we are being punished by the high cost of living. With this government, the cost of basic goods and healthcare is very high, causing great suffering especially for those with few resources. Regarding the pandemic, things are improving. Unfortunately, we lost 4 people to the virus but with the arrival of the vaccine, people are feeling more secure and the majority now have been vaccinated.

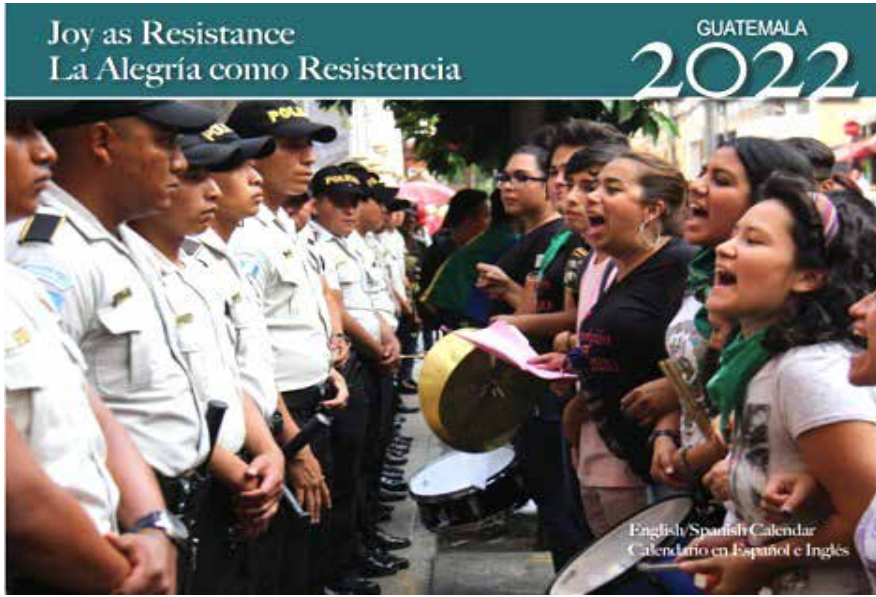
In many regions of the country human rights violations are increasing against defenders of environmental justice, perpetrated by police forces and supported by government and business interests. Another concern is the border with Mexico. The area near Chaculá is calm but the border at La Mesilla has seen an increase in violence and shootings by drug trafficking groups. The violence against immigrants has increased as well and they are now required to pay a fee just to get to the border.

All of this is happening and meanwhile, education in the community continues to be virtual, with the children doing their work from home. Our work in healthcare continues at the clinic, helping people from Chaculá as well as neighboring communities.

I hope you are all doing well and that one day in the not-too-distant future we will have the opportunity to meet once again! Take care!

Sincerely, Natalio Vicente

Tuesday December 21st
KGAP Fundraiser at ROOTED SPOON!
219 S. Main Street, Viroqua, Wisconsin
SOLSTICE TAMALES & POZOLE
Pre-Order & Pick up at Rooted Spoon
\$15 for 6 Tamales: bean, chicken, or pork
\$15 for a quart of Pozole
Ordering: see link at www.yihs.net



NISGUA's 2022 wall calendar highlights *Joy as Resistance*-a declaration that by celebrating victories and seeking joy on the path towards liberation, our movements will thrive. It is in the surprise of disruptive laughter and in the taking care of our comrades, that our oppressors will stand aside. We are forever grateful for the conversations over coffee, hands held in protest, and breathtaking moments of beauty shared with those we accompany.

This calendar is a beautiful compilation of imagery representing the many ways we see joy reveal itself in the movement for justice, accountability, and liberation.

We hope you enjoy!

To order calendar: Go to www.nisgua.org and click on Shop with Nisgua, under Support our work.

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://nisgua.org>