

KGAP newsletter

Summer Greetings from Connie Vanderhyden

by Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator

Dear KGAP friends and supporters,

I sincerely hope you are all enjoying a beautiful and peaceful summer, surrounded by friends and family!

It has been a while since we have published a newsletter, but I am happy to write to you now, sharing news from our friends in Chaculá. The last 18 months have been very challenging and frustrating in the community due to the ongoing land and water conflict with the neighboring village. I have been in contact with community leaders and friends several times a month to express our support and solidarity and to receive any updates about the situation. Due to all the time and energy required to attend meetings and push for a resolution, there was a delay in sending us the information about the distribution of the 2025 education fund. We now have a detailed explanation and some photographs to share. Students have also been sending letters of thanks, and I am so happy to share several here in this newsletter.

In January 2025, I was able to visit Chaculá during the 31st anniversary celebration of their return to Guatemala from refugee camps in Chiapas, Mexico. I traveled with two friends, Martha Pierce and Michael Swartz, who have also been part of this solidarity relationship with the village over the years. The celebration was like others in past years, festive and well attended. The governor's office had placed police officers in the community to provide security.

We enjoyed visiting with many friends and families, speaking at the anniversary ceremony, and meeting with several groups from the community to receive news and updates. The Chaculá board of directors invited us to attend a session about their efforts over the past months to come to a resolution with the neighboring village concerning the land and water disagreements. We were moved by the patience and perseverance of the leaders and the community members, in general. Everyone realizes this is a crucial time to follow through with the process, keeping the state and federal authorities involved as much as possible. It has been slow and frustrating as you will read in the short update by Jubinal Carrillo Funes in this newsletter.

Our small delegation was able to meet with a few social justice groups in Huehuetenango. We also met with NISGUA staff in Guatemala City, along with members of the Association

for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR). The AJR is made up of survivors of the massacres in the 1980's from 5 regions in Guatemala. NISGUA volunteers provide accompaniment for AJR members in their communities and when they are witnesses in present-day court cases against the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and genocide in Guatemala.

(For more information, please visit: <https://nigua.org/ajr-presente-in-ongoing-genocide-retrial/>)

I would say that there were two major take-aways from our January visit. First, we felt the on-going love, appreciation and solidarity from our friends in Chaculá. It means so much to them that we continue to care, collaborate and stand with them in solidarity during their struggles and their successes. We could also feel appreciation for our interest from the other groups with whom we met. Secondly, every time we spend time with Guatemalans, we witness their steady, unwavering dedication to the peaceful struggle for truth and justice. Confronted with systemic discrimination, oppression, and injustice for literally centuries, they model amazing resilience, respect, patience, optimism and love. It is literally breathtaking at times to consider all the obstacles they face and still, putting one foot in front of the other, they continue to struggle together for a better, more just future. We all can benefit from their example, as we take on our own challenges, wherever we are.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING IN THIS STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE IN GUATEMALA AND FOR WORKING WITH OTHERS, WHEREVER YOU ARE, FOR A MORE JUST WORLD FOR EVERYONE!

With gratitude,
Connie



Michael, Martha, and Connie with the Chaculá Junta Directiva

Colonia Nueva Esperanza, Chaculá, Nentón, Huehuetenango, Guatemala July 17, 2025

Dear KGAP and YIHS friends,

I, Jubinal Carrillo Fúnes, representing the educational community of Colonia Nueva Esperanza, Chaculá, and on behalf of my fellow teachers at the Básico Institute, am writing to you to inform you of the following:

For 28 years, our community has benefited from donations received from the NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION KICKAPOO-GUATEMALA PROJECT (KGAP) with the aim of promoting development in our community through education. This year, 2025, we received a donation of Q 302,238 (\$39,500 U.S.), which we used to build a classroom where the computer lab is now located. We were also able to provide scholarships to sixteen students for their diversified level studies (high school), 83 students for their basic level studies (middle school), and one student for university, as well as cover the administrative expenses incurred by the Básico Institute.

We know that you work hard to raise the funding to be able to contribute financially to the education of our community in Chaculá. Our young people have many dreams and the enthusiasm to continue studying. With this donation, we were able to encourage them to complete a professional degree that will help them get a job and improve their personal and family lives, and above all, work in what they love.

Among our sponsors who have supported education in our community is Martín Pearson, the husband of our great friend Gerina, who was able to sow many seeds for the education in Chaculá. We are now reaping the fruits of his support and work. Thank you, Martín, for continuing the fight of your beloved wife Gerina, whom we will always carry in our hearts.

We are very grateful to all of you for your great support and hope to continue counting on your solidarity. Thank you to Connie and Juanito (Shawn Lavoie) and to all those involved in making this social project possible. Thank you for your visits to our community. We hope you can come to Chaculá again next year.

Thank you to everyone who supports us and makes this project possible. It is of great benefit to Chaculá!

SINCERELY: JUBINAL CARRILLO FUNES, ON BEHALF OF MY FELLOW TEACHERS.

(Translated by Connie Vanderhyden)



Meeting with Scholarship students and parents



Group of Scholarship students

Distribution of Funds

Donated by the Kickapoo-Guatemala Project (KGAP) in Solidarity with NUEVA ESPERANZA CHACULÁ, NENTÓN, HUEHUETENANGO GUATEMALA.

- 1) Construction of the classroom for the Básico Institute's computer lab. Total: Q 43,573.00 (\$5,683)
 - 2) Purchase of school supplies for 83 students at the Básico Institute. Each student received a scholarship of Q 505 (\$65.87) to purchase their supplies. Total: Q 41,915 (\$5,466.86)
 - 3) 16 students awarded scholarships for diversified (high school) education. Each student received a scholarship in the amount of Q 7,000 (\$912.99). Total: Q 112,000 (\$14,607.86)
 - 4) 1 student awarded a scholarship for university. The student received a scholarship in the amount of Q 7,000 (\$912.99)
 - 5) Payment of 10 months of tuition for 83 students at the Chaculá Básico Institute. Q 35 per month. Each student will receive a scholarship of Q 350 per year (\$45.65). Total: Q 37,350 (\$4,871.46)
 - 6) Payment of 10 months of computer tuition for 83 students at the Chaculá Básico Institute. Each student will receive a scholarship of Q 300 (\$39.13). Total: Q 24,900 (\$3,247.64)
 - 7) Administrative expenses of the Chaculá Mixed Básico Educational Institute. Total: Q 21,000.00 (\$2,738.97)
 - 8) Payment for maintenance of the computers in the Institute's computer lab. Fees for the technician who maintains the computers: Q 5000 (\$652.14)
 - 9) Expenses for repairing the projector used in the computer lab. Q 2,000 (\$260.85)
 - 10) Purchase of a Lenovo laptop for the exclusive use of the computer instructor. Q 7,500 (\$978.20)
- TOTAL Q 302,238.00 (\$39,500 U.S.)



Completed Computer Lab Classroom

Letters from High School Scholarship Students

Dear KGAP supporters,

I am writing to you today, hoping that you are doing well in your daily work and to thank you for the support you have given me during this 2025 academic year. It has been of great value to me in my studies as a fifth-year accounting student at the mixed intercultural private school of applied sciences.

I am currently in my second year of the accounting program, which has been a wonderful and enjoyable experience with my friends at the college. I would like to express my gratitude for your support throughout this time. I consider myself fortunate to have been part of this scholarship organization, as your support inspires me to continue working harder and with greater dedication to move forward and finish this second year of my accounting degree. I will also attach my grades for this second bimester.

Without further ado, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to you for your support and wish you many blessings.

Alex Domingo Torrez.

Greetings,

Good morning! I hope you are having a wonderful day, full of energy and good health.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know how grateful I am for the financial support you gave me at the beginning of the year, as it has helped me so much during these months. I truly appreciate it, as this year is the last of my career as an accountant, and it's a bit more complicated than previous years. I appreciate it because, without your support, it would be much, much more difficult to conclude this year. I wish you a happy and blessed life now, and in the days to come.

Duglas Eriberto Díaz Ordóñez



Jubinal Carrillo Funes and extended family members

Dear KGAP supporters,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the academic scholarship I have been awarded to continue my studies as a Certified Public Accountant at the “Ciencia Aplicada” Intercultural School. I am in my first year of the program and currently enrolled in my second semester.

I feel very fortunate to have been selected to receive this scholarship. It allows me to focus on my studies and enjoy the weekend without worrying about the financial burden.

I hope I can give back in some way for the support I've received and make you proud of your investment in my education. Thank you for believing in me and supporting my education!

Nohelia Morales

(Translated by Connie Vanderhyden)



2024 Scholarship Student Graduate, Dennis Ubdaly López Jiménez

Update on the Land Conflict Situation

July 31, 2025

Dear Connie and KGAP friends,

We send you our warmest regards and wish you every success in your daily work.

We would like to inform you that our community, Colonia Nueva Esperanza Chaculá has been experiencing a conflict since March 2024 due to an invasion of our land by the neighboring community of Aguacate. In April of that year, as a result of this invasion and conflict at the site of our water source, one person from our community and two from the Aguacate community were killed. After this incident, negotiations began in May 2024. The last round of negotiations took place in January 2025, after which the Aguacate community withdrew because they did not want to reach an agreement with our community. In response to the negativity and multiple acts of destruction of our water tanks by this invading community, in April 2025, the community of Chaculá took action through a peaceful demonstration, blocking the road to prevent the Aguacate community from passing through.

In May of this year, representatives from the public prosecutor's office, police officers, and 27 members of the community went to repair the water tanks that supply our community. On that day, a heavily armed group from Aguacate arrived at the site and attacked the Chaculá community. During the attack, they kidnapped Mateo Tadeo and a police officer. After negotiating for their release, they were freed 16 hours later. Mateo was tortured and is still recovering in a hospital. The saddest thing is that the authorities, such as the Governor's Office, have not yet taken any legal action against this wave of violence caused by the Aguacate community. Mateo's case remains unpunished.

We have been without water since March 3, 2025, with little hope of solving the land issue. The community is very concerned about this problem. We are affected by the water situation. In reality, we feel like we are experiencing the same violence that forced us to seek refuge in the 1980s, but we will continue to fight here until we find the peace that we all deserve to.

Thank you for your interest and solidarity,
Jubinal Carrillo Funes
(Translated by Connie Vanderhyden)

*Note from Connie: Within the last week we have received news that the government is willing to help develop a new water source for Chaculá. KGAP would like to help support the community economically with this project and we have communicated this to the leadership.

THANK YOU FOR ANY DONATIONS YOU CAN GIVE TO THIS PROJECT AND THE EDUCATION FUND! WE SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT!



*Chaculá anniversary
celebration - traditional
dancing*

Many Thanks to our 2025 Donors!

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Barbara Gerlach
Meredith Taylor
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(in honor of Jeri Pearson)
Thomas A. Carlson
(in honor of Jeri Pearson)
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Jane Mahoney

Donations to KGAP are tax deductible & can be sent to:

KGAP c/o
Connie Vanderhyden
E9048 Pierce Hill Road
Viroqua, WI 54665
or donate online at
www.kgap.org

KICKAPOO/GUATEMALA ACCOMPANIMENT PROJECT (KGAP) see 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 nisgua.org

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