

KGAP newsletter

Warm Greetings from Connie Vanderhyden

by Connie Vanderhyden, KGAP Coordinator

Dear KGAP supporters,

I hope that this newsletter finds you healthy and happy, sharing warm and cozy times with friends and family. As always, we send you many thankful greetings from our friends in Chaculá and have included photos and news from various people. In addition, we have included a letter from a current NISGUA accompanier, explaining a little about the present political climate in Guatemala. You can follow the link to read the entire letter and also search the NISGUA website for up-to-date news and discussions. It has been a very intense time in the country and the outcome is still uncertain. The new president-elect is scheduled to be inaugurated in January but those still in power are attempting to disrupt that from happening in any way they can. The U.S. government has weighed in on the side of democracy, encouraging the present Guatemala administration to respect the will of the people and allow president-elect Arévalo to assume power in 2024. We are watching closely in admiration of the peaceful actions of the Guatemalan people, demanding respect for democracy.

We have some very sad news. We have lost a dear compañera, Petrona Gomez - midwife, mother, daughter, partner, teacher, and friend. Petrona died on November 1, 2023, at her home in Yalambojoch, a village close to Chaculá. Perhaps many of you remember articles about and photos of (thank you, Andi Alexander) our collaboration with midwives and health promoters in Chaculá and the surrounding region. During many of our delegations for more than 20 years, health providers from our area in Wisconsin traveled to Chaculá to learn

and offer services and workshops. In particular, two area midwives, Kim Dowat and Jennifer McGeorge, connected strongly with Petrona Gomez and other midwives to carry out a series of workshops sponsored by KGAP funding. Luisa Rivera, Andi Alexander, Marty Pearson and I supported and participated in these amazing events. Petrona was a leader in her field of midwifery and nursing. She was an organizer in the area and her loving trust and connections with other midwives facilitated our collaborations. We will miss her dearly and offer here some photos of Petrona and reflections from those of us who worked with and knew her well.

We continue to receive letters from scholarship recipients and have heard that 15 students graduated from the Instituto Básico in Chaculá this November. Many of them will apply for KGAP high school scholarships and join the growing group of young people from the region who continue their studies at the high school level, gaining career skills for future work and/or university studies.

As always, we thank you so much for your interest and support! We are honored to be able to continue collaborating in education and healthcare in this region of Guatemala!

Sincerely,
Connie Vanderhyden
KGAP Coordinator

Chaculá school children



photo by Andi Alexander

Letter from Humberto Andrés Morales

I first met Humberto when he was helping Eulalio at the Adult Literacy Center in Chaculá. This is a humble, sincere effort that has grown in size and strength with yearly KGAP funding. Humberto was a young man in his early 20's who had never had the chance to finish his Básico education (7th-9th grade). He asked for advice on how to further his education as an adult. We encouraged him to find an adult Básico program and helped him with the funding to complete this part of his education. Upon completion, he qualified for the KGAP scholarship program and continued to pursue his high school degree. This year he has finished his degree in accounting and was able to do his practicum in Chaculá at the APROSUVI health clinic in the village. Below is a letter from Humberto and a few photos he included. -Connie V

*Dear KGAP supporters,
I am graduating from my high school program!*

Throughout this program I have had many extraordinary experiences - traveling, meeting classmates, school activities, and virtual classes during the pandemic. Even after my motorcycle accident, my school was always understanding but at the same time demanding that I comply with certain requirements that led me to become a professional accountant.

I will send you pictures of the graduation and the awarding of the degree. Here is a photo of me in the APROSUVI clinic pharmacy in Chaculá.

I would like to thank you a thousand times for all the support you have given me along the way.

Humberto



NISGUA Accompanier Perspectives: The Rivers Here and the Rivers Up North are Connected

Ana (they/them), Internacionalista 2023 wrote this letter on October 23rd, 2023 during the Guatemala National Strike.

Right now, it is day 21 of a massive Plurinational Strike in Guatemala, led by the Indigenous Authorities. There have been days with over 100 points of shut down highway across the country.

The people of Guatemala are demanding: democracy, the resignation of the Attorney General Consuelo Porras and the resignation of other corrupt politicians who have taken anti-democratic actions in the context of the August presidential election. The strike has been a time where the Guatemalan people are reclaiming public space--dancing in the streets, playing soccer, biking, cooking and sharing food, holding ceremonies.

The size, organization, and cross-territory Indigenous leadership of the mobilizations is historic. Energy, solidarity, and eyes on Guatemala! In a future letter, I will share more about what these days have been like, but here is where I want to start: my first couple weeks in Guatemala.

In the town of Copal AA, there is a loudspeaker on a hill that can be heard from anywhere in this small community. As we get off the bus, three names are called out on the loudspeaker, followed by, "tienen que tener la cena lista a las 6pm // remember to have dinner ready at 6pm!"

Any time someone stays in Copal AA, the community takes collective responsibility for feeding the invitados (guests). That first night, I was hosted by doña Ana for dinner (yay Anas!). To understand why we were invited to Copal AA, you must understand its history.

Copal AA was formed by returned refugees in the 1990s. These returnees were forced off their lands by the genocidal scorched earth policies enacted by the U.S.-trained Guatemalan military in the 1980s. Where did they seek refuge? The Indigenous Guatemalan refugees sought refuge in México for about a decade, after which they negotiated an agreement with the Guatemalan government for their return. In this agreement, returnees maintained their right to an international presence before, during, and after their return. That is where the relationships of international accompaniment start.

Copal AA (full name Copal AA La Esperanza) was one community created by a small group of returnees who named their town after water and hope, mixing Spanish and Mayan languages (there are at least five Mayan languages spoken by the people of Copal AA, who use Spanish to communicate as a common second language). And the community takes seriously the name their founding elders gave them. It is extremely tight knit, and being at the crossing of two major rivers means they can grow the food necessary to feed the community, drink, and bathe. Water is life! But it also means they are under threat of an extractive hydro-electric project that threatens all life in the area.

Note by Connie Vanderhyden: This returned refugee community shares a similar history with Chaculá. To read Ana's entire letter visit: <https://nisgua.org/the-rivers-here-and-the-rivers-up-north-are-connected/>



Hundreds of people protesting outside of the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP).



Mural a school building wall in Copal AA. Written underneath is "La educación como práctica de la libertad" // "Education as a practice of liberation."

News from the Chaculá Adult Literacy Center

by Eulalio and Humberto

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY 2023 SCHOOL YEAR.

BOOKS for students Q. 3600 (\$460)

Teaching and methodology training by cooperative, MAPS. July 11 and 12 of this year. Q. 1000 (\$127)

Remodeling of a wall. Q. 2000 (\$254)

Groceries Q.1600 (\$204)

Total expenses Q. 8200 (@ \$1,045 U.S.)

We have included a photo of a student with the books, a student taking an exam, and students receiving a small food donation we were able to afford. Even though we would have loved to give them much more, they were happy to receive the donation.

We all thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support!!

We are hoping that we can expect your support in January, as every year. Thanks to all KGAP donors, we are able to continue moving forward.

Hoping that we can welcome you to Chaculá again soon, we bid goodbye and send cordial greetings to all KGAP supporters!

Eulalio and Humberto



In Memory of Petrona Gomez

With so much love and gratitude for all we learned and shared together with Petrona.

November 1, 2023, we lost a brilliant and brave community leader from Yalambojoch, Guatemala. Petrona Gomez was forward thinking in the practice of modern medicine in combination with traditional indigenous practices in maternal healthcare. She was a powerhouse. Petrona leaves behind her two beloved children Pedro Antonio and André Canek, her husband, Antonio Ros Montejo, and an enormous and wonderful extended family. (Andi Alexander)

She was such a powerhouse of a woman. Brave, fearless, brilliant. She was the community leader. I think at times, she had difficulty because of her beliefs and actions to help women in her community. She wanted to practice modern medicine and honor traditional medicine. She did not choose the easy path. (Kim Dowat)

A reflection on our last midwifery workshop in March, 2019: After all the previous years of visits and midwifery workshops, we reached such an amazing point of connection and solidarity with Petrona and, consequently, all the participating midwives. What I remember most from that time was the overwhelming sense of inclusivity with everyone involved - we were all together in the teaching and learning, enjoying so much humor and delight. Petrona's friendship and solidarity with us led the way, as all the other midwives trusted and loved her unconditionally. (Connie Vanderhyden)

We came with our intentions and babies and equipment, but all the women who arrived and worked and participated were there because of Petrona. Her 'zest for the doing', her joy, endless energy, good humor and intellect made the workshop happen. I remember looking over the room, with multiple stations going and Petrona translating into so many languages. I feel honored to have known her, and so sad at her short life. (Kim Dowat)

Most of all, I think about her two young boys. Pedro Antonio is 13 and Andre Canek will turn 8 in March. March 21st which is the same birthday as Petrona and she would have turned 40. She was a solid guiding presence for those boys and I only hope that the rest of the family can fill that role. (Andi Alexander)

Yes, concern for Petrona's children - Pedro Antonio and Andre Canek. This is related to one of the powerful realities that motivated the workshops—the loss of a mother ripples outward in its profound effects. Preventing mother-loss & the attendant heartbreak & multifaceted loss is what motivates comadronas (midwives) everywhere. Petrona's sons, the women she served, the midwives she supported, the communities she helped...it is hard to imagine how these voids will be filled. A physically small woman, but Petrona filled a huge space. I hope her spirit is at peace. (Jennifer McGeorge)



photo by Andi Alexander



photo by Andi Alexander

Many Thanks to our Recent Donors! January through June, 2023

<i>Illinois Maya Ministries</i>	<i>Anne Marie and Wil Fryer</i>	<i>Mary Bjorgaard and Steven Pearson</i>
<i>Tamsen Morgan and David Ware</i>	<i>David and Trish Swasko</i>	<i>Ellen Brooks</i>
<i>Jennifer McGeorge</i>	<i>Melanie Bordelois</i>	<i>David and Diane Banner</i>
<i>Tom and Terry Carlson (in memory of Jeri Pearson)</i>	<i>Sandra Stroo</i>	<i>Bill Brooke</i>
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Thank you for your support!
All donations are tax deductible and can be mailed to:
KGAP c/o
Connie Vanderhyden
E9048 Pierce Hill Road
Viroqua, WI 54665

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