

Progresa

Guatemala Friends Scholarship Program



Fall Update - 2013

www.guatemalafriends.org



GREETINGS

It is a pleasure for those of us who work at PROGRESA to once again greet you, our wonderful donors, and report on some of the most important things that have happened during the past months. We are now at the end of the school year. Our high school students finished in October and our college students in November. All of them are very busy right now with their last weeks of classes and their final exams. We too are busy with the process of selecting new students for 2014. Right now we are not sure exactly how many of our current students will graduate this year but we think it will be about 30. This means that we could select 30 new students if we planned to maintain the same number next year. Unfortunately we have continued to run at a deficit the last few years and as a consequence

we will need to lower the total number of students whom we help. The selection process is going to be difficult because we already have 60 applicants and we know that more will arrive in the next few weeks. We find it painful to turn down needy students who we think could succeed with just a little help. Although we are forced to lower our student population in 2014, we are very hopeful that with the help of several new volunteers and new donors as well as the support of our loyal donor base, we will be able to grow again in the future. We certainly hope so because there are a lot of Guatemalan students who need help. Whether we grow or get smaller, please know that your contributions are playing an important part in changing the lives of the students we are able to support.

SAD NEWS

Joel Arana, the newest member of our office staff,



suffered a serious motorcycle accident on August 20nd. He was on his way to the office in Parramos. We were waiting for him to arrive and were shocked when a stranger knocked at our door and told us what happened. He told

us that Joel had been taken to the National hospital in San Felipe. We immediately got in the car and headed for the hospital. A witness says that the two motorcycles crashed as the other tried to pass. At the hospital we learned that Joel had totally smashed his

knee which was his most serious injury. He also broke his arm in two places and was pretty scraped up. Unlike the two young men on the other motorcycle, Joel was wearing a helmet which probably saved his life. Sadly the other two did not survive.

While Joel is recovering we in Parramos have had to scramble to try to do Joel's work as well as our own. It was very hard at first but we feel that we now have most of the work under control and the program is continuing to function as usual. Still, there are a few things that we just can't seem to get done and our plans to update our website have been temporarily abandoned. We hope you will forgive us if we have been slow to answer any of your letters or emails or send information about your sponsored students.

THE LARGEST TEACHING TOUR

Our next **Teaching English Work Tour** is scheduled to take place from January 5th until the 13th of 2014. We already have 21 teachers and students lined up to participate so it will definitely be our largest group so far. We are extremely happy that more of our students and more of our donors will have the chance to experience this rewarding cultural exchange. It pleases us greatly that about half of the volunteer teachers will be returning for the second (or many more) times because it lets us know that we are meeting our goals for a spirit filled work week. For those of you who would like to know more about the students you are helping we would like to encourage you to join us in the coming years. We already have a tentative reservation for January 4th through the 12th of 2015.



NEWS ABOUT OUR GRADUATES



Eduardo Roland Castro from Tejutla in the department of San Marcos was helped by our program to finish his medical degree from 1999 to 2001. His family had worked hard to help him begin his medical classes but at the end of his third

year it became impossible for them to continue helping him. According to Eduardo he had decided to abandon his studies and illegally immigrate to the US in order to earn some money when a friend told him about Progreso and he decided to ask for our help. We accepted him because of his good grades and he was able to graduate as a general practitioner. Some years later he returned to school became a specialist in internal medicine. Later still he became certified in Intensive Medicine. He has worked as head of the

department of Intensive Medicine at the national hospital in Xela and also in San Marcos. Both positions represent an extremely high level of achievement for one of our students but he has now left these high status jobs to open his own office in San Marcos where according to him there are very few medical specialists.

Eduardo contacted us by telephone in July when he received one of our letters. According to him, he had not received any of our earlier letters or Boletines and had lost contact with us completely before a family member passed this letter on to him. He arranged to visit with us while we were in Quetzaltenango. When we spoke with him, he expressed his appreciation to the program for the help he had received and told us that if it hadn't been for our help in finishing his studies his life would have been very different. A very important gesture was that during the visit he gave us a check which repaid Progresa for the entire portion of his stipend which was given as a loan. He also agreed to let us make a short video of him thanking Progresa for its support. The video was taken with one of our point and shoot cameras so the audio is not great but we have posted it on Youtube if you would like to see it. The link is: <http://youtube.com/hDKPOXYOwr4>

Victor Manuel Choy Choc comes from Patzicía in the department of Chimaltenango. We helped him to study civil engineering from 2009 to 2011. Victor had already spent several years studying before he received our help but because of his financial problems he kept failing courses. When we analyzed his situation



we realized that indeed his failures were not due to a lack of capacity but instead to a lack of financial resources. Since entering the program, his grades have been very good and in June of this year, after finishing his thesis and his practicum, he graduated as a civil engineer. Miguel and Jaime attended his graduation and noted that as he accepted his diploma he publically thanked Progresa for the help he had received. As a part of his thanks Victor has begun to repay his student loan. The following is an extract from a letter we received from him.

"I am a civil engineer who graduated from the University of San Carlos of Guatemala. I received this degree thanks to the financial and moral support offered me by the Asociación de los Amigos Cuáqueros (PROGRESA). After finishing my internship in the municipality of Patzicía they hired me under contract to work in the department of municipal planning. In this department, I will have the responsibility to develop designs for sewer drains, potable water, bridges for cars and foot traffic, graveyards and other projects. Besides this in August of 2013 I opened my own consulting office in civil engineering, thus initiating another of my goals, which is to form my own company. As for the academic side of things, I have managed to participate in various training programs and obtained a certificate in the design of plants for residual water treatment. I also have the goal of initiating studies for my master's degree as a Sanitation Engineer in 2014.

Finally I would like to thank all the Friends who have help to finance the program, PROGRESA. Because of your help, many of us, who don't have families who can help financially, are able to reach our dreams and goals of self-development and at the same time participate in the development of our communities. Thank you everyone!"

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mónica Ajxup Hernández is an 18 year old student from Momostenango in the department of Totonicapán. In October of this year she finished her high school degree with a specialty in "Communication Sciences". During

the year Mónica completed a novel and interesting project for her community service. She tape recorded



six different short radio messages aimed at informing the citizens of Momostenango about the prevalence and problems created by alcoholism and drug addiction in their community. She then convinced seven different community radio stations to broadcast these messages for free during a campaign which lasted several weeks. At the end of each message she even credited our program indicating that “This message was brought to you by Progresa” as well as giving credit to the organization which lent her the equipment used in creating the radio spots.

Mónica told us that she decided to develop this informational campaign because her community faces many problems due to the high rate of alcoholism.



According to her research as many as 66% of Guatemalans suffer from some degree of alcoholism and the average age at which young people begin to drink is 15. *Mónica* calculates that during the campaign approximately 30,000 people heard at least some of the radio spots. This number represents one third of the population of 90,000 who live in Momostenango and its surrounding aldeas. We thought that the level of professionalism of *Mónica's* messages was so great that you might like to actually hear them. We have posted them on YouTube at:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=haxkzcmIASg&feature=youtu.be

Helen Montejo Montejo is a law student at the Mariano Galvez University in Huehuetenango. She lives in Jacaltenango, a small town located three hours from the University and travels to Huehue on Friday afternoons returning after her classes on Saturday. This year one of the middle school students in her town committed suicide as a result of problems he was facing at home.



This unfortunate incident resulted in a very tense situation in the school and many of the students reacted by acting out and becoming more rebellious. Working with the school principal Helen decided to offer workshops which focused on the prevention of bullying and family violence as well as the transmission of values and the building of self esteem.

She offered workshops to several different groups of students at the school. Using her knowledge as a law student, one of topics she emphasized was the Guatemalan laws which are designed to protect adolescents and the institutions to which they can turn if they suffer some type of violence. An important part of the workshops involved teaching students about how to resolve conflicts with alternatives to violence. As a final project activity, Helen organized a student march through the streets of Jacaltenango where the students carried placards with messages encouraging their fellow citizens to avoid violence and create positive values.

Francisco Pellecer Aguirre is a 22 year old student in the field of Agronomy at the University of “San Carlos de Guatemala”. He will complete his fourth year of studies in November of this year. Francisco lives in Jocotenango, a suburb of Antigua.



This year Francisco decided to work with 4th, 5th and 6th grade students in his home community in a project focusing on environmental education and reforestation.



The project included various activities including mini lectures on topics such as contamination, global warming and recycling. He then led two walking trips to a nearby protected forest area where he explained the environmental benefits provided by the trees.

The final and most important activity involved the planting of 1,400 tiny trees in an area which was owned by the municipality. The seedling trees were donated by the Ministry of Environmental and Natural Resources of Guatemala. The project also included an agreement with the municipality that they would take charge of protecting and caring for the young trees. We think this project exemplifies a very professional and complete approach to the task of helping one's community in that it involved a number of different organizations and demonstrated Francisco's ability to plan and carry out his vision.

MEET SOME OF OUR CURRENT STUDENTS

Abner Daniel Aguilar is 19 years old and was born in the municipality of Uspantan in the northern part of the department of el Quiché. His story is very moving and frankly seems incredible but he is consistent when he tells it and we have come to believe it is true. He was the product of an unplanned pregnancy and never knew his father. His mother married



when he was about 3 years old and at first his step father treated him well but this eventually changed. Not only was he forced to work very hard but he was frequently beaten. When he finished primary school, Abner decided he couldn't stand it any longer and fled from his household. Since that time he has survived on his own. At first he sought out simple jobs in order to eat and for a while he lived in the street. An important event in Abner's life came when he met a man who taught him how to paint walls and simple signs. From this he discovered his talent and pleasure in drawing and painting. Soon this became his main source of income and he also began painting pictures. About this time

Abner met several young people who liked music and with their help he learned to play the guitar. During our student conference in April we heard him play a song he had written and could see for ourselves how much artistic talent he has. Somewhere along the line, Abner managed to put himself through middle school and when we met him in Coban he wanted to apply to a high school program in construction drawing. He chose a school in Antigua because he had heard from his friends that this was a place where he could continue to earn money with his painting and music. We tried to discourage him from moving but he was determined and now that he is finishing his first year it seems that he was right. His school provides quarterly grades and during the first quarter he failed two courses and earned an average of 71. During the second quarter he averaged 78 with a low grade only in math. Then in the third quarter he averaged 91 with a 100 in math. After high school Abner would like to get a job with an architect and then eventually enter the university and become an architect himself. We are not quite sure how he is managing all this but we don't doubt that he will keep moving ahead.

Milton Rocael Manchamé Arroyo is a 21 year old student



from La Libertad in the department of el Petén. This department is the largest in Guatemalan and encompasses many large tropical forests and important archeological sites such as Tikal. The majority of its inhabitants are very poor as it is difficult to bring their crops to market. Milton's life

has been very difficult. His parents divorced when he was 5 years old and both of his parents started new lives with new partners. Milton lived with his mother for a short time but he was soon rejected by her and her new husband and he went to live with an uncle. Here too his life was difficult, not only did he have to work long hours in the fields, he was treated as "less than" his cousins. When he finished primary school his uncle told him that he couldn't continue to study and he had to take a low paying job in a near-by finca. He had always been an

excellent student and luckily for him several of his teachers raised money to allow him to continue studying. Unfortunately this help didn't last for long but when Milton learned of some nuns who ran a boarding school for poor children in Guatemala City, the teachers helped him to complete the application. He was accepted and completed his high school education in the capitol.

Milton is now working as a bank teller in Guatemala City and with our help has begun his career in Business Administration at a Jesuit university. Milton is paying for his own room and board and in the first year received a 50% scholarship from the university and borrowed money from Progreso to pay the rest of his tuition. We are pleased for him that after his first semester his grades were so good that the university raised his scholarship to 75% of his tuition. He is very intelligent and we are sure he will do well in business administration because in addition to his intelligence we have found him to be very open and honest.

If you or your group would like to sponsor one of these or other students please write us at progesa3@gmail.com and we will be happy to let you know their expected expenses. Don't forget that it is possible to share these expenses with another donor if they are more than you can afford.

Without your help this work would not be possible.
All donations are fully tax deductible in the U.S.

Donations are made to:

Redwood Forest Friends Meeting

Attn: Guatemala Scholarship Loan Program

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