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El Boletín is the newsletter of

Amigos de San Cristóbal,

a nonprofit organization based in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico.

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Editor:

Kena Luna

As many people around the world look to the Maya prophesies for predictions of the future, Amigos de San Cristobal continues to support organizations that work with communities to build bright futures for themselves. We thank all of you who have given your time and donations to continue the work of Amigos and our partners. We wish each one of you a joyous New Year.

Amigos Awards 2012 Grants to Eight Projects

We believe that all our donors will be pleased that their gifts to Amigos will be going to eight strong education, health, and economic development projects in 2012.

This year, with direction from the Amigos Board, the Projects Committee recommended that Amigos give larger grants to fewer organizations in order to make a greater impact on projects and to enable more committee and board members to personally visit all the projects.

Amigos received 19 applications this year from organizations that are making a significant difference to the marginalized communities in San Cristobal and Chiapas. It was not an easy task to narrow the group down to the following eight grant recipients for 2012.

Escalera

Foundation Escalera focuses on education, working to ensure that more marginalized students in the ten poorest municipalities of the highlands of Chiapas are able to enroll in high school. Through the Star Program, Escalera has offered scholarships and other grade-based incentives to more than 7,000 students, such as a 15 -year-old student who wants to be a nurse when she grows up, but her parents cannot afford the 300 -peso enrollment fee to send her to high school. With an Amigos-supported scholarship from Escalera, she can attend high school, gain the knowledge necessary to continue her studies, and hopefully one day be able to send her own children to high school.

K'inal Antsetik

K'inal Antsetik's Program for the Long-Term Formation of Young Indigenous Women supports nine young women from Chiapas in their academic studies and leadership skills. With the support of Amigos this year, these women will participate in workshops in radio and audiovisual broadcasting and will be able to return to their communities of origin to share their knowledge with other groups of women. In doing so, they will empower women in rural communities who already experience discrimination in their access to resources by helping to develop leadership and community-organizing skills. These nine women and the community groups will thus be able to actively participate in the confrontation and resolution of health, human rights, gender equity, and other problems in their communities .



Mujeres y Maíz



Since 2008 Mujeres y Maíz has provided healthy cooking stoves, electric food mills, and other tools that help reduce women's work in the kitchen and improve their working conditions. In late 2011, the women of Mujeres y Maíz opened La Milpa community kitchen, which benefits 30 women and 10 low-income college students. With a grant from Amigos, the kitchen will enable the women to sell their traditional products, with a focus on sustainable, local foods. The women learn about hygiene and food preparation, as well as small business ad-

ministration, all while earning an income to support their families. The project will award scholarships, also supported by Amigos, to 10 university students who come to live in San Cristóbal for their studies but are unable to afford nutritious meals, given the high costs of rent and transportation. The students will also attend workshops to learn how to cook inexpensive and healthy meals.

Banco de alimentos de Chiapas

Amigos will renew funding to pay for a nutrition training program for family groups eligible to participate in a food bank program managed by Banco de Alimentos de los Altos de Chiapas (BACH). Aimed at combating widespread malnutrition, the Amigos supported workshops are expected to reach 7,000 people in 2012. The program includes follow-on home visits to measure progress in sanitary conditions and food storage as well as improvement in individuals' health. In addition to providing food at significantly reduced prices to families, BACH also serves nursing homes and orphanages.

Madre Tierra

With help from Amigos, in 2012 Madre Tierra will be able to continue its project "Mi Casa Es Tu Casa." As part of its broader community health-care initiative, Mi Casa Es Tu Casa will work to rehabilitate homes with floors, roofs, latrines, and stoves in the Sierra Madre to improve the overall health of residents. Madre Tierra works in Chiapas's Sierra Madre, the most marginalized region of the most marginalized state of Mexico. Devastated by Hurricane Stan and living in extreme poverty, residents of the region are unable to provide for their families' basic needs. Moreover, many communities do not have drinking water, electricity, or other basic services. The nearest towns often are 4-8 hours away by foot. As a result, residents do not have access to health care, and current living conditions in the region result in many respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses, particularly in children.

Melel Xojobal

Melel Xojobal works with impoverished indigenous children and adolescents in San Cristóbal to help them exercise their rights in a way that will improve their quality of life. With support from Amigos, in 2012, Melel will be able to provide academic scholarships to 8 indigenous children from San Cristóbal: 6 primary school-age children, and 2 middle school-age children. Melel's program to support indigenous children in enrolling and staying in school targets socioeconomic factors that prevent families from enrolling their children, including educating families on the importance of school for their children and helping secure birth certificates required by schools for enrollment.

...meetings



12 Guayacanes del Sur

In 2012, the organization 12 Guayacanes del Sur will use the financial support from Amigos to build a demonstration plot, including plants and animals, to help communities in the border region of Chiapas return to a sustainable way of life. The entire region faces problems related to health (particularly malnutrition), dependence on single-focus agriculture, and the inequality of women in communities. The program Pan para Todas, or "Bread for All," directly benefits forty indigenous Mam families in the region by strengthening knowledge and skills with respect to sustainable agriculture and economic self-sufficiency.

Casa Las Flores

This year the Projects Committee recommended to the Amigos Board that Amigos "adopt" a special project to become more involved with as it develops. La Casa de las Flores serves the street children of San Cristobal. Support from Amigos will enable the director to hire a teacher to develop a curriculum, guide the volunteers who help out, and conduct classes. La Casa de las Flores provides a safe place where the children can eat, bathe, and learn skills they need to better their lives. At Casa de las Flores they are valued, listened to, and supported. Within colorful walls and with caring adults, the children spend time being children and young adults in a respectful environment before they go back into another reality where their rights are not always honored.



During 2012 the members of the Projects Committee and the Board will visit each organization to ensure that donations from our members and friends are helping the organization meet the goals of their project and to support the programs through encouragement and connections to resources.

Second annual tianguis/flea market fund raiser big success

Despite inclement weather eager bargain hunters swarmed the second annual Amigos flea market on December 18 from early morning until well into the afternoon at the Cathedral Plaza. By the end of the day shoppers had nearly cleaned out the large and wide array of items which had been donated by Amigos members and San Cristobal residents who responded to our radio requests for donations.

Due to the large crowd Amigos volunteers had no time to rest throughout the morning hours. At one point, when several shoppers

were competing for the same women's attire, the goods were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Smiling children walked away with toys, puzzles and stuffed animals and teenagers and adult men and women were gratified with their purchases of clothes, shoes, CDs, books, a TV, computer equipment, furniture and a variety of household items. Total sales topped the previous year's successful flea market by nearly 20%.

While a number of Amigos volunteers contributed to the successful outcome, it was the pre-event planning and hard work of President Hileana Garcia, Mónica Santiago Castro, Rodrigo Alfonso and Nicholas Miller who led the effort. Amigos members joining them on event day for several hours of volunteer work included Kraig Kemper, Rachael Larsen, Gary Ness, Alma Silva, Nancy Orr, Cody Miller, Teresa Berlioz, Rena Thompson, Ann Conway, John Chavez, Alison Abbott, Letty Fuentes Peña, Margaret Bridgforth** and David Orr. Continued...

Photos Tianguis



SAVE THE DATE!
AMIGOS MEMBERSHIP ANNUAL MEETING
MARCH 22, 6:30 p.m.
PLAZA REAL
REAL DE GUADALUPE #5

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Thanks to wonderful friends of Amigos, we are getting good publicity on the radio and on the streets of San Cristobal.

Iraida Noriega Concert

Former Amigos Board member José Luís (Pepe) Mijangos, owner of Latino's Café Restaurant Club, donated half of the ticket sales from the special three night performances of the popular Mexico City jazz singer, Iraida Noreiga, December 28-30. Our sincere thanks to Pepe for demonstrating his continued support of Amigos in this special way! And thanks to Board Members Alison Abbott and Adriana Aguerreberre for providing accommodations for the musicians.

Kevin Johansen Concert

In November Amigos President Hileana Garcia and her husband Rodrigo Alfonzo sponsored a concert with Kevin Johansen, popular American Latino singer who was born in Alaska and grew up in Argentina. The November 5th concert was promoted along with Amigos on radio and on posters. During the concert Amigos presented a slide show, developed by Board member Adriana Aguerreberre, with slides on the work that our partners are doing in San Cristobal and Chiapas. Board members Alison Abbott and Diane Livingston baked chocolate chip cookies to sell at the event and also staffed a membership table where people could find out more about Amigos and become members.



Faithful donor supporters fuel Amigos widening impact in improving lives of disadvantaged chiapanecos.

"While the world-wide economic downturn has meant fewer visitors to Chiapas in 2011 (especially from the U.S.) and therefore fewer first time." donors to Amigos, generous renewals from past donors have meant no reduction in grant distributions to improve the health, education and economic well being for those whose lives Amigos donors are impacting every day.

With a week remaining as the newsletter went to press, final fundraising results for the year won't be known until mid January. We already know, however, that a combination of renewals from past donors, "donors grandísimo" and first time donors mean no let up in our efforts to increase our impact. We are extremely grateful for the expression of confidence expressed by our supporters.

We sincerely thank the people listed below for their investment in Amigos' work this year, 82% of whom are past donors. (A final list to be included in the next newsletter)

Seth Abbott
Tom Aleto & Karen Elwell##
Armand Alfonzo**
Betty & Bob Allen**
Lori Benson**
Duncan Black & Joy Whetstone
Linda Bornholdt**
Margaret Bridgforth **
Judy & John Bross
Lunette Coburn##
Barbara & Bill Collins
Mary Dunea##
Katherine Faydash**
Nikkolaus Gormsen**
Patricia Greenfield
Sandra Gregory
Mary Jo Hamilton##
Jean and Pete Henderson##
Donald M. Hart**##
Linda Haskell
Allen and Dale Hermann##
Karen Howitt**
Kathy & Kraig Kemper**
Mary Kay Kew**
Becca Kopf
Miriam & Bob Laughlin
Bea & Leon Lindberg
Robert Lipman

Ruth Ludwig
Fleury Mackey
Thomas & Edna Mast
Peter Morris
Nancy & David Orr##
Ceci Perry
Purple Paisley Quilters##
Mary Margaret & John Sather**
Robert Schweich##
Linda & Jim Slezak
Catherine & Lawrence Smith
Ellen & Larry Stillpass
Laura & Louis Sudler
Jeanne Wheeler##
Robbie Williams

Socio Fundadores
Charter donors - Have donated every
year since our 2005 beginning

** Donors Grandísimo
Extraordinary generous donations

Members corner

Geny Hernandez and Mark Harmon Wed in Unique Ceremony

Well known Amigos members and volunteers, Geny Hernandez López and Mark Harmon, exchanged vows of marriage December 28 in a lovely outdoor ceremony held in the gardens at the home of Señor and Señora Juan Uvence.

The unique ceremony featured demonstrations of the newly weds' joy of living together - past, present and future – including the world of art, dancing and travel. Geny and Mark are key members of the tango group that performs twice weekly in front of patrons at the Malevo and Perfidia restaurants. Mark's paintings and ceramic work have been featured in a number of exhibitions throughout San Cristobal and he has donated his ceramics for prizes at Amigos membership gatherings. Geny is the former director of the Museo de Culturas Populares in San Cristobal and is now teaching Ethnomusicology at the University of Chiapas (UNACH).

Along with a sumptuous comida, guests were treated to the band of Franco Alvarez whose music ranged from the 1950s to Lady Gaga. This was followed by the talented Argentine singer, Natalie Magliano, who entranced the audience with her wonderful voice and the variety in her repertoire.





Visit our website, join, help us help others!

www.amigosdesc.org/



