

Video, Growth Plans, NGO Partners Highlight 7th Annual Meeting

With an at-capacity audience, Amigos president Hileana García presided over the seventh Annual Meeting, held at the historical Congreso Building conference facility on March 22.



Amigos president Hileana García presiding over the Amigos annual meeting.

Hileana's bilingual skills made the well-organized agenda move along crisply. Also, for the first time, an impressive slide show with videos featuring each of the currently sponsored projects and the past year's membership and fundraising events was presented. With Hileana referring to the projects

as "our motivation," the video included testimonials from recent recipients, who described how Amigos' donor funds are improving lives through the efforts of partner NGOs working to improve health, education, and economic well-being. The presentation is available on the Amigos website (www.amigosdesc.org), the Amigos Facebook page, and on YouTube.

The Annual Meeting opened with Hileana welcoming guests and warmly thanking all members responsible for multiple accomplishments in 2011, including members of the board of directors, three of whom are not standing for reelection in 2012: Adriana Aguerrebere, Diane Livingston, and Nicholas Miller. Specially recognized for their ceaseless efforts were treasurer Alison Abbott, Projects Committee chair Ann Conway—along with her committee members—and Amigos administrator Claudia Tovilla. Representatives of the NGO partners in attendance were also introduced and welcomed individually.

In reviewing the financial report displayed on a large screen, along with other statistics, Hileana reported that 106 members are current with 2012 dues, \$722,440 pesos are in an investment account held by Amigos (of which \$473,381 pesos are endowment or reserve), and \$476,988 pesos had been raised through generous donors in 2011.

Objectives for 2012 include growing paid membership to at least 120 members, as well as achieving donations of 500,000 pesos and local event fundraising of 103,000 pesos, to be able to distribute 450,000 pesos in grants in the fall. A fundraising video is in the planning stages, with filming at representative project sites scheduled for the second week of May. The highly credentialed New York documentary filmmaker David Pentecost, a part-time San Cristóbal resident and Amigos member, will make the film pro bono.

Hileana also reported on a productive Amigos weekend retreat in late January, which resulted in the unanimous decision to increase Amigos growth rate to broaden Amigos' impact in addressing basic needs of the marginalized population of Chiapas. To do so, larger funding sources will be targeted to supplement gifts from individual donors and a full-time director will be hired. A grant request to a major foundation to cover the first three years of the director's salary has been submitted.

A formal strategic planning process addressing the next 3–5 years was also a result of the retreat and is well under way, led by Adriana Aguerrebere. A review of the Amigos mission statement at the retreat led to the inclusion of "to develop self-sufficiency," in addition to "improving the health, education and economic well-being of disadvantaged Chiapas citizens."



Board member Adriana Aguerrebere presenting the slate of candidates for the 2012 Amigos board.

The Annual Meeting concluded with the election of directors of the board. Reelected to a new one-year term were Alison Abbott, Ann Conway, Hileana García, and Alma Silva. Elected to their first term were Lucía Baráibar Ruiz, Katherine Faydash, and Bruce Ferguson.



Alison Abbott

A four-year Amigos board member, Alison has served as treasurer for three years and as administrative coordinator for one year. Married to Enrique Arreguin Rodriguez, Alison has made San Cristóbal her home for six years, following a 35-year career as a primary school teacher at the Francis Parker School in Chicago. Besides her work for Amigos, Alison volunteers as an English teacher.



Lucía Baráibar Ruiz

A first-time Amigos board member, Lucía is a San Cristóbal native. She studied both law and political science, but it was her courses in jewelry design that led to her full-time work. She is general director of the jewelry businesses Puerta Azul de Chiapas and Quinto Sol Joyería (where many local Amigos members pay their dues). With this experience, plus her experience as director of the San Cristóbal Tourism Office, past member of the Mexican Businesswomen's Association (AMMJE), and now a member of the State Council of COPARMEX, Lucía brings a business perspective to the Amigos board.



Ann Conway

A native Californian and past resident of Colorado, Ann pursued three successful careers: in education, with Citigroup, and as a manager and country director with Peace Corps, before moving to San Cristóbal two years ago. This is her second year on the board, and Ann is also chair of the Project Committee. Ann and her husband John will open their boutique hotel La Joya Hotel San Cristóbal in December 2012.



Katherine Faydash

A member of the Amigos Project Committee for more than a year, Chicago-born Katherine is new to the Amigos board. She has lived in San Cristóbal since 2005. She has over ten years' experience as a developmental book editor and project manager in the publishing industry. She also is codirector of DePaul University's Chiapas Human Rights Practicum.



Bruce G. Ferguson, Ph.D.

A native of Seattle, Washington, Bruce joins the Amigos board after having been an Amigos member for three years. He is a researcher and head of the Agroecology Department at El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (ECOSUR) in San Cristóbal. He has published many articles in scientific journals and has written chapters for seven different books. His research, writing, and teaching projects have focused on ecological restoration (including sustainable food systems), agroecological education, and participatory agroecological certification. He lives in San Cristóbal with his wife Helda Morales and their son, Marcos.



Hileana García

President of Amigos in 2011, Hileana is starting her third year as a board member. As cochair of the Special Events Committee, she was instrumental to the success of the 2011 Susana Harp concert as well as the 2010 and 2011 flea markets. Hileana and her husband, Rodrigo Alfonso, are the owners of Kitsch & Bagels and Posada del Abuelito, and they are the parents of Sofia, age 3, who will soon be a big sister.



Alma Silva

As the cofounder and president of Desarrollo Educativo Sueniños, Alma will continue to offer the NGO perspective in her second year on the Amigos board. Originally from Mazatlán, Sinaloa, Alma attended university in Austria, where she met her husband, Christian Szinicz. They are the proud parents of two children, ages 2 and 5, and they have just moved into a new home in Barrio Santa Lucía.



Report from the Amigos Strategic Plan Leader Adriana Aguerrebere

We are very excited about the strategic planning work that the Amigos Board has been involved in recently. One of our objectives for 2011–2012 was to conduct an organizational analysis and design a strategic plan for Amigos. In February 2012, board members attended a retreat led by Armando Alfonzo to look at where Amigos started, where we are now, and where we are going. Armando has years of experience working with NGOs, and he has helped Amigos align our vision and mission statements to focus on the added value that Amigos brings to San Cristóbal and Chiapas.

The board members unanimously agreed that it's time to grow and have more impact in Chiapas. This will have significant implications for our strategies and operational plan, and it will involve some changes, including hiring a director. During several more meetings we worked to fine-tune Amigos' overall strategies.

The next stage of our planning, which will be carried out by the new board of directors in 2012, will be to develop a one-year operational plan and to finalize the three-year plan. Our focus will be on excellence and measurable results so that we can benefit the disadvantaged through our partner NGOs and the broader community.



Armando Alfonzo working with Amigos board members.

Amigos Gives the Second Annual “Donna Wilcox Hart Award” to 12 Guayacanes del Sur, AC



Amigos president Hileana García presenting the “Donna Wilcox Hart Award” to José Norberto López.

On March 10, 2012, Amigos president Hileana García presented the Donna Wilcox Hart Award to 12 Guayacanes del Sur, A.C., for its project “Pan para Todos”. This award was established in 2011 in memory of Donna Wilcox Hart, who loved the people and cultures of San Cristóbal and Chiapas. The Project Committee and board of directors of Amigos felt that it was fitting to give this award to 12 Guayacanes because the project represents an exemplary combination of education, health, and economic development in Chiapas. In her presentation, Hileana said that Amigos was very impressed with the 12 Guayacanes' spirit, strength of purpose, tenacity, and dedication to one another.

Five other Amigos members (Rodrigo Alfonso, David and Nancy Orr, Kraig Kemper, and Alison Abbott) made the three-hour trip with Hileana to the project site in the municipality of Frontera Comalapa, near the Mexico-Guatemala border, to participate in the award celebration. The celebration opened with a warm greeting, during which many of the project participants—men, women, and children—each welcomed and thanked the visitors from Amigos. After the presentation, the 12 Guayacanes' secretary, José Norberto López, explained how much the award and grant meant to the group for their food production project.

The Amigos members then were given a tour to visit some of the impressive components of the project: pigs, chickens, fruit trees, and a new mushroom-growing structure. The tour ended at the parcel of land that is being purchased with part of the Amigos grant, and the tour was followed by a delicious lunch of tamales, fruit, and atole.



José Norberto López explaining the mushroom project to Amigos members.



Membership Renewal and Social Event

Some 70 members, prospective members, family members, and friends attended the annual membership renewal and social event at Casa Felipe Flores on the beautiful afternoon of January 22. Attendees enjoyed food, drink, and camaraderie, and were entertained by an outstanding guitar duo.

Reminding everyone of Amigos' mission, representatives from several of the Amigos-supported NGOs were present. There was also an informative slideshow presentation of Amigos projects from recent years. Another highlight—and a pleasant surprise—in addition to the collection of membership dues, six people made donations to support Amigos projects, totaling 2,660 pesos.

Eight new dues-paying members joined Amigos, and another seven indicated their interest in volunteering. As always, a number of members were unable to attend because of family or other commitments or were out of town. For past members who have yet to renew their 2012 dues, please renew as soon as possible so we can include you on the active rolls and continue sending you the quarterly newsletter.

Members who wish to volunteer for one or more Amigos activities (and did not have the opportunity to return the questionnaire at the January 22 event), if you are interested in assisting with any of the following, please send an email to amigos@amigosdesc.org:

- Visiting an Amigos-supported project and providing an email report of your visit
- Taking photographs of funded projects and special events
- Translating from English to Spanish and Spanish to English
- Helping organize membership gatherings
- Developing fundraising strategies
- Reviewing grant applications
- Serving on a committee (Membership, Project, Communications, Fundraising, Special Events) or on the board of directors
- Helping organize fundraising events (such as concerts and the flea market)
- Developing strategies for increasing membership and engaging members
- Designing posters or flyers for events



Nicholas Miller, membership event organizer, welcoming guests with Amigos member Kippy Nigh.



Event hosts Nancy and David Orr enjoying the music with other guests.



March 23rd Sak Tzevul Concert Amigos Benefit

On March 23rd, the second in a series of four Sak Tzevul/Casa del Pan concerts for 2012 was held, with the proceeds for this evening donated to Amigos de San Cristobal, AC. Many thanks to Amigos members and Casa del Pan owners, Kippy and Ron Nigh and to the musicians of SakTzevul for a wonderful evening of delicious food and music. Many Amigos members were in attendance for this delightful event. To quote Kippy, from her report to Amigos: "The event last night was a success in every respect. I saw smiles on everyone's faces, reflecting supreme, continuous enjoyment of Sak Tzevul's perfect concert, and we made money for AMIGOS."



*Sak Tzevul presenting their magnificent concert
at the Casa del Pan.*


Sna Nichimtik
FRUTERIA Y BAZAR

SNA NICHIMTIK FRUTERIA Y BAZAR
es una empresa social que fue creada para dar empleo a chicos que trabajan
en la calle en un espacio seguro y donde se desarrolla el programa de educación
financiera y capacitación para el trabajo formal.

Además de encontrar frutas y verduras a precios competitivos estarás ayudando
a que estos muchachos puedan crear un fondo de ahorro para que en un futuro
próximo ellos puedan abrir sus propios negocios.

VEN Y COMPRA con nosotros

El equilibrio esta en manos de todos y todas.

Calle 5 de febrero No.22 Col. Centro
San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas

Sna Nichimtik Fruteria y Bazar Is Open!

The Sna Nichimtik (house of the flowers in the Maya Tzotzil) fruit and vegetable store and bazaar is now open for business. Run by our partner NGO, Casa de Las Flores, this small store offers employment to youths who work in the street and the opportunity to learn business skills in preparation for formal employment. If you live in San Cristóbal or are here for a visit, stop by and buy some produce. The prices are competitive and the workers are friendly! The address is Calle 5 de Febrero No. 22, Col. Centro, next to the Casa de Las Flores center.

Members Corner

Transitions

Please let us know of any "transitions"—births, deaths, moves, honors, etc.—involving Amigos members.

amigos@amigosdesc.org

Thank You, and a Reminder

Again, a big thank you to the donors of items for the 2011 Amigos flea market. Don't forget to start saving unneeded items, large and small, for the 2012 Amigos flea market!

