



The Aldea (village)

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Empowering Guatemalan children through education.

SHARING OUR VERY SAD NEWS FROM LIVINGSTON, GUATEMALA

By Shari Zamarra

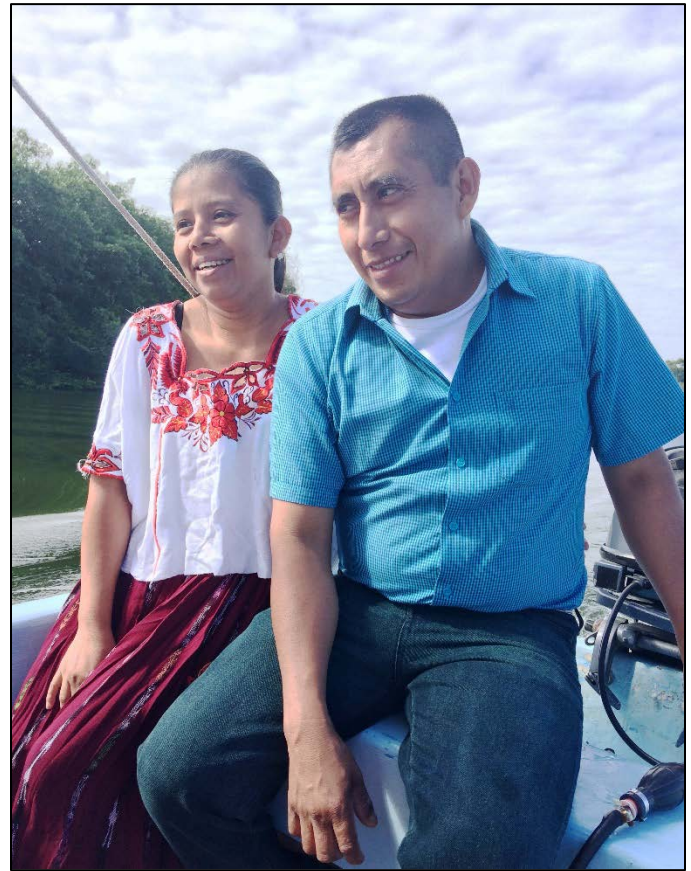
Our **TEACH** family was shocked and saddened to learn that Luis Xol, 44, and his younger sister Olga, 24, were killed August 29, 2019 on the Rio Dulce river on their way home from a shopping trip. Since **TEACH** began in 2002, Luis has been a vital partner in our mission. He was one of 12 children raised in Lagunita, Izabal. He and his wife Filomena's dedication to education was evident not only for their own five children but for all the children in the area, which made him an obvious partner for **TEACH**.

In 2004 Luis founded, with several villages, Asociación Maya Q'eqchi for the economic development of the area to promote eco-tourism and education. Through this organization, **TEACH** has been able to build primary schools in villages that had none, to pay teachers' salaries, and to promote more middle school options in the area. Olga was a former teacher in one of our **TEACH** schools and was a pre-med student.

Luis' efforts to empower indigenous Mayan children through education were widely known in the Municipality of Livingston, the area around the Rio Dulce River. It is similar to a large U.S. county. In June 2019, he was elected Mayor of the municipality but had not yet taken office. It is believed that the killings were politically motivated; no progress has been made in solving these crimes.

Please join us in extending our deepest sympathy and offering our continued prayers to Luis' and Olga's large extended family.

These tragic losses make us realize more than ever the importance of education to make a better Guatemala. **TEACH** has needed to adapt to many



Luis Xol, 44, was killed Aug. 29, along with his sister Olga (not pictured), as they traveled home from the market, by boat. This photo of Luis and wife, Filomena, was first published in 2016, for a profile in this newsletter.

changes in our 17 years of work. That flexibility is one of our hallmarks.

We are determined that the work of Luis will not be forgotten, and therefore we will be establishing scholarships in Luis and Olga's names.

*Shari Zamarra is chair of the **TEACH** Board of Directors.*

STUDENT WORKSHOP HELD IN COBÁN FOR OLDER STUDENTS

By Shari Zamarra

On June 13-15, 2019, eleven **TEACH** students and two teachers attended a workshop in Cobán organized by our partner organization GSSG (Guatemalan Student Support Group). GSSG assists some of our high school and university students with scholarships. Students from other schools also attended — 56 people in all. **TEACH** funded the tuition and transportation.

During the workshops, the students actively participated, sharing experiences of their schools and their daily lives. A variety of relevant topics were included in the program:

- My sacred space, spiritual strengthening.
- The most urgent need for reading today.
- Role of the indigenous student and the barriers of opportunities for success.
- University studies for a single mother: this is no obstacle to success.
- Misuse of technology can cause loss of concentration in studies.
- Challenges of youth in this world convulsed by social media networks.
- Pathways and secret passages to Spanish grammar.
- Valuation of what life gives us. Professional growth.
- Wisest administration of my scholarship funds.
- Guatemala from its origins is characterized by social stratification, marginalization and discrimination even in our days. How to get ahead despite such social issues existing in the 21st century.
- Man and woman, the responsible human coexistence: on the role of men and women today, specifically on the macho issue in the country. This was one of the most dynamic of all the topics.
- Writing letters to my sponsors, improving the content and ideas, contextualization and truthfulness.

Merlyn Ipina, Coordinator for **TEACH** and INSPA, who attended the workshop with his students, commented: Many thanks to Jorge Paque,



Students and teachers spent three days studying how to improve themselves through education and knowledge, during a June workshop.

the GSSG Program administrator, for making this opportunity possible! “May God bless each of you and your Foundation **TEACH** and all of the people that make this support possible.”

Students wrote about what they had learned:

“Read a little and you will be like most of the others. Read a lot and you will be one of few.”

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“I learned many things including how to share with other people. I liked the GSSG workshop at lot and I learned about the following: My sacred space, valuing promises, technology and the loss of concentration, problem solving and other things. The topics made sense to me and I will incorporate what I learned in my daily life.”

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The workshop is an excellent example of how partnership works: Generous donors provide resources; partners on the ground make it happen; students and teachers work and study – all to make a three-legged stool.

*Shari Zamarra is chair of the **TEACH** Board of Directors.*

OUR MISSION

The mission of **TEACH** is to actively respond to the schooling needs of underserved children, in Mayan communities in Guatemala.



ANNUAL BINGO, SILENT AUCTION FUND-RAISER SET FOR MARCH 28, 2020

The St. Mary of Sorrows Council 8600 Knights of Columbus will sponsor the 5th annual Bingo and silent auction fundraiser to support **TEACH** on Saturday, March 28, 2020.

The family-friendly event will be in Farrell Hall at St. Mary's at 5222 Sideburn Road, Fairfax, Va. 22032.

Doors open at 6 PM. and play is from 6:30 until 9 p.m. The cost is \$10.00 for two cards. Chili, hot dogs and baked goods will be available for purchase.

Donations of items for the Silent Auction, corporate table sponsors, and restaurant and business gift certificates for bingo prizes are greatly appreciated. For more information, please contact Karen Abraham, at 703-978-1147 or board@teach.org.



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CHAIR'S MESSAGE: JUST HOW TEACH WORKS

By Shari Zamarra

How does **TEACH** work? This is a question that bears some reflection. As we look back on 17 years, several things come to mind. Some thoughts to share:

We stay true to our mission – By caring and working to give students in Guatemala an education.

We are responsible – Thanks to Treasurer Fred Walker, our financial situation is sound; 2019 audit is complete.

We adapt – Changing conditions on the ground require this. The present situation (sad news article on page 1) is an obvious example which requires careful scrutiny. Some sites are ones we have had from the beginning. After careful consideration, some sites have come and gone.

Until now all of our sites have been in the Department of Izabal, where we were planted by Fr. Tom Moran CMF many years ago. In 2019, we added a school outside Antigua, which came to our attention through Jeff Schneider, our trip guide and translator.

Semilla de Esperanza y Amor (Seed of Hope and Love) has students from preschool through middle school. The location allows us to visit each year (one of our criteria), as we always end our trip in Antigua.

Another adaptation in the last couple of years has been to offer scholarships to high school and university students. These funds go directly to assist a particular student, with oversight by one of our trusted partners.

This is a departure from our process of funding primary and middle school sites, where monies go to the entire institution.

We wish to support a student as he or she advances through the **TEACH** system.

We partner – Realizing we cannot do this alone, we constantly seek partners who have similar missions. (See the student workshop article on page 2.)

We listen – Knowing that given our North American lens, we cannot begin to know what is best for our students, we listen to local leaders and partners. Sometimes the lessons learned are surprising.

We appreciate – Your generosity provides the resources; our partners on the ground make it happen. (See the band article on page 4.)

So that's how **TEACH** works!

STRIKE UP THE BAND!

By Fred Walker

Our **TEACH** contingent visited Escuela Maya LaSalle, one of our supported primary schools in El Estor, during our trip to Guatemala in February 2019. We met with Brother Lesberth, the new Christian Brothers administrator of the primary school, a basico (middle school), and their new diversificado (high school).

We toured the facilities, were treated to performances by students of the primary school, met with the six scholarship students from Semuy who attended the new diversificado, and sat for discussions with Brother Lesberth and the primary school principal, Marta. Following talks about **TEACH**'s financial commitments to Brother Lesberth, we asked if he had questions or concerns.

We were surprised when he asked **TEACH** to help buy instruments for his school band. Requests for infrastructure support, more teachers, or help with nutritional packages are the usual fare. Money for instruments was right up there with the request for a boat and motor for Sanabria a few years ago.

Music and the performing arts are a key part of the education received in our supported schools, so we told Brother Lesberth that we would take up his request when we returned home. The motion to provide \$2,000 for band instruments was approved.

Brother Lesberth says there are 70 members in the musical band—22 dancers and 48 musicians. Girls and boys from the primary school, basico, and



The LaSalle Marching Band marches past their school.

diversificado make up the band's membership. Some use school instruments, while others have their own.

Band members pay 10 quetzals (about \$1.35) monthly, and practice from one to three hours weekly for performances. They play at religious festivals, such as their patron saint's Feast Day and St. Peter's Day, as well as in several civic festivities.

Pat Parr, an ardent, long-time **TEACH** supporter, volunteered to donate the entire amount. She said she had enjoyed playing in her high school band and want the students in El Estor to have that opportunity.

The donated funds will be used to purchase two trombones, three trumpets, one five-drum set, one four-drum set, and three other drums to be ready for the new school year in January 2020.

Brother Lesberth and his marching band members sent their wholehearted thanks to **TEACH**, especially to "Mrs. Pat," saying "we appreciate your good deed and, Mrs. Pat, God bless you for your support."

*Fred Walker is Treasurer for **TEACH**.*

Yes, I would like to be a **TEACH** Sponsor

Please ask a friend to be a sponsor of **TEACH**. \$30 a month (\$360 a year) will keep a child in school.

I'll sponsor:

Boy Girl in primary grades

Boy Girl in middle school

Boy Girl in high school

I have enclosed a check in the amount of \$ _____

I cannot be a sponsor now, but I am enclosing a donation of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ E-mail address _____

Make all checks payable to **TEACH**

Mail to: Toward Educating America's Children

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TEACH will never share your name or personal information with other organizations.

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