



Chair's Message

HOW DO WE DO IT? WE WORK IN FAITH AND PARTNERSHIP

By Shari Zamarra

How do you run an organization in another country, another culture, another language? At **TEACH** we ask ourselves this question quite often. In February, Jeff Schneider and I traveled to our **TEACH** projects in Guatemala for the first time in two years. In pandemic times, we have had to adapt. A point of pride for us is our ability to be nimble and pivot.

Jeff and I tried to be prepared for some changes, but we found a bit more than we thought. At one of our villages, the Guatemalan government had agreed to pay for a second teacher, so **TEACH** help is no longer needed – good news! At another village, we found that the families are moving away because parents lack jobs, and only a few children remain. The school had to be abandoned. Fortunately, the remaining children attend a nearby school. Letting go of schools is never easy, because we get attached, but we have had to do it numerous times. Because of our excellent partners, we have other options and now have two new schools. The bottom line is that the children are being educated -- our Mission. It's just not always done the way we planned.

The reality of the economy for the people we serve is challenging. Parents want their children to be educated, but sometimes they can't even put food on the table. Inflation is taking its toll. Not all children could do remote learning during the pandemic; some dropped out, and some must repeat.

Another pivot was required when we realized our annual Bingo at St. Mary's in Fairfax, Va. was not possible this year. Enclosed is an alternative spring project. This is an opportunity to share with friends who might have been Bingo buddies and also to spread the word about **TEACH**.

As always, we respect your generosity and willing-



*Medical student Silvia, at right, donates medical supplies to a clinic, in 2021. She earned a scholarship through a **TEACH** partnership.*

ness to support our work. Thank you.

Some things change but some things remain the same, i.e. commitment to our Mission. Questions and comments are always welcome, as well as anyone interested in sharing their gifts as a Board member, as our recently departed friend Bill Norris did so well (see page 3).

One example of how we do it: partnership

Silvia, a young woman in medical school in Guatemala, has written an eloquent letter, thanking one of our **TEACH** supporters for his assistance. She is one of our INSPA scholarship students. Check out her words, posted on our website, at www.teacham.org/news/. Silvia, her sponsor, and all of you are good reasons why we empower students working for a better world. You help us pivot, adapt, partner, innovate, and believe. Together -- that's how we do it. Faith remains the basis of our work.

PARTNER PROFILE: MAYA Q'EQCHI CULTURAL CENTER ASSOCIATION

By Fred Walker

One of the unique aspects of the indigenous Maya communities in Guatemala is the cultural association. The association that **TEACH** interacts with is the Maya Q'eqchi Cultural Center Association. The seat of the Association is in Lagunita Salvador, located on a tributary of the Rio Dulce River 17 kilometers east of Livingston and is accessible only by water.

The Association is an education and social development organization focused on rural communities, their development and their participation in society. It helps educate rural area children and fosters the social development of the neediest communities by promoting education and projects with funds provided by international missions, including **TEACH**.

The Association is a benchmark of quality education operating in the most marginalized communities. It is sustainable and it develops, along with the communities, proposals that contribute to strengthening society.

The Association was founded in 2004 at Lagunita Salvador Village on the initiative of Mr. Luis Xol, who had become aware of the lack of education and development opportunities in the Livingston, Izabal communities. The Association is now involved in education, running water, health, cultural, environmental, agricultural, community tourism, and sports infrastructure projects. The Association is operated by a nine-member Board of Directors. Its Chairperson and Legal Representative is Julieta Xol Cuz, with whom **TEACH** interacts.

The General Assembly is the top decision-making authority and is composed of resource management members, the Board of Directors, the Project Coordination, active donors, and the COCODES (Community development Councils) of the beneficiary communities.

Assistance from foreign donors was obtained for



*Thanks to a partnership between the Maya Q'eqchi Cultural Center Association, and **TEACH**, this little girl attends school in Lagunita Salvador.*

the implementation of education projects and the construction of churches in several Livingston communities. The Maya Q'eqchi Cultural Center Association has attained significant achievements thanks to the support of its donors who have placed their trust in the Association since its inception. Major donors are **TEACH**, Esperanza de Rio Dulce Mission, Kids to Kids, and Caminos Esperanza de Rio Dulce, all USA-based NGOs (non-governmental organizations).

The Association has promoted education, health, community and school orchards, agriculture, backyard bird-raising, and forestry projects by forming strategic institutional alliances with The Ministry of Education, the Livingston parish, the Council of Indian Women and Biodiversity, the Organization for the Restoration of Ecosystems, the Organization for the Generation of Food Systems, and other local organizations.

Direct beneficiaries currently include seven coeducational rural elementary schools, and five other higher-level educational institutions. Some 2,500 persons are benefiting indirectly from project activities sponsored by the Association.

Associations such as the Maya Q'eqchi' Cultural Center Association are extremely important to the continuing educational and cultural development of the rural villages and communities of Guatemala and **TEACH** is committed to a continuing relationship with this vital organization.

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

OUR MISSION

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

IN TRIBUTE TO THE LATE WILLIAM NORRIS, A TRULY REFINED DON QUIXOTE

By David Megel

There was a spirit alive in the '60s, that animated many -- a real concern for the well being of others. It found expression in a cartoon in the *New York Times*. An image of every soul on earth arranged in a circle enjoying the comfort of their back being scratched by the person behind them. It is a comfort that demands the care and concern of another human being. The caption beneath the cartoon was: "Try scratching your own back sometime."

It was the hope which originated in the '50s to repair the devastation wrought by the war of the '40s. It was manifest in the ecumenism of the United Nations, the advent of women's liberation, the voice of Mahatma Gandhi, and a rebuke of colonialism. It was captured in the music of the "Age of Aquarius." It animated "The Dream" of Martin Luther King Jr., and drove Pope John XXIII to call Vatican II.



Bill Norris, along with his wife, Marta, were on the very first trip to Guatemala.



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Bill Norris grew up in the '50s. He embodied the concern for and care of others. I didn't meet Bill till the '80s when he appeared at a community performance of the play "Don Quixote." Bill was a refined Quixote. He didn't dote on, or chase after, windmills. He was a realist with a Quixote heart.

In his youth he volunteered service in the Army Air Corps and in a European Work Camp. He taught English and history in Beirut. He was Quixote in ideal manner and smile. Bill and his wife, Marta, accompanied us on the very first trip to Guatemala, which resulted in the founding of **TEACH**. For their generosity to **TEACH**, their travels to Guatemala, Bill's service on our **TEACH** Board, his editorial work for "The Aldea" newsletter, we thank you both.

Bill was Quixote on stage and off. I can remember how he greeted me and others with much enthusiasm, so warmly we thought *we* were celebrities. When you were fortunate enough to spend a few moments with Bill, you walked away feeling *you* were some great guy. But it was Bill who was such a great person.

So Bill, thank you for being who you were, what you did for **TEACH**, and for the way you showed us how we might become refined Don Quixotes.

Bill passed away on April 6, 2022 at age 95.

*David Megel is a founder of **TEACH**.*

TEACH SELECTS TWO NEW SCHOOLS TO RECEIVE ASSISTANCE

By Jeff Schneider

Board member and volunteers visited several sites in Guatemala last winter, during its regular outreach with villagers, parents, teachers, and schoolchildren. We traveled from Rio Dulce River and took a truck ride for 20 minutes on a well-worn dirt road, crossing two creeks to reach the village of Tameja. We were met by the village leader and most of the families living there. There is a primary school in Tameja, an isolated Maya village that has requested assistance.

The Guatemalan government is paying for a primary teacher and one basico (middle school) teacher. However, the basico teacher does not live close by and is frequently a no-show. Meanwhile, Pablo, a teacher **TEACH** has worked with in Semuy, wants to relocate to his village. The village council

made a request to **TEACH** that Pablo be hired as a second basico teacher.

We also visited Naranjal, another isolated community close to the border with Belize. We had to arrive from the ocean and then up a creek to the village. This is a village founded 7 years ago by 25 families. They grow corn, cocoa, cardamom, beans and few other crops. They built a basic school, then got it certified 2 years ago by the Ministry of Education. However, they have to prove it is sustainable with 3 to 5 years of consecutive classes before the government will consider assistance. Last year they had a foundation providing the salary for one primary teacher. This year the foundation was unable to help. We met with the village council and most of the families at the school. The leader said they don't want their children to lose a year of schooling. They also need to keep building the 3 to 5 years of consecutive classes, to qualify for government aid. They built a room for a teacher, and the village will provide room and board.

We were impressed with the strong organization of this village. They are very serious about the opportunity of education for their children. Our cooperation and oversight with these villages comes through the Maya Q'eqchi Cultural Center Association (see page 2).

The **TEACH** Board approved support for Tameja and Naranjal at the Board meeting on Feb. 22nd.



TEACH visited several schools to ensure children like this little boy can stay in class.

Jeff Schneider is a **TEACH** Board volunteer.

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

Make all checks payable to **TEACH**

Mail to: Toward Educating America's Children

P.O. Box 188

Burke, VA 22009

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 _____

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

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