



The Aldea (village)

Spring/Summer 2017

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Empowering Guatemalan children through education.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE: YOUR TEACH BOARD IN ACTION

By Shari Zamorra

When I consider the status of **TEACH** this spring, many verbs come to mind -- verbs like these action words: **Informing, Thanking, Evolving, Listening, Learning, Partnering, Seeking.**

Informing and thanking you our supporters is vital. We know that without you, there would be no **TEACH**. In 2017, we have 11 sites. Our sites must be accessible for visits and must conform to our mission. As we listen and learn, we are led by our local Guatemalan partners and community leaders and are assisted by our U.S. partners. I am happy to report that 2016 was our best year ever and our finances are sound, due in part to Fred Walker's excellent financial management, the success of our Diocesan Appeals (led by David Megel and Anne Larin), and the hard work of our Board members.

Our recent February trip was rich in action. When we



Martha Choc Rax receives a gift sent from her sponsor, **TEACH** Board member Karen Abraham.

visit, we are presented with many needs and requests. Each must be evaluated by considering its relevance to our mission and our budget capacity. We are reminded that sometimes there are health, nutrition and water issues that affect children we are helping to educate. These needs can possibly be met with the help of other groups or grants; any ideas or help on those issues would be greatly appreciated.

As students helped by **TEACH** mature and move to the next level of education, we strive to continue to support them. We now offer scholarships to students at the middle school and high school levels at four of our sites.

Our 4th Annual Teachers' Workshop is on the horizon for July.

It is vital that we listen to you our supporters, as well as to our people on the ground in Guatemala. Please know that your comments, questions, and ideas are most welcome.

LEARNING WITHOUT WALLS

By Pat Giglio

It was my privilege to accompany the **TEACH** representatives on their trip to Guatemala in February this year. I have been a continuing sponsor with **TEACH** but had never personally seen the dramatic impact the donations have on the children, their families and their villages until then. We were a small group of five, traveling by car, pickup truck and boat to remote sites, checking to make sure each site is operating successfully and has what is needed to ensure that the children are being educated.

We visited 10 sites, each one unique but all with the same purpose of helping to provide schooling for the children. At many of the locations the children had prepared programs to entertain us, singing songs or dancing to music, wearing everything from cowboy hats to native costumes. The sharing of food was often part of our visits, with the women of the villages cooking all morning to provide *Continued on page 3.*



Dos Zapotillos, a school in its first full year of support by **TEACH**, has a roof but no walls. Nevertheless, a new teacher can provide instruction for the 27 students.

TEACH BRINGS A NEW TEACHER – AND LUNCH

By Fred Walker



Village committee members and **TEACH** board members welcome Rubi (front row, center), the new teacher for the school in the village of Creek de Cuatro Cayos.

On a beautiful sunny day in February we approached a small village located on the banks of a tributary of the Rio Dulce River, in eastern Guatemala. Our party consisted of our five-person **TEACH** contingent, three members of a local village committee, and a young teacher named Rubi. Our destination was Creek de Cuatro Cayos (Creek of Four Keys). When we reached the village's small, one-room school building, we were met by a group of parents and children with a look of hopeful anticipation on their faces. The 16 families and their 16 school-aged children had not had a regular teacher for two years; prior to that the presence of a teacher was sporadic.

Addressing the gathering, we introduced Rubi, their new teacher, to them; they responded with polite but enthusiastic applause. **TEACH** had committed to providing funds for the teacher, offering the villagers hope in getting their education back on track.

In our discussions with villagers such as these, we always ask how else we might help them. As we had learned previously from the Bishop of Izabal, "one cannot preach the gospel effectively unless the people first have clean water to drink and food in their bellies." By extension it is difficult to learn efficiently when one is hungry or in distress. We were told that the children had parasites — probably from their

drinking water — needed vitamins, and needed a nourishing mid-day meal. Our response was to provide funds for a water filter, anti-parasite medicine, age-appropriate vitamins, and a high-protein mid-day meal for the school children. The meal would consist of *incaparina* — a mixture of corn flour and soya flour — that is served as a type of porridge, to which cinnamon and sugar are added. I learned later that *incaparina* was developed by a Guatemalan biophysicist for just such cases as we encountered at Creek de Cuatro Cayos.

By the end of the day, we had added another primary school to our ever-increasing list of supported schools and institutions, and had included the wherewithal to improve the health and educational chances of 16 young Maya children.

*Fred Walker is the 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.

BINGO, SILENT AUCTION MAY 13!



The St. Mary of Sorrows Council 8600 Knights of Columbus will hold the 2nd annual BINGO and Silent Auction fundraiser to support **TEACH** next May 13. It will be in Farrell Hall at St. Mary's, at 5222 Sideburn Road, Fairfax, Va. 22032.

Doors open at 6 p.m., and play is from 6:30 until 9 p.m. The cost is \$10 for two cards. Food and soft drinks will be sold.

Donations of items for the Silent Auction (each valued at more than \$75), corporate table sponsors, and restaurant or business certificates for prizes are greatly appreciated. Watch for more details in the spring, or for more information please contact Karen Abraham at 703-978-1147 or send an email to her at board@teacham.org.



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DID YOU KNOW?



The girls living at the Sacred Hearts residence in Quirigua, Guatemala can turn used can tabs from soft drinks, etc. into beautiful, functional purses. The purses are sold for money to buy school supplies. Please consider saving can tabs for the students. To arrange for a **TEACH** Board member to pick up your tabs, please send a note to board@teacham.com. Thank you in advance for your efforts!

LEARNING WITHOUT WALLS *Continued from page 1*

a lunch of chicken, rice and tortillas as their means of thanking **TEACH** for helping their children.

One of my favorite sites was Dos Zapotillos, a school in its first full year of support by **TEACH**. We traveled there in Father Abel's pickup truck with me sitting in the back. As at many of the sites, our arrival brought out all of the villagers, young and old, which brought a festive air to the day. The children were bright-eyed, curious, friendly and happy. These villagers were especially appreciative to see us come, as we were bringing a new teacher for their school; their previous teacher had not returned, so there had been no school for the children since the start of the school year in January.

The school itself (seen behind the teacher and her new pupils in the picture) is a pole structure with a dirt floor and a decaying thatch roof – the 27 students will be literally learning without walls around them. However, I think it is more appropriate to regard the situation figuratively – **TEACH** helps to remove walls that prevent children from learning. In the case of Dos Zapotillos, the “wall” was the absence of a teacher. In other cases it is the need for supplies, a building, or a place for students to stay while attending school. Whatever the hindrance may be, **TEACH** tries to find a way to overcome it so that children can learn ... without walls obstructing them.

I recommend this trip to anyone wanting to see firsthand what this admirable organization is doing for the poor, isolated and under-served children of Guatemala. Or, if you are unable to make the trip, please consider a donation to help **TEACH** continue to serve this amazing population full of potential greatness.

OLGA LETICIA BA CAAL: NEWEST MEMBER OF THE TEACH TEAM

By David Greene

Please meet Olga Leticia Ba Caal, our coordinator for the Rio Dulce area. Olga lives in Lagunita Salvador right on the banks of the Río Dulce, about midway between Livingston and the city of Río Dulce. No road goes to Lagunita; when Olga needs to travel, she goes to the dock at the edge of her front yard and gets into her boat. Her assignment is to coordinate **TEACH** projects located along the Río Dulce, so she is continuously in contact with the teachers and community leaders there – at Nueva Generación, Sanabria, Kateri Center in Livingston, Lagunita Salvador, and the Esperanza School in Calix Nacimiento. And she is just as continuously in contact by email and telephone with Shari Zamarra and David Greene.



Rio Dulce coordinator Olga Leticia Ba Caal.

“To coordinate” means to provide whatever help is needed. That she does, and she does it promptly and effectively. Because of her work, **TEACH** can learn about problems as they arise and develop well-thought through solutions sooner. The result: **TEACH** projects move from idea to reality much more quickly. Olga helps schools plan building projects to develop their proposals, and she helps communities develop applications for new teachers from **TEACH**. She advises alternative ways of meeting issues, and the advantages and disadvantages of each one. She serves **TEACH** projects by distributing funds for teachers’ salaries and for building projects, and provides follow-up on this distribution. She reminds schools when reports to **TEACH** are due, and she keeps reminding them until the reports are in. When **TEACH** delegations come to the Río Dulce area area, she coordinates transportation and meeting schedules.

A former president of the Association and Cultural Center of the Maya Q’eqchi’ and Coordinator for Education Projects

of Esperanza Río Dulce, Olga is married to Miguel Ángel Xol Rax, who was one of the founders of the **TEACH**-funded school at Calix Nacimiento. They have two daughters.

“As a Q’eqchi’ woman,” she said, “I want to continue my studies in environmental engineering at the Universidad Rural and work at middle management level, which will give me the opportunity and the skills to do demanding and important work for the benefit of the indigenous communities in the Río Dulce area. I love to meet and

get to know new people, and whenever I do, I find it also helps me move toward this goal.

“I put a high value on pursuing whatever challenges are put in front of me. I want to be someone who helps lots and lots of young men and women to follow their dream to be a wonderful person—a great person—in the future.

“My chief role model, and also a powerful motivation for me, has been my oldest sister, Lola Cabnal. Over the past 20 years she has followed a highly successful path with the Ak’Tenamit Association, a cooperative study-work secondary school founded by Steve Dudenhoefer. She was with Ak’Tenamit from its very beginning, and eventually became the head of the association. She now lives in Guatemala City and works on international projects. Her way of working, growing, setting goals, and accepting challenges, especially those related to communities that live in extreme poverty, is a model for my career.”

It is clear that her work for **TEACH**, which began in October 2015, is an example of how Olga wants to live her life – meeting challenges and helping young people realize their dreams to be wonderful people who help other people to be wonderful, too.

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
- The Semuy Basico 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 _____

Phone(H) _____ (Other) _____

E-mail Address _____

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

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