



FALL 2009

NEWSLETTER

AMIGOS DE SANTA CRUZ FOUNDATION

COMMITTED TO HELPING IMPROVE THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF SANTA CRUZ THROUGH SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION, BETTER HEALTH CARE, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



A Vision in Progress

Dear Friends,

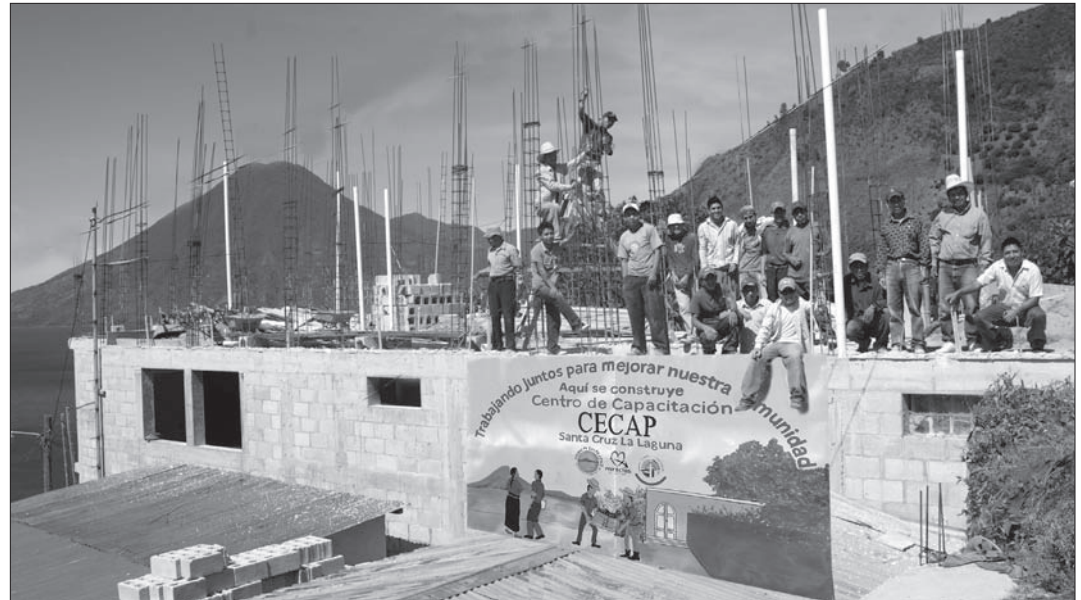


Pat Torpie, Director

As I sit down to write this newsletter I am overwhelmed with gratitude toward all of you, our friends and supporters, who have helped us to achieve so much in 2009. You share our vision of a Santa Cruz where quality education and meaningful work are available to all and where access to knowledge and resources help families live healthier and more productive lives.

The overriding theme for this year has been "Progress through Partnerships." More and more, Amigos has been able to partner with other organizations that share our vision for Santa Cruz and can help us make a difference. We could never have achieved all that we have without the collaboration and support of our outstanding partner organizations. These partnerships have been fostered over the years as we've grown and gotten to know and respect each other. They include Feed the Dream, CoEd, Miracles in Action, and our sister school in Pinckney Michigan. We are very grateful to Rotary International and the Seattle International Foundation for their support.

With the help of these organizations we are reaching out to remote villages to help provide nutrition to mothers and their young children. We helping



CECAP -Centro de Capacitacion-(vocational training center) is happening! Workers have completed the first two levels. One more to go!

to feed 700 children a nutritional meal every day as well as teaching young mothers how to improve the health of their families. Through our on-going teacher training programs we are improving the quality of education for children. We encourage leadership and higher education through our scholarship and leadership development programs for young adults. And, of course, CECAP is all about partnership with local and Guatemalan government, funding organizations and the local community.

Our achievements are obvious to anyone who lives in, or visits, Santa Cruz. As you read on in this issue, we hope you will share our sense of pride in all that we've accomplished together. Now more than ever we hope you will help us to keep this work going and growing.

"Working together to better our community"

CECAP, our center for vocational education, is our greatest source of pride. Only one year after the ground breaking "primera piedra" ceremony, two of the three levels are almost ready to use! The local CECAP Committee has been busy all year overseeing the construction work and developing long-term plans for the center. CECAP is officially partnering with Guatemalan agencies to provide course curriculum and instruction for secondary students and adults in specific vocational programs. We hope to receive a grant from Rotary International this fall for equipment and furnishings

and begin classes in the first two levels in January. With your support, the kitchen, restaurant, and weaving/sewing center will be completed next spring.

This progress could never have happened without your support and all the hard work of our local leadership. The sign in front of the building site for all to see reads: "Working together to improve our community." CECAP is a symbol of pride for the people of Santa Cruz as well as a symbol to all of what can be achieved when people work together toward a shared goal.

Feeding the Dream in remote communities



Meet the women of Tzanjomel. Above, the inauguration of their community molino (corn grinder), a gift from Feed the Dream.

For the past 4 years Amigos and Feed the Dream have been working together to support better health and nutrition for the women and children of the more remote villages of Santa Cruz. Our outreach worker, Miceala Upjan, and her helpers have made a substantial impact on the lives of the women with whom they work. Every week women gather to prepare a meal together taking turns with the cooking, preparation and clean-up. Groups of 40 or so women, many with babies wrapped in brightly woven cloths on their backs, come together to share a hot, nutritious meal and participate in learning activities with Miceala. For these women, this is their first experience participating in a women's group, sharing experiences and learning from one another. They have learned to express themselves and are finding a common voice with which to communicate with local authorities about the medical and educational needs of themselves and their children. This sense of self confidence and solidarity are a result of the development work that Miceala has been doing with them for the past 2 years. We see children growing stronger and mothers who are gaining a basis

of knowledge from which they can improve the health of their families.

Molino for Tzanjomel

This year Amigos and FTD expanded efforts to touch the lives of women in two small and very remote areas of SC. High in the mountains lies the hamlet of Tzanjomel where 25 families live in extreme poverty. Women have had to wake before sunrise to hike down the mountain and across a river to a lakeshore village to grind their corn. They then had to hike back up the mountain in time to make tortillas for their children and husbands before the day begins. When we met with these women of Tzanjomel, they said their greatest need was for a grinder or molino of their own. After the community fulfilled its commitment to build a shelter for the molino and come up with a plan for communal usage and maintenance, we helped them pick out and purchase the molino. This is simple way to support this community but it has made a lasting impression in a area where no one has ever reached out before. Inauguration Day was a celebration to remember!

New women's center opens in Tzununa

Amigos and FTD reached out this year to offer women in an extremely poor sector of Tzununa, the opportunity to work with us to help improve the nutrition and health of their children. Our women's group built a simple shelter where they help prepare meals for themselves and their children 3 mornings a week. The land for this shelter was generously donated by Robert and Linda Hinshaw, an American couple who have lived in Guatemala for the past 35 years. Learning activities for both the women and the children are providing



a rich and unique experience for all involved. Women are taking pride and ownership of their new center, learning about health and hygiene, and sharing a sense of community among themselves.



Tzununa women and Miceala prepare and share a nutritious meal at their new women's center.

We're almost to the top.. help us make all the way



View from the top floor of CECAP where restaurant will be.

Picture this: A three story community center made for and by the people of Santa Cruz to house workshops and classrooms where the young and old can come to learn new skills that can lead them to real life jobs and prosperity for themselves and their families.

Thanks to our generous supporters this vision is well on its way to becoming a reality. The first two levels of CECAP, Santa Cruz's new Centro de Capacitacion, are almost complete. Built on the side of the mountain along with the rest of the village, CECAP is a formidable landmark in the town center. The lower levels will house industrial shops in carpentry, welding, electricity and electronics as well as our technology center, offices and open classroom spaces. With continued hard work, these two floors will be in use in January 2010.

But the view from the top is what will blow your mind! Picture a street-level entrance that leads you through an open weaving and sewing center with a small arts and crafts shop in one corner and a stairway leading up to a roof-top herb garden and demonstration solar energy facility. On the far end of the floor is a small restaurant and large teaching kitchen that looks out over one of the most beautiful lakes in world, Lake Atitlan. This restaurant

and kitchen will serve as a school to teach students to prepare simple meals, organize menus and run a small restaurant business that will help sustain CECAP programs while teaching valuable skills to local participants.

Envision products made from local natural resources, such as avocado cream and shampoo, being produced by women and marketed to local tourists and in stores through the US and Europe as socially responsible products. Sales will help support the local economy as well as sustain the CECAP center. This is a part of our vision.

Picture the pride of the people for having achieved so much. This is the legacy we hope to leave for Santa Cruz La Laguna.

A year ago we broke ground on this new center and today we are almost there! But to reach the top, we need your help. We still need to raise \$10,000 to finish the top floor.



Looking up at CECAP from below. Top floor not yet built.

Picture how good it will feel to have been a part of making this dream a reality for the people of Santa Cruz. Make CECAP a part of your legacy. Please be as generous as you can to help us reach the top.



Members of our hardworking CECAP Committee.



Thank you, friends...



How can we express our gratitude to all the friends and volunteers who each year give a part of themselves to help our efforts in Santa Cruz? Without your support none of what we do would be possible. **Pinckney, Michigan teachers** arrive each summer offering friendship and in-service training to our teachers and students. Afternoon enrichment/art activities run by committed volunteers bring joy to the children and stimulate their creativity. **Feed the Dream** feeds mothers and young children helping to relieve malnutrition that plagues the poor. Donor dollars feed hundreds of children everyday, provide resources for better health and hygiene, and offer opportunity to young adults to continue to pursue an

education beyond the 6th grade. Our partner, **CoEd**, supports better learning by providing computer education to students and helping teachers become better at what they do.

Very special thanks to our **Miracles in Action** friends who believe, as we do, in the long term investment of CECAP and have backed up that belief by funding close to half the construction costs. We are grateful to the **Seattle International Foundation** who also believes in CECAP and awarded us a \$10K grant to help with the construction. Special thanks to **Eucalyptus Clothing** and **Heron Moon Publishing**, publisher of “Hands at Work”, for donating a percentage of profits from sales and to **Rotary International** for



Pinckney teacher, Karen Diaz, leads math activities with 1st graders; star volunteer, Maria Nielson,



shows secondary students how to make simple movies with a digital camera; Lucia and Rosa show off their linoleum block prints created in the afternoon arts program. Far right:



kindergartners enjoy their daily snack. Below: Nancy Bingham helps deliver Christmas tamale baskets to the women of Pajomel.

supporting clean water for the people. Thanks to all of our wonderful “amigos” who care enough to support our efforts year after year through generous donations. You know who you are. We know who you are. Our gratitude is great. Your gifts of time and money are making a big difference in the lives of the people of Santa Cruz.



Expanding the world of learning through computer education



4th grade students use Encarta, a powerful online encyclopedia, to investigate themes during their computer class in our new technology center.

Computers can be powerful learning tools, especially in remote areas where access to resources are limited. The children of Santa Cruz got their first introduction to computers in 2004 when we installed our first mini-lab of 4 donated used computers in a small corner of the school. Since then, our computer lab has undergone improvements each year. Through a generous donation in 2007, we were able to replace the old computers with 10 brand new ones plus a satellite for internet connection. Regular computer classes were established for both primary and secondary students. Computers became tools for learning for the children of Santa Cruz.

This year, we are very proud to partner with CoEd, Cooperative in Education, a US-based NGO that has been supporting

better education throughout Guatemala for the past 13 years through a book distribution program for secondary schools and more recently through the establishment of well run technology centers in schools throughout the country. Communities are invited to apply to become a recipient of the CoEd programs and must agree to share in a costs-savings program that is later used to replace old books and computer equipment. Santa Cruz now houses a fully-equipped technology center, with 18 work stations, and course curriculum for all grade levels. Our computer teacher receives training and supervision from CoEd on a regular basis. These courses are extremely popular. Students as well as adults are learning how to use the internet to access resources, empowering young adults to pursue learning goals and helping the community find solutions to critical issues that face them.

Santa Cruz Graduates young leaders



Rosalia and her grandparents at her graduation ceremony. She is the first in the family to complete school and earn her degree. She hopes to go on to university in 2010.

November, 2008 was a proud month for the families of 6 young Santa Cruzeans who earned their diplomas from "diversificado" or professional training programs. Diversificado, the equivalent of high school, provides tracks for teachers, secretaries and accountants to earn their "degree" or title. It is a great accomplishment for a young person from a poor village to make it all the way to the professional level and a proud moment for their families and community. Santa Cruz can now boast of a 18 young professionals. 12 years ago, when Amigos first started our programs, there were only 2 who had made it so far.

Highlights of the Year 2009

Santa Cruz Center for Vocational Education (CECAP) is 2/3 completed!

Amigos receives grants from Seattle International foundation and Rotary Club to support CECAP

CORPS reading literacy program completes second year of ongoing teacher training in early reading.

Amigos and Pinckney schools sponsor year-long teacher training program for primary teachers.

New CoEd technology center opens its doors with 18 computer stations, and weekly courses for all students.

Santa Cruz Youth Leadership project is initiated.

Helped provide 700+ primary school students with a nutritional snack every day.

Opened new women's center in Tzununa expanding the FTD nutritional programs to another 35 women and 40 young children.

Provided a corn grinder/molino to Santa Cruz's most remote village of Tzanjomel.

Sponsored Sex Ed workshop for youth group and secondary students.

Worked with Rotary to install a water system for Maria Linda, our smallest SC hamlet

51 young adults receive support for secondary education.

6 scholarship students graduate from secondary programs as professional teachers, secretaries and bookkeepers.



Recycling campaign gives kids a chance to earn shoes

Kids fill plastic water bottles with "clean" garbage to make building blocks for CECAP

"Basura", or garbage, is a huge environmental problem in Guatemalan villages such as Santa Cruz la Laguna. Blame it on progress – the introduction of manufactured snacks and plastic bags and wrappers combined with little or no community infrastructure to deal with garbage collection, removal and recycling leaves villages with garbage strewn streets and hillsides. In Santa Cruz, land fills are used to dump garbage while town leaders try to come up with a larger plan. Meanwhile, Amigos helps to encourage a cleaner environment by making presentations in school on the importance of recycling and garbage control.

A year ago we initiated a recycling program for kids based on a local model whereby children can earn a new pair of donated used shoes by collecting garbage in large plastic water bottles which are then used as building materials for simple structures such as walls or benches. The need for decent shoes is a great motivator. This program gives school children the chance to participate in helping to clean up their town. The hundreds of bottles collected over the past year will be used in the construction of the top floor of CECAP, our new vocational center currently under construction. Its a win-win!

Now, more than ever, we need you..

We know that the economy has been tough on all of you. We are grateful that you keep Santa Cruz in your hearts. You know that your dollars are making a great difference for so many people who have had so little. This newsletter is testimony to all the good work you have supported. Please help us to continue and grow in the work that we do. Join us in helping to support a productive and healthier future for the people of Santa Cruz

Please be generous in your gift giving this year. Make a special one-time gift to our building campaign along with your donation for our on-going programs.



YES, I want to help the people of Santa Cruz!

Please accept my general donation of \$ _____

AND

I want to make a specific gift for the CECAP Vocational Center Building Fund of \$ _____

NAME: _____

Mailing address: _____

e-mail: _____



Make checks payable to Amigos de Santa Cruz and mail to Amigos de Santa Cruz P.O. Box 148 Lopez Island, WA 98261

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT: www.amigosdesantacruz.org

Amigos de Santa Cruz is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible in the US.