



The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund NEWSLETTER

JULY 2022

■ July 2022 Update - Back to School!

Dear Friends,



Steve Dudenhoefer
Founder and
Chief Technical
Advisor

Our campuses are fully operational with 780 boarding students from 163 rural communities studying eight hours a day. Our teachers are

working extra hard to help students that might have fallen behind during the pandemic to catch up on their learning. Rural indigenous students across Guatemala had their schooling adversely affected by the pandemic due to schools closing and a lack of access to technology and the Internet, with many students falling two years behind in their studies. Through the generous support of our donors, we were able to provide most of our students with low-cost tablets loaded with school work and periodically connected to the Internet through cellphone networks. The disruption was much lower than most rural students, but students learning remotely was inferior to their learning on-site as boarding students. To make sure that students graduate with the skills they need to get great jobs in Guatemala, we have increased our technology training with a new dedicated computer lab for girls and increased training in the use of GPS and mapping software for land surveying and reforestation. We have also increased our student internship placement with organizations and businesses that are interested in hiring them when they graduate.

Earlier this year I traveled to Florida to speak at several Catholic churches, asking parishioners to support the purchase of food for students at our boarding schools. The response was heartwarming and because of the generosity of caring parishioners, we have been able to improve the diet of our students and make sure they have three nourishing meals a day. Our students supplement these meals with produce and meat that they produce on their school farm.

So far this year we have had three Rotary work groups travel to Guatemala to work with our students. District Governor, Michael Walstrom, from South Florida led two work groups with 22 Rotarians and spearheaded a Rotary grant to provide technology training and basic infrastructure for the girls at our Rio Dulce jungle campus. Stephen Legge and Dan Wolf of the Buffalo Grove, Chicago area Rotary Club led a group of 25 Rotarians on a 12-day trip to our Rio Dulce campus in the Guatemalan jungle where they worked side by side with our students to build a new dormitory for 80 girls, complete with bunk beds, lockers, and picnic tables. They also helped build a new tree nursery and taught English classes. A work trip to our school has become a yearly pilgrimage for many of the Rotary families with some having visited 20+ times. A number of the visiting Rotarians brought their children and grandchildren who made fast friends with their Guatemalan peers. These family members learned valuable life skills and realized the value of the opportunities they have back home. The region served by the school has the highest rate of malnutrition and child death from malnutrition in Latin-American as well as the highest rate of pregnant girls between 10 and 14 years of age. In the first four months of this year the Guatemalan Ministry of Health identified 212 pregnant girls 14 and under in the region served by our school. These statistics underline the importance of our work in keeping at-risk girls in school until they graduate with good jobs so they can avoid early pregnancy and forced marriage.

We are grateful for the faithful support of our donors as this has allowed us to continue to provide vital services to the families we serve. These include healthcare and vocational education and job placement for at-risk girls and boys to avoid forced marriages, early childbirth, and dangerous migration.

Donor Spotlight-Rotary Organizations “Service above Self”

Thank you, Rotary, for supporting girls' education. A big shout out to the 46 Rotarians from Florida and Illinois that traveled to Guatemala over the last several months to work alongside our students to improve our girl's boarding facility. Rotary members built a new dormitory for 80 girls, complete with bunk beds, lockers, picnic tables, and areas for drying clothes. Our students learned valuable basic carpentry skills and their self-esteem was boosted as they built their own dormitory and furniture. Most of our students come from rural villages with no electricity and they've never seen a power tool before arriving at our school, but they now have the skills needed to be able to construct a building and build furniture. Rotarians also taught CPR and basic first aid as well as English, painted murals with students, and helped our students improve their cooking skills.





Rotary Interact Club-Jupiter High School



Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund (GTF) Executive Director, Debora Kerr, has been working with the Jupiter High School Rotary Interact Club which annually supports five student sponsorships. Due to the Omicron pandemic, Interact Club students were greatly limited in their activities for the past two years. However, under the new leadership of their school sponsor, Ms. Josephine Buscemi, GTF was recently presented with a check for \$1,825. Students collected these funds from selling chocolate bars in the community. In the past, GTF has arranged a video conference call between Interact students and the students they sponsor at Ak' Tenamit. This activity is planned again for Fall 2022.

Thank you Interact students!!

High School Degrees in Sustainable Community Development-Reforestation



As part of their work-based learning process, 68 of our 10th and 11th-grade students that are studying vocational high school degrees in Sustainable Community Development are implementing a large-scale reforestation project in 14 rural indigenous communities. Under this initiative, which is financed by the German government, students put into practice the skills they have learned in the classroom. Using GPS and mapping software to measure deforested and degraded land, they identify the best tree species and quantities needed, organize community members, and accompany the reforestation initiatives. This experience will assist in career advancement upon graduation in supervising reforestation projects as forest rangers and implementing poverty reduction and environmental conservation initiatives.



Our students graduate with over 10 times the national average hours of practical experience. This has been fundamental towards our achieving a post-graduation employment rate of over 85%, compared to the national average of only 10% for high school graduates. Our Sustainable Community Development students graduate with great jobs protecting the environment and helping to reduce poverty in communities that are located near national parks and protected areas. A high percentage of songbirds and birds that eat insects affecting crops in the US migrate through Guatemala, so preserving biodiversity in Guatemala has a direct positive impact on the quality of life in the US.

Student Spotlight-Ervin Aroldo Pop Choc



Ervin Aroldo Pop Choc, 21 years old, is in Ak' Tenamit's 11th-grade vocational high school Sustainable Tourism class. Ervin is the first one in his family to continue his studies beyond 6th grade. When he completed 9th grade, he hoped to continue studying and graduate from high school but his father passed away four years ago and his mother is unemployed. Ervin did not study for several years and continued to work to support his mother and younger brothers and sisters. As most high schools in Guatemala are private and very expensive, Ervin didn't think that he would ever be able to study beyond the ninth grade, but one day he heard that Ak' Tenamit's Father Moran Vocational High School provides full scholarships to impoverished indigenous youth, and he made the arduous journey to the school to request admission. During his two years at the school, besides excelling in his academic studies, Ervin has already completed six months of internships with several well-known restaurants in Guatemala City. He says he feels very fortunate to have been accepted to study at our school because he'll graduate with 10 times more

hands-on experience than at other schools. In addition, our in-house employment office will make sure that he gets a great job in Guatemala so he can support his family. Ervin has discovered a love for cooking and his long-term goal is to open his own restaurant.

Sponsor A Student Transform A Life!

Ak' Tenamit's practical, vocational education, 3,000 hours of job experience, and personal motivation prepare graduates to succeed in their rural environment, and inspire them to help their families and their communities. For just one dollar per day (\$365 per year), you can transform the life of a young person who would otherwise be trapped in poverty.

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WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law and processed through a PCI Compliant Data Security Company. The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund is the US based, non-profit, non-denominational fund raising arm of Ak' Tenamit.

