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Solidaridad: News from Foundation Todos Juntos and Pop Wuj

Winter 2013



2013 Pop Wuj Scholarship Program High School Graduates, L-R: Karina Ventura Tayún Az, Erik Santos Istazuy Pérez, Martín David Tambriz y Tambriz, Gloria Yolanda López López, and Samuel Isaac Pérez Romero.

Photo by Ashley Aue.

Scholarship Roundup

In 2013 the Pop Wuj Scholarship Program provided scholarships to 127 students, ranging from kindergarten to university level. Carmen de Alvarado, the Pop Wuj Social Projects Director, and Pop Wuj social work Spanish students met monthly with the scholarship families in Chirijkiak, San Juan Ostuncalco, and Llanos del Pinal. Carmen also met with the group in Xeabaj and with individual families who traveled to Xela to submit report cards and discuss educational challenges and school plans for 2014.

This year seven girls and eight boys graduated from primary school (6th grade), twelve

girls and one boy graduated from básico (equivalent to 9th grade), and two girls and four boys graduated from high school. In addition, two students continue to study in post-secondary programs.

All students were recognized for their hard work and perseverance during the year-end scholarship assembly on Wednesday, December 11. Felicidades estudiantes!

As in 2012, approximately 50% of the 2013 scholarship program budget came from the profits of the [Pop Wuj Spanish School](#) in Xela. The other 50% came from individual donors who support their students year after year. A yearly scholarship is just \$160, but any amount will help support the education of young Guatemalans. To donate to the Scholarship Program, please visit [Foundation Todos Juntos](#).



Photo by Travis McMullen

School Vacation at the Family Support Center

The Family Support Center served 39 children and youth in 2013, providing educational support, nutritious meals, and a safe place before and after school in Llanos del Pinal. When the school year ended in mid-October, the Family Support Center staff and a few volunteers jumped into action to create a fun and educational vacation program.

We divided the children and youth into five groups according to their grade level. Then Gustavo, the teacher at the Center as well as a Family Support Center and Scholarship Program alumnus, created a weekly schedule for each group. Everyone participated in English, Spanish/literature, K'iche, sign language classes, math, social studies, puzzles, and physical education each week. Yes, that's four different language classes

for our kids!

Of course we also had a handful of special activities, including a cooking activity for Halloween, the annual “Olympics” or field day, the birthday party for the children with birthdays in October, November, and December, and a special art activity. We hiked up Volcano Candelaria to a very rustic, natural sauna, played basketball at the sports complex in Xela, and had several days of water games and fun. In early December the older kids also participated in a photography workshop offered by [Voces de Cambio](#).

We capped the year with a Christmas party on December 12. The party included performances by a clown and a magician as well as a Christmas version of limbo. Each child received a new pair of school shoes, a new sweatshirt, and a small toy or gift.

At the Christmas party we also said goodbye to two teenagers who have participated in the Family Support Center for years. Santos and Yolanda graduated from high school in October and they will “graduate” from the Family Support Center in December. Best of luck Santos and Yoli!



Text and Photo by Caroline Yung, Former General Projects Coordinator at Pop Wuj

Meet Heidi Gomez

During my last week as a Pop Wuj intern, I had the opportunity to sit in on an interview with Heidi Gomez, a 23-year-old Pop Wuj Scholarship Program participant. Heidi is currently in her second year of law school at the University of San Carlos in Xela.



Photo by Caroline Yung

Pop Wuj and Timmy Global Health

Since 2008, Pop Wuj has maintained a partnership with [Timmy Global Health](#), an Indianapolis-based non-profit dedicated to expanding access to health care. Timmy supports Pop Wuj’s medical projects, allowing Pop Wuj to provide better care to chronic and referral patients as well as address malnutrition in three rural communities

Heidi has been in the scholarship program for fifteen years. During this time she graduated from secondary school with a specialty in accounting, graduated from the Pan-American University as a secondary school teacher, and is now pursuing a law degree.

Heidi is from the Maya Mam-speaking community of San Juan Ostuncalco. Although her mother, Violeta, never received a formal education, she always supported her children's desire to study and work in the profession of their choice.

Heidi's younger brother, Juan, 18 years old, is also in the Pop Wuj Scholarship Program and is in the equivalent of 10th grade. He aspires to be a doctor.

As Heidi spoke of her family, her job, and her studies, I was impressed by this bright young woman's talent, dedication, and work ethic.

In Guatemala, secondary school enrollment for students of official studying age was 46% in 2010 (World Bank, 2013). The enrollment rates are even lower for girls, the indigenous Maya, and those living in rural areas. Heidi's story is an exceptional one.

Even though Heidi and her brother both receive scholarships, their time spent in school takes away from potential time at work. The family works hard to make ends meet so that they can continue to

near Xela.

Seven times a year Timmy Global Health sends medical or public health brigades to Pop Wuj to provide medical care and health education in five communities: 1) Concepción Chiquirichapa, 2) Xeabaj, 3) Pujujil, 4) Buena Vista, and 5) Xela. Each brigade brings medications and vitamins that also serve to stock the Pop Wuj pharmacy during the non-brigade weeks. In years past Timmy also sent a Safe Stove Building brigade to advance Pop Wuj's stove project.

Timmy Global Health university chapters raise funds, advocate, and then travel to Guatemala to provide medical services and education. Pop Wuj receives groups from Tufts University, Boston College, Butler University, University of Cincinnati Medical School, Washington University in St. Louis, and Indiana University.

Thanks to the partnership with Timmy, Pop Wuj now employs two local doctors, a local nurse, a medical projects coordinator, and has a fully-stocked pharmacy. Thank you to [Timmy Global Health](#) and the volunteers who participate in their university chapters.

Internships Available

Do you have at least intermediate Spanish and an interest in volunteering with Pop Wuj's projects? [Pop Wuj](#) offers the following internships via our partnership with [Entremundos](#), a

study. Several days a week Heidi, her mother, and her sister go to a nearby town to buy vegetables which they then resell. The journey is long and they leave San Juan before sunrise.

With her degree as a secondary school teacher, Heidi teaches part time at a school in Xela earning 400Q (approximately \$50 US) a week. Juan also works part time as a mechanic in his brother-in-law's car repair shop. Heidi attends classes at the public university in the evenings, arriving home at 10pm.

Although Heidi's schedule is a hectic one, she is happy and excited to be pursuing her dream of becoming a lawyer, a process that Heidi says would not have been possible without the continued support of Pop Wuj.



[Foundation Todos Juntos](#), a 501(c)3 non profit, was founded in 2001 by former students of the [Pop Wuj Spanish School](#) to facilitate ongoing collaboration with various development projects in and around Quetzaltenango (Xela), Guatemala.

Today the Foundation supports educational, medical, social, and public health projects in the

local Xela NGO:

- 1) Medical Projects Assistant Coordinator
- 2) Family Support Center Coordinator
- 3) Environmental Projects Coordinator
- 4) Scholarship and Education Coordinator
- 5) General Projects Coordinator

These internships are appropriate for undergraduate or graduate students as well as adults who are interested in a hands-on experience in international development. Visit [Entremundos](#) today to learn more and apply.



Photo by Caroline Yung

Donate

Tax-deductible donations may be sent via check to:

Foundation Todos Juntos
3142 NE 45th Avenue
Portland, OR 97213

Western Highlands of Guatemala.
Please visit the [blog](#) for regular updates on the projects.

Online donations are accepted via PayPal at www.todos-juntos.org/donate.html.

The Foundation Todos Juntos Board of Directors continues to search for potential board members. Ideal candidates will live in California and have accounting or bookkeeping experience.

Please specify which project(s) you wish your donation to support. Thank you!

Please contact Claudia Hindo, Board secretary, at info@todos-juntos.org for more information.



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