

News

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We must
educate
the girls.



Dear Friend,

We hope this message finds you and your family well. As you turn these pages, you'll see that we've been busy at Ak' Tenamit. The last six months have been a roller coaster, with financial problems and a tragedy, yet there has been so much progress, enthusiasm and gratitude from our students, graduates and their neighbors that we are as dedicated as ever to helping Guatemala's Q'eqchi Mayans overcome poverty.

We are mourning the loss of two Ak' Tenamit graduates – Catalina Mucú Maas and Alberto Coc Caal – victims of the violence and impunity that has caused so much suffering in Guatemala. Their ambush and murder while traveling by boat from the town of Rio Dulce to their village was a brutal reminder that the obstacles to Ak' Tenamit's goals of social justice, rural development and cultural preservation are entrenched and, sometimes, downright evil. Yet the progress and achievements of hundreds of Ak' Tenamit students and graduates, the growing number of enterprises and initiatives in the communities we serve, and the remarkable success of our efforts to promote the education of indigenous girls remind us that those goals are not only achievable, they are essential.

With your support, we are helping hundreds of young Mayans to achieve their potential and work toward their dreams, as we improve the health and living standards of thousands of people in dozens of remote and impoverished villages. All of Ak' Tenamit's 2009 and 2010 graduates are employed, helping their families and communities, and many are even continuing their education on weekends. They've all been instilled with a philosophy of service above self and inspired by the commitment of the international volunteers who have given so much to Ak' Tenamit, such as the more than 50 Rotarians who labored at the project in March.

We are all united in a noble mission. Despite the setbacks and heart-wrenching losses, the good that Ak' Tenamit achieves with your donations and other support is truly remarkable. The need remains vast, the poverty, overwhelming, yet we are more determined than ever to continue and expand our vital work.

In the name of Catalina and Alberto, their families and their communities, we thank you for your support.

Steve Dudenhofer
Founder & Chief Technical Advisor
Ak' Tenamit

Marianne B. Kollmer
President
Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund



Our mission

Ak' Tenamit is an indigenous community development organization that promotes long-term solutions to poverty in the rainforests of eastern Guatemala through education, health, income-generation, and cultural programs run by and for Q'eqchi Maya Indians. This newsletter is published by the **Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund**, a Florida-based, nonprofit organization that raises funds and provides logistical support for Ak' Tenamit.

EMBODYING *Service* ABOVE SELF

In February, we were devastated by the murders of two Ak' Tenamit graduates and community leaders, Catalina Mucú Maas and Alberto Coc Caal, who together with Sebastian Xuc Cac, the school teacher in the village of Quebrada Seca, were ambushed as they traveled by boat from Puerto Barrios to the Rio Dulce. Alberto and Sebastian had been helping the people of Quebrada Seca wage a legal battle against a rancher who is trying to steal part of the community's land – for Mayans, their land and forests are sacred – and they had received death threats prior to the assault. Catalina, who was returning from her weekend classes at a uni-



Catalina Mucú Maas

versity in Rio Dulce, was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Guatemala's indigenous communities have been struggling to protect their ancestral lands and sacred forests for centuries. Guatemala means "land of the forests" in the ancient Mayan language, and the Q'eqchi Mayan communities of the Rio Dulce are the stewards of the sum of the

last remaining forests in eastern Guatemala.

Since Ak' Tenamit was founded in 1991, various communities that the project serves have fought legal battles to prevent their forests and land from being stolen by illegal loggers and ranchers, many of whom are linked to drug cartels. Sadly, it is doubtful that the murderers of these brave young leaders will ever face justice, since the intellectual authors of most of Guatemala's murders commonly bribe and threaten the authorities – only two of every 100 murders goes to trial in Guatemala, and many are acquitted.

This crime was part of a trend of violence and impunity that has caused untold suffering and destruction in Guatemala, but it was especially tragic considering that it claimed the lives of three exceptional young people. Catalina was the first girl in her community to graduate from high school; she participated in the construction of Ak' Tenamit's vocational high school, ex-



Alberto Coc Caal

celled as a student there, and became a Mayan spiritual guide. Upon graduation, she was hired to run Ak' Tenamit's handicraft training program and was elected to serve as the secretary of Ak' Tenamit's Board of Directors. She was married to Luis Tiul, another Ak' Tenamit graduate. Alberto, who was also an Ak' Tenamit graduate

and Mayan spiritual guide, was helping his community to develop an agroforestry project. He was the father of three children. Sebastian, the director of Quebrada Seca's elementary school, was helping that remote and impoverished village to defend their land.

While we mourn Catalina, Alberto and Sebastian, Ak' Tenamit's board, staff and students refuse to be intimidated by their murders. On the contrary, it bolsters our commitment to catalyzing change in Guatemala. Ak' Tenamit's service-based curriculum prepares students to utilize Guatemala's legal system to protect communal and human rights and emphasizes the importance of protecting the rainforest and valuing traditional culture. Catalina, Alberto and Sebastian eagerly accepted their role as community leaders, stewards of their people's ancestral forests and agents of positive change. Their friends and former classmates, current students and Ak' Tenamit personnel will honor their memory by working for the justice and equality that they wanted, so that one day, the rule of law will prevail in Guatemala and their communities will enjoy the peace and justice that they deserve.



Catalina, age 12, helping to build the first classroom at Moran Center.

National & International Model

Ak' Tenamit is viewed nationally and internationally as a model for its innovative and successful work to help indigenous communities to become economically independent while protecting their environment. It is recognized by national and international environmental organizations and is the only civil society organization in Guatemala to hold permanent observer status under the United Nation's Framework on Climate Change. Lola Cabnal, Ak' Tenamit's Vice President, also speaks at global events related to protected areas, climate change, biodiversity and indigenous peoples, where she lobbies for decision makers to value the contribution of indigenous communities in the stewardship of the earth's biodiversity. She recently spoke about these issues at the 2010 UN Climate Change Conference.

STUDENTS PREPARED TO SERVE



Luis Rax proudly holding his diploma as he celebrates with his sister.

Last November, 103 students graduated from the Father Moran Education Center with a degree in Sustainable Tourism or Rural Community Development. Some of the most touching moments of the graduation ceremony were when several fathers joined their daughters on the podium, hugged them tightly, and beamed. It is still uncommon for Mayan fathers to allow their daughters to study,

so these moments were a sign that progress is being made. Many of our 2010 graduates, like Luis Adrian Rax, are already working to better their communities.

Luis Adrian Rax works with COOPI, an Italian organization, to strengthen communities' capacity to prepare for and cope with natural disasters in Livingston, Guatemala. Livingston is vulnerable to hurricanes and floods, and Luis meets with community leaders to establish disaster preparedness plans and gives presentations to raise awareness about what to do before, during, and after a disaster. It is hard to believe that Luis grew up shining shoes and living on the street. He says he "saw no future for himself before [he] came to Ak' Tenamit" at 19, but the opportunities Ak' Tenamit presented him "inspired [him] to take pride in his culture" and he became passionate about strengthening local communities.

I am so proud of Hector, and today I saw the fruits of my labor. We have 12 children, and it was difficult to send him through school. We have few resources and work in the fields. Now he can find a good job and have a better life than I did."

-- JUAN COY
(father of Hector Coy, class of 2010)

Education

Sponsor a student

Hundreds of students like Luis attend Ak' Tenamit with the dream of graduating and improving life in their communities. They study Rural Community Development or Sustainable Tourism and learn the importance of community along with the vocational skills needed to find meaningful employment. Sponsoring a student insures that he or she receives this education by covering their tuition, room and board, healthcare, and transportation to/from the school and internship sites. **A one-year sponsorship costs only \$360 per year, only \$1 per day.**

RESTAURANT TRAINING FOR VILLAGES

Several riverside communities have opened restaurants and cafes to attract tourists traveling down the Rio Dulce. Most villagers, however, have never been tourists themselves, eaten in a restaurant, or tasted recipes that aren't typical of their region.

The chef at Ak' Tenamit's restaurant, Bugamama, recognized this challenge, and led a restaurant training workshop for several communities to help them build their businesses.



Community members learn international food handling standards.

They learned food preparation and plating techniques, how to use different cooking utensils, and new, tourist-friendly recipes. Most importantly, however, students learned about food safety and hygiene. For many students, it was the first time they had ever tried pizza, pasta, or been served at a table, and they all commented that "they felt more prepared to serve their guests" after receiving the training. Another student noted that he enjoyed learning the new recipes so that he could offer something for every taste. This workshop complemented a money management training that Ak' Tenamit organized to teach upstart tourism projects how to budget and manage finances.

Developing alternative sources of income, like restaurants, is critical for these communities because the majority of those living in these villages are subsistence farmers who earn less than \$2 per day selling corn, fish, beans, and produce. These crops are often the families' only source of income and a single flood or drought can quickly wipe out an entire year's harvest and leave families without

Rotary

LIGHT
at last!

Running a large boarding school in the middle of the jungle without roads, running water, or electricity is enough to try any teachers' soul. Now part of that burden has been lifted.

A Rotary International Matching Grant for solar panels and control equipment will provide electricity for the library, computer lab, dining hall and education office. In addition to reducing the school's dependence on generators, teachers will be able to enhance their lessons with computer-based presentations, images, and video clips. Most students are unfamiliar with life outside their villages and having access to this information will expand their understanding of different cultures and difficult concepts.

Rotary district 6440 with RC of Northbrook, IL initiated the grant with support from RC of Guatemala Sur as host club with help from D6990 clubs and district support. Other contributing clubs include RC of Wilmette Harbor, Arlington Heights, St. Charles, Buffalo Grove, Deerfield, Libertyville Sunrise and D6990 clubs of Hollywood and Ft. Lauderdale, FL.



THE GIFT OF clean water

Water-borne intestinal diseases are a major cause of death for children under five in Guatemala. The Rotary 6440 service teams delivered 120 water filters to families in the communities of Plan Grande Tatín and Las Brisas del Golfete and their efforts provided clean water for nearly 700 children. Rotarians explained the importance of using filtered water and taught villagers how to assemble and clean the filters. An Ak' Tenamit staff member translated these demonstrations into Q'eqchi and emphasized the value the filters would bring to their families.

These filters were purchased thanks to an anonymous donor and a matching corporate grant. We encourage you to investigate matching grant opportunities with your employer - a wonderful way to fund worthy projects at Ak' Tenamit.

Rotary

ROTARIANS BUILD A HOTEL & more!

For the last four years, District 6440 Rotary clubs have brought service teams to Ak' Tenamit to help improve infrastructure and expand programs. This February, students worked alongside 6440 service teams to build four bungalows and a bathhouse at Ak' Tenamit, which will be used as a jungle eco-lodge. The lodge will become one of the 4 hotel sites where sustainable tourism students complete apprenticeships.

6440's service did not end there. Some varnished tables in the dining hall to protect them from the intense jungle humidity, others sorted and labeled library books and taught English, and Carlos Frum taught a two week small business entrepreneurship course that culminated in students designing two fast-food restaurant concepts for rural environments.

The collaboration with Rotary International is an invaluable resource to Ak' Tenamit and to its students. **Thanks to all of the Rotarians in this year's service trip!**



A NOTE OF THANKS

To **Rotary District 6930**, led by Jim Sisserson, and the Puerto Barrios Rotary club for their tremendous effort to coordinate a \$40,000 Rotary matching grant for the clinic. This grant provided a year's supply of medicine, gasoline needed to make emergency medical evacuations and make regular medical visits to villages, and a new motor for the boat. Your efforts helped the clinic treat 19,000 patients and evacuate over 100 patients to the hospital in 2010.

The following clubs participated in this grant: Cocoa Beach, Melbourne Beach, Eau Gallie, Brooksville, Evanston, Evanston Lighthouse, Libertyville Sunrise and Puerto Barrios.

Thank you!

MEDICAL TRAINING PAYS OFF



Martin Coc Chub never ceases smiling while at the clinic- even when he takes late night shift.

In November, Martin Coc Chub, a clinic health promoter, attended training in pediatric emergencies at the national hospital, but he never imagined that this training would help him save two lives just one month later. Thank you, thank you to the donors who sponsored Martin's training!

December 21, 4:00pm... Martin opened his door to find a desperate father whose daughter was having childbirth complications, "My daughter is dying. Can you help us?" he said. When Martin arrived, the mother was bleeding profusely. "I gave her an IV and was able to stop her bleeding... which I learned at the emergency training, Martin recalls, "I couldn't have done that before." The mother's condition began to improve, and she gave birth to a healthy baby.

"For the first time I felt like a real doctor," Martin beamed. "I got to practice things that I had only ever read and dreamed about." Martin's passion and inspiration to move ahead is what will pull communities out of poverty, and his accomplishments are a true testament to the role that educating locals plays in improving living conditions.

Guatemala has the second highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere.

Had Martin not known how to perform these techniques, these stories likely would have turned out very differently.

Be a healthcare partner

Health promoters like Martin have the training and resources they need to provide healthcare in villages and at the clinic because of our Healthcare Partners (HCP). Our HCPs' donations purchase medications and supplies, fill our medical and dental boats with gasoline, pay our health promoters' salaries, and cover overhead costs. Our healthcare services are the only medical services that reach these remote villages and becoming an HCP for only \$120 per year (\$0.33 per day) helps ensure that this care continues.

THE BLIND WILL SEE

Pedro is a single father of three, who was going blind from cataracts. He feared that his children would starve if he lost his sight because he would be unable to work. Ak' Tenamit's Dr. Omar Ibañez arranged for him to meet with ophthalmologist, Dr. Morales, and Pedro trudged through dense jungle for 7 hours in borrowed boots to reach the office.

Dr. Morales determined that surgery could save Pedro's sight and offered to perform the surgery pro bono after learning about Ak' Tenamit's work.



Pedro anxiously waits outside the optometrist's office

"Chills ran down my entire body when he said this," said Dr.

Ibañez, "He will never know how drastically he changed the course of Pedro's life."

Dr. Morales replaced Pedro's cataract with a new lens and Pedro returned to the office a week later to have the patch removed. As the patch was taken off, a look of pure bliss appeared on Pedro's face. For the first time in years he could see- and he could see 20/40!

It was almost possible to see his future taking shape in his mind: now he could work, feed and clothe his children, and maybe earn enough to send them to school. He had just walked in borrowed boots for the sake of his family and, thanks to the generosity of Dr. Morales and the donors who support our clinic, his journey paid off.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

Teresa Bó Beb



Current grade: 12th grade

Education concentration: Rural Community Development

From community: Dolores, Petén

Teresa is passionate about increasing indigenous participation in local and regional decision-making and focuses her efforts on increasing leadership among indigenous women. Mayans are traditionally excluded from civic activities and Teresa works to increase their participation in elections and leadership roles so that their needs are no longer overlooked. She leads by example and represents her community at local council meetings. She not only raises her villages' concerns but also works with leaders to establish laws and decrees that take into account their needs and rights.

Teresa believes that encouraging pride in Maya culture is key to increasing participation so she volunteers with Asociación Xchool Ixim to help build networks throughout Central America that strengthen Mayan culture. She also organizes cultural awareness events in communities around her village during school vacations.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Moriah Looten



Current position: Fundraising Director

Work location: project site in Rio Dulce

Length of service: September 2009-present

Moriah is a proud Texan who has lived and worked in several countries, including India and Mexico. Although most international volunteers work with Ak' Tenamit for three to six months, Moriah has worked Ak' Tenamit's project site for nearly a year and a half and served in several positions. Moriah currently leads Ak' Tenamit's grant writing team, whose staff is 100% Q'eqchi. They solicit funding for a range of programs including health, education, public policy, and community tourism. Before Moriah dedicated herself to grant writing, she also worked in Ak' Tenamit's "We Must Educate the Girls" program and its HIV/AIDS and domestic violence prevention program.

She says that the biggest challenge she faces in grant writing has been the global economic situation and the rise in natural disasters, which have forced foundations and individuals to be more selective and "fundraising to become much more competitive." Moriah is well-known and loved by all, and Ak' Tenamit is proud to have her as part of its team and community.

Did you know?

A CULTURAL TIDBIT

Happy New Year 5127!! The Mayan calendar celebrates the New Year in February and this is the year 5127. The New Year is welcomed through a five day celebration called Wayeb. Learn more about Wayeb at our blog, www.aktenamit.org/blog.

A birthday GIFT

A long time donor, **Jean Downey**, recently celebrated her 85th birthday. Her seven children decided to honor her by combining to donate to her favorite cause rather than bearing gifts. A nice idea, much appreciated by Jean and especially by the students at Ak' Tenamit.

REQUEST FOR FREQUENT FLYER MILES

Please consider donating your unused frequent flyer miles to the Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund. Steve and key staff members could use the miles to travel to the US to give fundraising presentations to Rotary Clubs, church groups and other supports, or to attend conferences. He also takes advantage of trips to the US to purchase supplies needed that are unavailable, or more expensive in Guatemala.

Visit us online! www.aktenamit.org

Check out our new blog, Facebook and Twitter pages! We'll keep you updated with pictures, videos, and the latest news about Ak' Tenamit's amazing work.

Visit our blog at: www.aktenamit.org/blog
 Find us on Facebook and Twitter by searching:
 "Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund"

We update these sites often, so keep checking back to see what's new. If you have any difficulties accessing the blog, Facebook, or Twitter pages, please let us know by sending an email to: theguatfund@gmail.com



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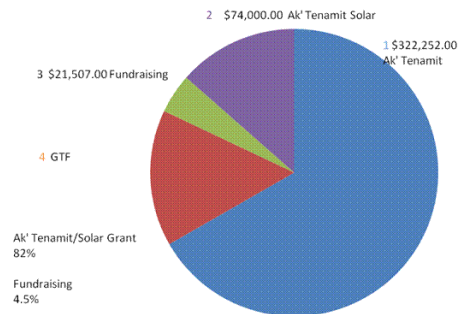
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A thousand thanks!

With great appreciation to all our donors and benefactors including Sister Paula Blue, Richard Martens, John Conway, Elsie Bickford, Mary Hulitar, Sandy Hill Foundation, Mrs. Woodward Roe, Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Mullen, Bob Teitler, George McNeill, Holy Trinity, Dr. & Mrs. Lyons, Linda Vadnais, Marilyn Sciortino, George Moss and C.G. Charitable for their generosity in helping Ak' Tenamit to achieve their goals and carry onward!

We would also like to give special thanks to the parishioners for their continuing support at St. Patrick's Catholic Church and St. Vincent Ferrer Catholic Church.

Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund 2010 Use of Expenses



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The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund is a US-based, non-profit (501c3) corporation that raises funds and provides logistical support for Ak' Tenamit.