

# Oaxaca Learning Center December 2007 Letter

Dear Learning Center Friend,

Oaxaca is calm and very beautiful this time of year. We are just entering the dry season, but the surrounding mountains are still green and city's gardens are lush and filled with flowers. The days are sunny and the nights cool—lovely for sleeping. In a word, perfecto!



*Fermin and Woody*

The city is slowly recovering from last year's political disturbances. Visitors are beginning to return, although the occupancy rate of hotels, and our bed and breakfast, remains much lower than in past years. It has been a very hard year for many businesses and some will never recover.

The generosity of many friends has made it possible for The Learning Center to weathered this very difficult year. We have actually increased the number of students who receive free tutoring, support they need to stay in school and change their lives. Many of these students come from villages in the most rural areas of the state where their previous schooling was indifferent. Additionally, a number of our indigenous students grew up speaking a language other than Spanish.

Your warm response to our fundraising letter last December generated more than \$16,000 in donations. I can't begin to thank you enough for this. Your help played a crucial role in keeping The Learning Center going during 2007. As we look towards 2008, I call on your generosity once again, to fund an expansion of our services to the young people of rural Oaxaca, especially the young women, who face many societal barriers to staying in school.

Because of your donations, more than a hundred students so far this year have been able to receive much-needed tutoring in math, chemistry, physics and other academic subjects. They have learned touch-typing and how to use the computer, with free access to the Internet. For those who wish to become bilingual, we also offer free English-language lessons. And as a result of our first—and successful!—grant application, we opened an outreach tutoring center in a poor neighborhood of Oaxaca, where we are offering our program to an additional twenty-seven students daily.

We have also fine-tuned our approach to measuring and evaluating each student's progress, and to identify more precisely individual problem areas. This has helped us solidify our relationship with each student and to focus on his or her specific needs.

We are beginning to see the results of this approach. Students are more committed to staying longer and studying harder. Their achievements will be tracked in a database that will tell us which students come for what and when, for how long and with what results.

The other good news is that we now have five dedicated students on scholarships and ten university students on stipends working as tutors at our two sites. I can't emphasize enough how important it is for these young people to have enough funding so they no longer have to work long hours or worry about where their next meal is coming from or where they're going to live—things most of us take for granted.

As an example, for \$200 a month, Albaro, a university student in agriculture, was able to quit his night-watchman job. He now is able to get a good night's sleep so that he can face long days of classes—and a long bus ride—refreshed. We also found Albaro lodging in a home where he gets room and board for free. These days, Albaro has a huge smile on his face and will talk your ear off about all his ideas to improve agricultural practices in Oaxaca.



*Álbaro*

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We are also looking for special funding to support an exciting new program, **Leadership Development Through Work Study**, for eight of our high school students. A brief description of the program is attached. If you know of any potential funding sources for this program, please let me know how to reach them.

Organizationally, we have finally been granted non-profit status by the Government of Mexico and we have hired a licensed accountant (Lulú Perez, profiled in our newsletter) as well as an auditor. We have also had the pleasure of adding new volunteers to our roster of people willing and able to help with the teaching of English and the development of promotional materials.



Lulú

Although reservations for the bed and breakfast that funds our basic program are increasing, we still have not returned to the close to 85% occupancy that we enjoyed prior to last year.

As a result, we are now reaching out again to our friends, family and supporters with this request that you help support our work by making a contribution to The Learning Center's growing programs:

- √ \$2,500 will support the entire center for a month;
- √ \$1,000 provides a month's stipends for our 10 tutors;
- √ \$280 will pay for one month's university tuition for Jorge Rosario who is now in his second year at the Universidad Regional del Sureste preparing for a career in teaching languages;
- √ Any amount that you give will help us greatly!



Jaasiel

## There are two ways to make a donation:

1) You can make a **tax deductible donation** to The Learning Center fund via the Oaxaca Lending Library Foundation. Make these checks payable to OLLF, c/o James Corrigan, 5443 Drover Drive, San Diego, CA 92115 . Please write on the check that it is for The Learning Center.

Also, please email me at [gary@learningcenteroaxaca.com](mailto:gary@learningcenteroaxaca.com) regarding the date and amount of your check – *this is very important*.

2) If you **do not need a tax deduction**, you can send your check to: San Francisco Federal Credit Union, 770 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94107. Make the check payable to: Gary Titus. On the back of the check write: Gary Titus. For Deposit Only, Account #37641-S21. Also please send me an email at [gary@learningcenteroaxaca.com](mailto:gary@learningcenteroaxaca.com) to let me know the amount of your check and when you sent it. We cannot accept credit card donations.

Please let me know if you have any questions and/or would like more information. Also, please forward this e-mail to friends and continue to tell people about our Bed & Breakfast.



Tutors and students

## Oaxaca Learning Center December 2007 Letter

I am personally very happy with the way our students have responded to the Learning Center program during this year. It is always difficult to deal with the funding issues to keep the programs going, as well as to respond to additional needs that we identify along the way.

However, the satisfaction that all of us involved get out of being part of these young people's growth and development is worth every gray hair!!

All of us at the Learning Center thank you so much for caring and thank you for your generosity. Best wishes for a very happy holiday season,

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*¡Saludos desde Oaxaca!*