

# The OAXACA Learning Center



Making a difference, one young person at a time!

Tutoring | Women's Group | English & Computer Skills | Counseling  
Student Stipend Program | Designing The Future

[www.tolc.org.mx](http://www.tolc.org.mx)

[www.iicaprendizaje.org](http://www.iicaprendizaje.org)

## Fall 2012

### Financial Self-Sustainability

In our summer newsletter we introduced you to Jaasiel Quero who, along with Gary Titus, co-founded the Learning Center (IIAC) and is now its President. Noting how much the Center has achieved, how it is constantly expanding its services to an ever-growing number of students, and how that expansion needs to continue to keep pace with demand, Jaasiel was quick to mention the issue he sees as his main and pressing responsibility: How can the Center become financially self-sustainable? "It's going to take time to get there," he realistically points out, "and we have to start figuring out how *now!*"

An essential partner in this quest for self-sustainability is *Friends of the Learning Center (FOLC)*, the Center's associated, volunteer fund-raising group headed by Fay Henderson de Diaz and on the Board of which Jaasiel also sits. Fay, bi-cultural with fund-raising experience and a deep dedication to the Center's purposes, acknowledges that the journey to the Center's attaining self-sustainability means navigating a course through unfamiliar waters. A committee of IIAC and FOLC have begun weekly meetings to chart a course – a five-year strategic plan which will be developed over the next several months.

Individual donations and the income from the Bed & Breakfast at the Center continue to provide the lion's share of the Center's current annual budget of nearly one million pesos—roughly \$77,000 USD. Included in this amount in 2012 is a generous grant from Halloran Philanthropies that has allowed us to almost double the number of students who received tutoring and participated in other Center activities.



*Fay and Jaasiel are our team captains charged with making the Center financially self-sustaining.*

The team is working on a strategy to offer services to the larger community that would generate income for the Center. One possibility is to see if the Center might develop a cadre of trained and certified Life Coaches—a logical extension of the personal development and support services the Center already offers its students.

The bottom-line question, of course, is this: Is self-sustainability for The Learning Center a feasible goal? Ask Jaasiel that, and the answer he gives is typically low-key and carefully considered: "I believe it is." Those who know his leadership style, though, hear what this quiet helmsman is really telling his crew: "Yes! It is possible! And we're going to get there!"

## Partnering For A Better Tomorrow

The Oaxaca Learning Center has gained a hard-earned and justly deserved reputation for the quality of the students who take part in its educational programs.

Recognizing the dedication and superior abilities shown by our young people, Universidad LaSalle has agreed to provide a number of partial tuition scholarships through the auspices of the Learning Center. This academic year we are pleased to have Andrés Cruz as a first-year student in LaSalle's senior high school. Betsy Arango has a scholarship to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Tourism Administration. Three of our senior Center staff are pursuing Master's degrees at LaSalle - Jaasiel Quero and Mirel Duarte in Educational Research and Sonia Bautista in Educational Administration. The Masters' classes meet all day on Saturdays, which allows the staff to work full-time during the week.

As part of the formal agreement with LaSalle, the Learning Center also welcomes LaSalle's college students who are doing their 6-month social service projects to select the Center to complete that requirement.

This partnership between the Learning Center and LaSalle is a wonderful achievement and holds great promise both for the Center and for the young people who put their hope in us.



*Mirel, Andrés, Jaasiel, Betsy and Sonia are five students from the Learning Center having scholarships to study on different levels at the various campuses operated by LaSalle in Oaxaca.*



### Universidad LaSalle

Universidad LaSalle (Mexico) is one of the most prestigious private universities in the country. Founded in 1962, the main campus is in Mexico City, but the university operates satellite schools in fifteen different states. LaSalle consistently ranks in the top ten among institutions of higher learning in the nation, with some degree programs rated best in their field.

Universidad LaSalle expanded into Oaxaca in 2007. In addition to offering undergraduate and graduate level programs, LaSalle operates a pre-school, junior high and senior high school here.

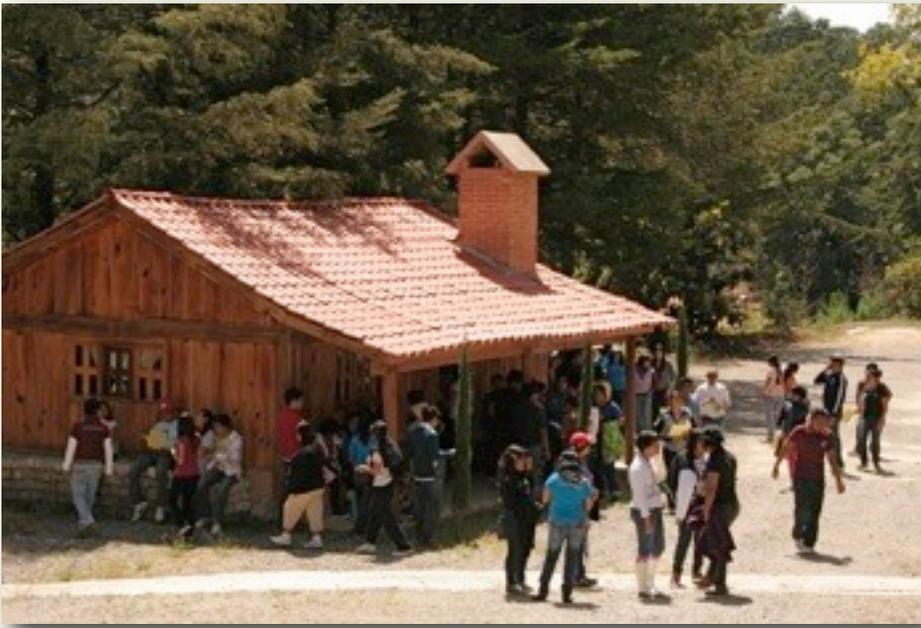
### Invitation To Our Bed & Breakfast



Go to [www.tolc.org.mx](http://www.tolc.org.mx) for reservations.

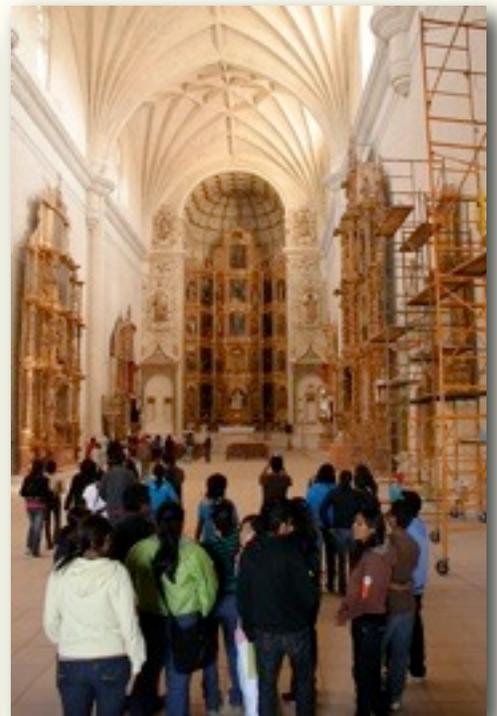
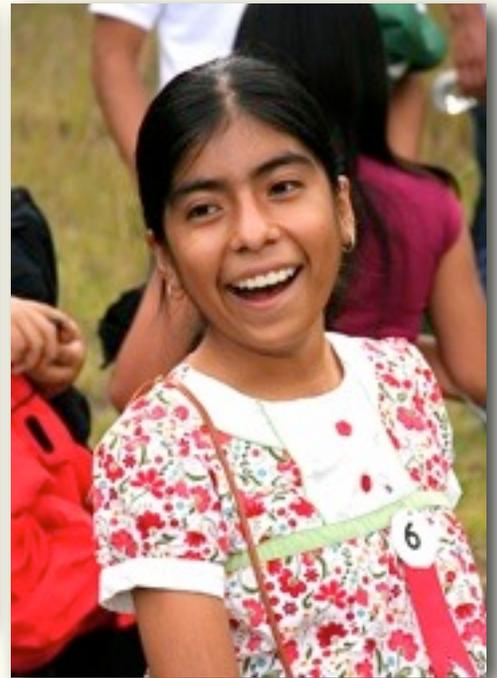
### CANFRO Is Coming!

Last year the Learning Center took a huge step in setting up a U.S.-based corporation able to process tax-deductible contributions from our many friends and supporters in the States. We are very pleased to announce that a similar Canadian corporation - CANFRO - will soon be in place to serve the many Canadians who so generously donate to our enterprise. Because these corporations are run by volunteers, 100% of the money contributed goes toward helping the students here at The Oaxaca Learning Center.



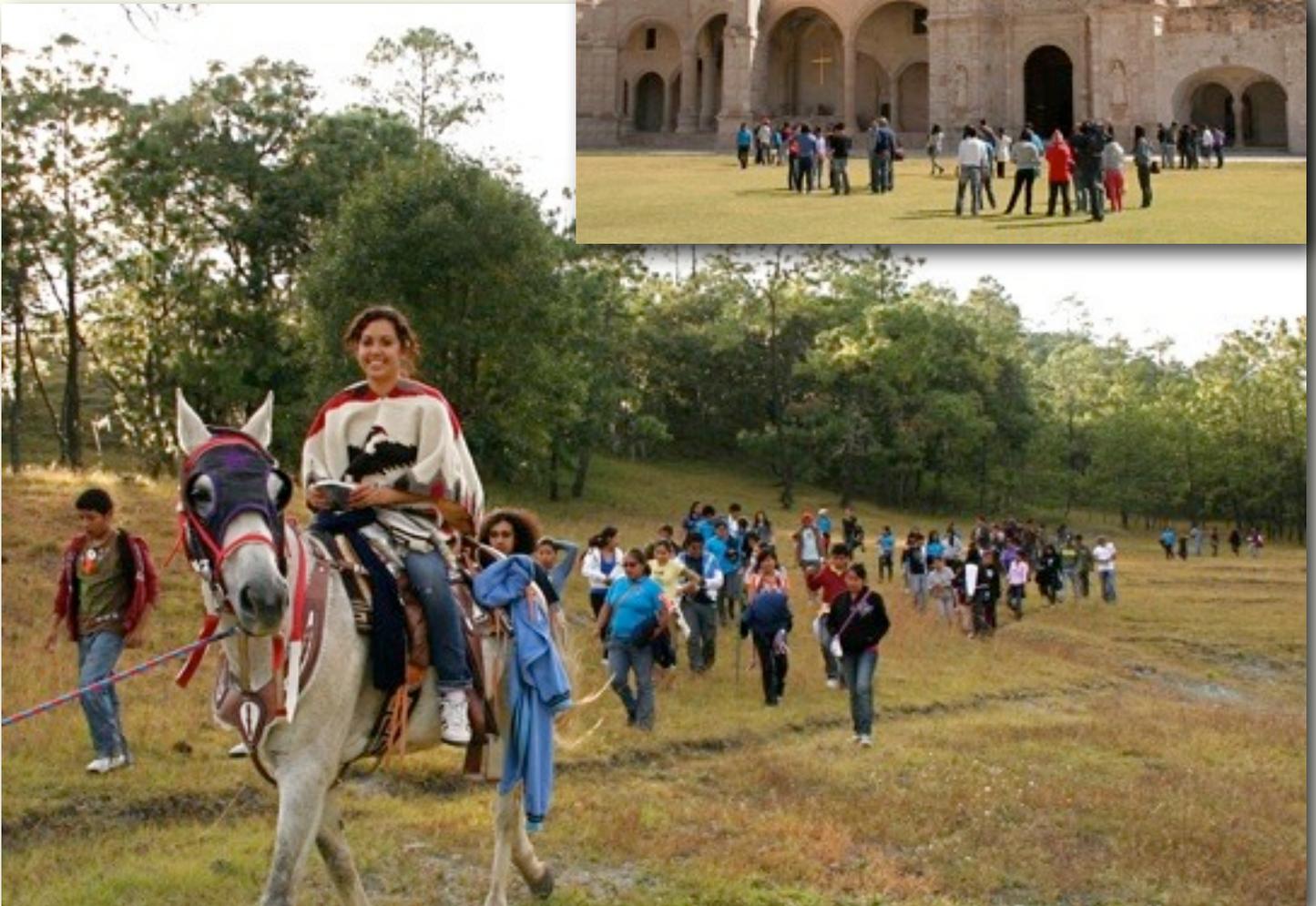
## Time Out For Tlaxiaco

Students at the Learning Center must meet rigorous requirements to remain in our program. They must maintain excellent attendance and high grades at school. They are expected to meet regularly with their tutors and actively participate in group workshops and individual counseling sessions. Those in the student stipend program must submit expense forms and make monthly written reports to their sponsors. All of this is a lot of work! To keep morale high, enthusiasm strong and build camaraderie, the Center sponsors some “break time.” The weekend of October 20-21, charter buses took Center staff and students to “Camp Gotcha” near Tlaxiaco in the Mixteca Alta region of Oaxaca state for two days of light-hearted but very serious group interactions. Each participant had to contribute 100 pesos of his/her own money. The event was underwritten by a grant from the Secretariat for Social Development (SEDESOL), a government agency. On the way, the group toured the renovated monasteries in Yanhuitlan and Teposcolula. After touring, hiking and many group activities, the young people returned home tired but happy.





*Fun and games with a serious purpose! Group events like the weekend in Tlaxiaco build up self-esteem, group awareness, cooperation and that family spirit the Learning Center is so well known for.*



# Change At The Learning Center: One Volunteer's Experience

by Ralph Meyers

Gary Titus expertly roped me into volunteering at the Oaxaca Learning Center more than six years ago, on my visits to Oaxaca before moving there in January 2007. Mostly, since I am a writer, I've volunteered writing services, with many an article prepared for this Newsletter.

Last June I left Oaxaca, moving to Mexico City. Among many other things involved in such a major step, I've thought a lot about the Learning Center and the remarkable changes I saw there over the past years. The principal ones to me have been:

- ☀ Many more students and far broader program offerings, with academic courses now supplemented by social workshops (abuse in relationships, for example), personal development courses and career strategies.
- ☀ A much larger representation of young women in classes and programs.
- ☀ Increasingly greater managerial control, leadership and tutor training on the part of the young people involved in the program, who often begin as students and migrate to tutoring and then to administration. This is a true peer-led effort.

Every one of these changes has been of enormous benefit to the Center, creating a program perhaps without equal in Mexico. Gary's original vision was to provide free academic tutoring for disadvantaged students from the city of Oaxaca and from villages across the state. Without the tutoring help, most of the students would never have been able to stay in school.

Today that academic focus has been significantly enriched. For most underprivileged young Oaxacans, academic help is only part of the need. They typically have not benefitted from any focus on their personal development, nor on developing strategies to achieve personal goals. In the past few years, programs in all these areas have flowered at the Center and every time I visited, I could see the students' growing sense of confidence and self-esteem.

Where once most participants were male, today young women make up at least half the group. Typically, their challenges are even

greater than those of the young men. Education for women, especially among rural and working class families, is only a recent phenomenon. One of those high-achieving women is Sonia Batista de León, the Center's director and once a student there. She and her team have taken on full leadership responsibilities and their work is outstanding.

As a volunteer living in Oaxaca, I had a chance to experience these changes first-hand, and it's hard to emphasize enough how rewarding that has been. But even those of you who have not had an opportunity to visit Oaxaca can be a part of this marvelous effort. Virtually every cent of the money contributed to the Center goes to its programs. Your every contribution goes to making it possible for young Oaxacans to change their lives.

So here I am in Mexico City, a good distance away, but I want to continue to volunteer and to contribute to the Center's work. And I hope each of you will consider doing the same. There's not a better cause out there.



## You Can Help!

*The Oaxaca Learning*

*Center depends upon the goodwill and generosity of our friends and supporters to carry out our mission. Every cent that is donated will be used to help our students.*

**Tax-deductible donations may be sent to:**

**Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center  
P.O. Box 926  
Blue Hill, Maine 04614**

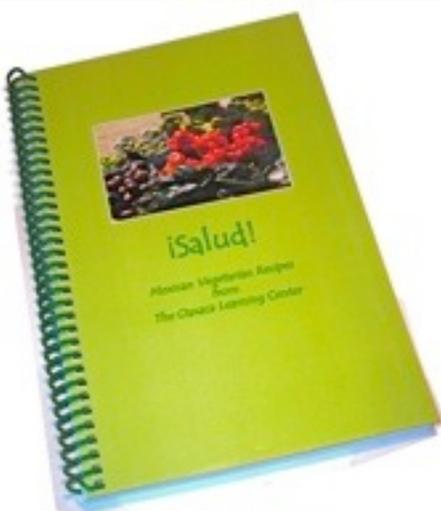
*You may also make an instant donation (which will incur a slight service charge) using PayPal by clicking the button below:*

**Donate Now!**

# 2012 College Entrants

Each year students completing their last year of high school attend special preparation classes that the Center offers to those who will be taking admissions exams for the various universities in Oaxaca. Most are students already benefiting from tutoring at the Center; others come just for the preparation courses. Since college admission is very competitive and many more students apply to local universities than can be accepted, a strong performance on the exams is key to gaining admission. Last spring, 35 students participated in the courses offered. Of those, 30 gained entrance and are now studying in the universities listed below. Twenty-five are studying at public institutions and five at private universities. Our best wishes go out to all these new college students!

STUDENT	UNIVERSITY	CURRICULUM
Alicia Castro Silva	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Electrical Engineering
Amado Sibaja León	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Mathematics
José Reyes Rivera	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Law
Cecilia Méndez García	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Architecture
Viridiana González Jiménez	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Accounting
María Canseco Cruz	Escuela Normal de Educación Preescolar del Oaxaca	Preschool Education
Perla Canseco Castellano	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Law
Jovana Martínez Pérez	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Architecture
Yessica Aguilar Huerta	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Human Rights
Mildred Barrios Arlanzán	Universidad de la Sierra Juárez	Environmental Science
Karen Santiago Cortés	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Physical Therapy
Blanca Cavero Zárate	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Medicine
Andrea Arias Avendaño	Universidad Regional del Sureste	Medicine
Eduardo Martínez Vásquez	Universidad la Salle Oaxaca	Teaching Foreign Languages
Roberto Luis Vásquez	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Engineering Management
Alma Morales Méndez	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Chemical Engineering
Hugo Vicente Yescas	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Civil Engineering
Genoveva Alavés Hernández	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Mathematics
Daniela Camarillo López	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Mathematics
Enrique Hernández Zarate	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Mathematics
Diana Santiago Gómez	Universidad José Vasconcelos	Graphic Design & Communications
Nashelly Pérez Rodríguez	Universidad Regional del Sureste	Medicine
Abdiel García García	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Medicine
Oscar Hernández García	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Civil Engineering
Carlos Vásquez Hernández	Instituto Tecnológico del Valle de Oaxaca	Computer Science Engineering
Guadalupe Bautista León	Universidad del Golfo de México	Psychology
Rosalina Ayuzo García	Universidad Mesoamericana	Graphic Design
Cristina López Salazar	Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca	Medicine
Ruth Gómez Velasco	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Construction Management
Daniel Martínez Hernández	Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca	Industrial Engineering



## Cook Up A Special Gift For Christmas!

Are you looking for a special gift for people on your Christmas list? Consider something unique they can use over and over again, enjoying healthful, delicious meals along the way. ¡Salud!, the Center's wonderful cookbook, contains over fifty easy recipes to give your table a "south of the border" flavor, wherever you live. The full-color, spiral-bound cookbook is designed to lie flat for easy reference. Recipes are written in Spanish and English and appear on facing pages to enable the cook to have a truly bilingual culinary experience. Most of the ingredients are readily available outside of Mexico, though acceptable substitutes are suggested. The cookbook is available for \$17.95, plus \$3.95 shipping, and can be ordered through PayPal using the easy link below:

[https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=YTTYK2W4VZRGN](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=YTTYK2W4VZRGN)