

The Oaxaca Learning Center



Making a difference, one young person at a time!

Tutoring | Women's Group | English & Computer Skills | Counseling
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www.tolc.org.mx

www.iicaprendizaje.org

Fall 2014 Newsletter

So Many Ways To Share!

The holiday season is upon us, bringing with it the opportunity for people to share something of their own good fortune with others not so blessed. The Oaxaca Learning Center is hugely dependent on the generous spirit of our friends and supporters to keep up the good work being accomplished here. Though they are tremendously dedicated and talented, the Center's senior staff, the program coordinators, the tutors and the many American and Canadian volunteers could not continue without the financial contributions that pay the bills that pile up every month, year in and year out.

It has never been easier to make a donation to keep the good work going at The Oaxaca Learning Center.

Our friends in the U.S. can make tax-deductible contributions through the Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center by sending a check to FOLC at P.O. Box 926 in Blue Hill, ME 04614.

Canadians can send tax-deductible gifts to CANFRO at 73 Pine St. in Belleville, ON K8N 2M7.

Please be sure your email address is listed on your check.

You may also make an instant online donation to the Learning Center using PayPal by simply clicking on this magic button:

Donate Now!

Don't let Santa's elves do all the work of making gifts for the holiday season! Your donation to the Learning Center will have an impact on the lives of eager students through the coming new year.

Social Business Gathering Steam

This year the staff and tutors at the for-profit Community Learning Center (CLC) worked to further refine their tutoring methodology to address the characteristics of new fee-based student/clients from economically advantaged families while also developing a more high-intensity marketing and advertising plan. Since September, staff members have been implementing a wide-ranging media campaign and conducting personalized visits to schools.

We are gratified and energized by the results. CLC sold 467 hours of tutoring in October and 530 hours in November. This is a big improvement over an average of 335 hours per month from January to September. It is thrilling to be on an upward trajectory to consolidating our sustainable social business.

In 2015 the Community Learning Center will offer new services -- workshops; preparation for special and admission exams; and educational consulting -- to enhance CLC income. Since November 2014 the CLC team has been working with two social entrepreneurs with successful marketing profiles to refine our promotional messages for our various audiences. These individuals have agreed to continue mentoring our marketing team in 2015 to optimize our message and its delivery. In the coming year we will fund the following promotional media as resources allow:

- A lighted marquee at the entrance of the CLC
- Creation and maintenance of a CLC webpage.
- Design and purchase of logo items
- Radio spots and newspaper ads
- Publicity on passenger buses
- Posters and promotional brochures

*Gail Schacter,
a winter visitor
from Victoria,
British Columbia,
practices Spanish
during an afternoon
intercambio with
Andrés Cruz,
a high school
student who is
learning English.*



TOLC Scholarship Students Visit San Felipe del Agua

One of the great programs offered at The Oaxaca Learning Center provides tuition assistance and a small monthly living allowance to deserving students. This year there are eleven students at the senior high or college level receiving aid through this program, thanks to the generosity of several donors.

One of the requirements of the scholarship program is that all of the young men and women participate in weekend sessions that include personal counseling, group activities, lectures by visiting professors, book reports and the like. The point of this intensive concentration is to insure that



ABOVE: Eleven scholarship students, Center staff and a visiting professor pose for a group photo in Parque Donaldo Colosio in San Felipe del Agua.



LEFT: The group gathers in one of the palapas in the park to listen to a presentation on the importance of human rights in Mexico given by a visiting professor.

BELOW: Everyone relaxes after enjoying a potluck lunch of tostadas at the conclusion of the day's program. The highlight of the meal was a birthday cake presented to one of the students.

the students not only excel in their school work, but become self-confident individuals who can take leadership roles in society.

These weekend workshops usually take place at one of the Center's three locations in Oaxaca. Sometimes, though, to spice things up, the gang looks for some other venue.

So it was that on Sunday, 23 November, the students and several senior staff met at *Parque Donaldo Colosio* in San Felipe del Agua. The group spent several hours in various sessions -- some playful and others quite academic -- then concluded with a potluck lunch.

These activities not only help the students individually, but build bonds between the students and with the staff that create the supportive family atmosphere the students so much appreciate. It is these in-depth programs that make the Learning Center unique and produce such outstanding results in the lives of so many young people.



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A Capital Adventure!

The White House, the Capitol building, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the Smithsonian . . . they've all become familiar landmarks to Pamela Duarte who, until recently, was the Learning Center's English Coordinator.

Eager for new experiences that would broaden her knowledge and determined to advance her education, Pamela searched online for scholarships for which she might be eligible. One in particular caught her attention. Offered by The Washington Center in partnership with the Mexican government's *Fundación Liderazgo Avanzado*, 100 selected students with the right qualifications would get to spend three months of academically credited work and study in the U.S. Capital. Pamela applied and garnered one of the coveted slots.

She shares an apartment in Washington with three other Mexican students in the same program and has a busy life. "I'm doing an internship with The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages," Pamela explains, "and then I'm taking two courses as well. One course is on Leadership, and the other is called Civil Society Engagement. But Washington seems to have thousands of conferences and events every day, and the best part is that most of them are free!" What has Pamela been enjoying most? "I like the museums, the metro system, the streets, the culture. I'm enjoying all that Washington has to offer!"

Born in the city of Oaxaca, Pamela comes from a family short on financial resources and education but long on ambition and achievement. She has a sister with a university degree in Business Management, another with a Master's Degree in Education (the Learning Center's very own Evaluator and Planning Coordinator, Mirell Duarte), and a brother currently studying at the *Universidad Tecnológica de la Mixteca*. Pamela is now 24 and in her final year at State University of Oaxaca. What does she see in her future? "I want to get a degree in Tourism and Sustainable Development," she begins. "I want to become certified as a Teacher of English as a Foreign Language so I can apply for another scholarship somewhere. Then she adds as an afterthought: "And of course I want to get a better job, buy my own house and travel around the world." Those are big visions, and Pamela believes her Washington experience will help clarify her goals.

Congratulations on your Washington scholarship, Pamela! You can be sure all of us at The Oaxaca Learning Center will be following your new adventures with great interest.



Pamela Duarte speaking to students at a TOLC event last August.

CANFRO

Canadian Friends of Oaxaca (CANFRO) was incorporated by a group of Canadians who hope to enable Oaxacans in need to build better lives. We are very happy to be supporting "The Tutor Project" at The Oaxaca Learning Center. A big "thank you" to those who have contributed during the past year. We encourage your continued support and ask you to help us spread the word that Canadians can obtain a charitable tax receipt by donating to this cause, either in cash at The Learning Center while in Oaxaca, or online wherever it is convenient. For more information you are invited to visit our web site: www.canfro.ca

Paying It Forward

Rafa Rito, a student at the Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca working on a degree in Mechanical Engineering, receives tuition assistance and personal tutoring from the Learning Center. As payback, he in turn tutors younger students. Here he teaches a pre-schooler how to count in a session at the Community Learning Center.



Meet Our New English Volunteer Coordinator

This is another installment in a continuing series of articles featuring people who volunteer their time and talent to help The Oaxaca Learning Center flourish.

Carol Knox came to Oaxaca in July of 2013, pondering what the next episode in her life might be after retiring. She'd had a lifelong love of Mexico and all things Mexican, and the idea of living in Mexico always intrigued her. As she relates: "Oaxaca enchanted me from the start, but I knew I couldn't simply sit in the Zocalo and read. As I explored volunteer opportunities here, my Spanish teacher suggested The Oaxaca Learning Center, and one day as part of my lesson we visited TOLC and had a nice conversation with the president, Jaasiel. That morning was a turning point in my decision to pack in, pack up and head out from my other life."

Carol has been a resident of Oaxaca nine months now, and has taken on a specific role at The Oaxaca Learning Center. Her title is English Volunteer Coordinator, which provides her the opportunity to welcome and support expats visiting or living in Oaxaca, who - like her - want to contribute something of themselves to this wonderful place. Her job is to ensure a good fit at TOLC for the volunteer's interests and talents. Carol's partner in the language program at TOLC is Nelly Luis, the Spanish Student Coordinator. Nelly works with the students, encouraging them and ensuring they have a good fit to work on their English skills.

Today the Center has fifteen volunteers working with twenty students. Some prefer to work in pairs, and others one-on-one for intercambios. We also have volunteers who are fluent in Spanish who tutor students. As Carol says, "Our goal is to be creative and make the most of every opportunity, depending on the needs of the students and the skills of the volunteers."



Nelly Luis and Carol Knox discuss how to coordinate their efforts directing the Center's English program.

Capital Campaign Update

As you probably know, we're in the midst of a Capital Campaign to secure the future of the Learning Center through the purchase of the Center's Murgia Street building. To date we have raised about 60% of our \$200,000 goal. Over 50 donors have contributed in amounts ranging from \$25 to \$60,000. While we're pleased to be more than halfway toward our goal, we need to complete the campaign by March 1, which is fast approaching.

If you have not already done so, please send a tax deductible contribution now, or early in 2015. Checks may be made out to FOLC (Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center) and sent to Susan Connor, 313 Linden Avenue, Wilmette, IL 60091. You will receive a letter confirming your tax-deductible donation. If you have friends who should know about this important campaign, please share this information with them.

If you wish, you may donate online using PayPal by simply clicking on the "Donate Now!" button to the right. How easy is that!

The staff and the students of the Learning Center thank you for supporting this critical effort to ensure that the Center continues its impressive work to help young Oaxacans build a better future.

Congratulations, Graduate!



Jauri Sanchez Cruz

Congratulations are in order for Jauri Sanchez Cruz, the very talented and energetic young man who directs the Center's student scholarship program. Jauri graduated last summer from Universidad Vasconcelos with a bachelor's degree in Law and successfully defended his thesis before the faculty on December 1st.

The Learning Center is fortunate to have people of Jauri's caliber directing operations as members of the senior staff.

We wish Jauri well as he embarks on a career as a lawyer!

To make an instant donation to the "Ensuring The Future" capital campaign, click here:

Donate Now!