

# 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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## Spring 2014 Newsletter

### LaSalle University Teams With The Oaxaca Learning Center

For the last two years we at the Oaxaca Learning Center have had a very positive and growing relationship with LaSalle University here in Oaxaca. Through a special agreement, LaSalle offers up to 80% scholarships to selected students from our center. This year LaSalle's tuition scholarships and complementary funding from Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center made study at this outstanding private university possible not only for three of our senior staff (in Masters programs) but also three others in the high school and undergraduate programs.

On May 7th Rocio Ocadiz, the Rectora of the Oaxaca Campus of LaSalle, her assistant, Berencia Morales, and Laura Juárez, coordinator of the high school program, joined Gary, Sonia, Jauri and Fay for lunch at the Center. Conversation centered on how we might expand this relationship. The occasion gave us the opportunity to express our thanks for the support and interest of La Salle in our program and its beneficiaries.



*Jauri Sanchez, Fay Hernandez, Laura Juárez, Sonia Bautista, Rectora Rocio Ocadiz, Gary Titus and Berencia Morales met at The Oaxaca Learning Center in early May.*

### “Ensuring The Future” Campaign

Later this year The Oaxaca Learning Center will launch a Capital Campaign to raise \$200,000 USD to purchase the building that has been the home of the Learning Center since its beginning. This is an extraordinary opportunity to ensure the future of the Center by freeing the Board of Directors and Center

leadership from a serious concern so they can concentrate their efforts on delivering outstanding services and meeting the community's growing needs. Look for more about the “Ensure the Future” campaign and how you can contribute to it in the upcoming summer edition of this newsletter.

## Turning Necklaces Into Computers

*This is another installment in a series highlighting how some supporters of The Oaxaca Learning Center give of their time and talent to help our students excel.*

Francine LaPorte, a vivacious woman from Tenants Harbor, Maine, has discovered the pleasure of wintering in Oaxaca. A former instructor of English as a second language, she found out about the Learning Center while using the internet to do research about Oaxaca. "I wanted to use my TESOL skills as a volunteer," she explains. "I became involved with the Center during a stay in 2010 as a tutor working with Armando Carmona Cruz and Mirell Duarte, members of the senior staff who were both on scholarships given by the Cambridge Academy to study English." From that point onward Francine has been an ardent supporter of the Center. "Everything about TOLC moved me: the dedicated and inspirational young people working so hard as students, tutors and coordinators - all working together as a respectful community."



*Francine LaPorte models one of her fashionable necklaces.*

"While in Oaxaca this past January, I was shown how to make a deceptively simple, yet elegant necklace composed of washers and ribbon. At the same time Armando badly needed to replace his dying, six-year-old computer. I was talking with a friend about him when she spontaneously handed me a \$500 MP donation, saying only, 'I want to help'. Earlier that day she had complimented my necklace, so in gratitude I made her one as a gift – and voilà! – an idea was born: *Collares Por Computadoras*.

Since that epiphany moment, Francine has made and sold hundreds of necklaces and donated the proceeds to the Learning Center. She is a regular customer at the local fabric shop where she purchases ribbons in a rainbow of colors and the neighborhood family-run hardware store where she buys metal washers by the kilo.

"I have shown the necklaces to friends, along with the TOLC brochure and personal photos of the young people I hope to help financially. The necklaces come in many colors. There are three shades of red - or, as I have named them, 'vino tinto,' 'bugambilia' and 'jitomate.' There are also three blues, along with purple, green, orange, pink, yellow, brown, black, striped, plaid, rainbow - and the newest model (in time for Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day) the green, white and red of the Mexican flag. Now back in the USA, I am making pink ones for 'Breast Cancer Awareness Month' in May. My sister in Philadelphia plans to host a necklace party for her friends."

Recently Francine and Tracy Roach, another tireless TOLC ESL volunteer teacher, hosted a workshop where three scholarship recipients joined in making 39 necklaces on a Sunday morning. They are creating their own peer-directed, non-profit "social business" to continue and expand the work, in fulfillment of TOLC's mission to continue financial support of tutors and staff. The new entity is called "Porte de La Porte". They have new ideas and marketing strategies, as well as designs for men (bracelets, and belts).

Necklaces can be ordered online at [portedelaporte@gmail.com](mailto:portedelaporte@gmail.com). Orders can be filled either in Mexico or the USA. The price in Mexico is 100 pesos; in the U.S. the necklaces sell for \$10 each, plus shipping.

Francine reports that as of May 1 the necklace project has given about \$1850.00 USD to the Learning Center for new computers and other associated academic costs, with another \$400.00 on the way!



*The Learning Center necklaces can be had in a rainbow of different hues and are seen adorning women all over Oaxaca city.*

## Meet Our Students

*While we at the Learning Center are justly proud of our tutors and senior staff, are highly pleased with the scope and depth of the programs offered, and are tremendously grateful for the support and encouragement of our donors and friends, it is the students themselves who make our enterprise worthwhile. We would like to take this opportunity to acquaint you with three of the outstanding young women who benefit from their association with the Center.*

### **Karen Juárez Pelcastre** - 19, second semester at Grupo CEDUA

Karen does not fit the usual mold for young women in Oaxaca, as is evidenced by her pursuit of a degree in auto mechanics. She is the oldest of five children and lives at home in Xoxocotlan with her mother and grandmother. Her father is an auto mechanic, and she spent time as a child in his shop where she developed her fascination with machines. Karen has received tutoring in math at the Learning Center for three years. She appreciates the personalized attention she gets from the staff and enjoys the family atmosphere that pervades the place. Karen feels she has not only benefitted academically from her time here, but has been motivated to achieve personal and career goals. Her dream is to own an auto facility that caters especially to women -- a place where women can bring their cars for repair, knowing they will be respected and their vehicles well taken care of. On the other hand, Karen relishes working on really big diesel engines -- the sort that power buses and dump trucks. That may not fit in with the notion of a neighborhood workshop geared to serving female drivers!



### **Rosario Calvo Ruiz** - 15, junior high school

Rosario was introduced to The Oaxaca Learning Center three years ago through a copy of our student newsletter that was posted at her school. Later, Mirel Duarte, one of our senior staff members, happened to have a conversation with Rosario's mother. That set the stage, and the rest is history. Rosario presently comes to the Center for one-on-one tutoring in math on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, and returns on Sundays for a two-hour session shared with another student. Her older brother is also now a student at the Center. Rosario finds that learning is somehow easier at the Center than at her regular school, and she can see the results of her tutoring in her improved grades. She also enjoys the various workshops put on by the Center and the monthly activities sponsored by the staff. Her ultimate goal is to become an accountant.

### **Angelina Hernandez Mesinas** - 22, fourth year university student

Angelina will graduate from the Autonomous University of Benito Juarez in Oaxaca this summer, after which she will begin a six-month internship in August as the final step towards earning a Bachelor's degree in Public Accounting. She is the second oldest of the eight children who live at home with her parents in Cuilapam. Once Angelina becomes established as an accountant, she would like to run her own business. She credits the Learning Center with helping her do well in her studies and with learning personal responsibility and punctuality. She has also been the recipient of a college scholarship provided by the Learning Center.



## Halloran Grant Renewed For 2014

The Oaxaca Learning Center wishes to thank the Harry R. Halloran Jr. Fund for renewing its grant of \$25,000 USD for 2014.

Halloran Philanthropies' initial support in 2012 allowed for the expansion of our core mission to empower students from low income and impoverished families by doubling our tutoring/mentoring capacity.

In 2013 their encouragement led the Center's leadership to develop a Five Year Strategic Plan to bolster the Center's long-term sustainability through the initiation of a social fee-based business.

The 2014 Halloran grant shifts a large part of the monies previously dedicated to support for free tutoring to funding the development of the social business. This shift in emphasis is possible because The Oaxaca Learning Center is now able to fund three of the four tutors at the new for-profit teaching center who were supported by the Halloran grants in 2012 and 2013, as well as the majority of the expenses of our satellite teaching center.

We believe that in 2014 and 2015 the Center will successfully consolidate the social business that will focus on fee-based tutoring, and then branch out into delivery of workshops and other professional consulting services for institutions in the education sector.

The initial and continuing support of Halloran Philanthropies has been instrumental in implementing our strategy for long-term sustainability.

## You Can Help!

*The Oaxaca Learning Center gets most of its revenue from donations.*

*Americans can send tax-deductible gifts to:*

**FOLC**

**P. O. Box 926**

**Blue Hill, ME 04614**

*Canadians can send tax-deductible gifts to:*

**CANFRO**

**73 Pine Street**

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*Please be sure to include your email address on your check!*

*You may also use PayPal by clicking on this button:*

**Donate Now!**

## Update On The New For-Profit Learning Center

The Oaxaca Learning Center's new social business, a fee-based tutoring service located in a building in the upscale Reforma neighborhood, became operational last summer when selected staff members initiated a summer school program there. That was followed by regular tutoring through the fall semester. Currently there are 39 pupils paying for 12 hours of regular instruction per month during the spring semester -- 2 elementary school students; 15 in junior high; 11 in senior high and another 11 taking a special course to prepare for the college admissions exam. There are six tutors working at the Reforma center.

In June, staff and tutors from CAS (as the new center is called) will participate in an education expo to be held in Llano Park. The center will have a tent set up there and will offer demonstration tutoring, hand out informational flyers and answer questions from people attending the fair.

The administrative staff hopes to have the CAS center paying its way within two years, and after that to make a profit which, in turn, will be used to fund the free services provided by the original Learning Center on Murguia street in el centro.

## Invitation To Our Bed & Breakfast



*We have space available during the summer months and into the fall in our charming guest rooms and the private apartment on the second floor here at The Oaxaca Learning Center.*

*Why not schedule some time away and come pay us a visit?*

Go to [Reservations@BedAndBreakfastOAX.org](mailto:Reservations@BedAndBreakfastOAX.org)