

# 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)

## Winter 2012

### Bright Faces, Bright Futures

If you were to take a generous dose of youthful enthusiasm, add voracious inquisitiveness, stir in some fearless optimism, leaven with a sense of responsibility, then pour the ingredients into the mold of two young human beings to cure, you might well end up with the likes of César and Yunis Zacarías Olivera. This dynamic brother and sister team from the nearby town of Tulé have been regular participants in the program at The Learning Center for just about a year now.

César, a tenth-grade student, was encouraged to enroll at the Center by his dance instructor. He came to us in February exactly one year ago. He was sufficiently energized by what he found here that his younger sister followed him, enrolling at the Center in April.

Both have a full class load at their regular schools and also take dance lessons (both are performers in the *Guelaguetza*, the famous regional dance festival held in Oaxaca each July). César works weekends as a tour guide. Just ask him about any of the archeological sites in the Valles Centrales - Monte Albán,

Mitla, Zaachila, Yagul, Dainzú, etc. - and he'll give you an earful of information! Yunis does not have an outside job at the moment, but has worked in various positions in a restaurant. Neither has much free time, but both are committed to coming

to the Center each week for classes in math and chemistry. They value, too, the psychological support they have received from staff members. Yunis cites especially the experience she has had in the women's program. And, not surprisingly, they look forward to the monthly Saturday excursions sponsored by the Center. Lastly, they both come in twice a week for English *intercambios* with gringos who volunteer their assistance at the Center.

Neither César nor Yunis has settled yet on a definite career path.

They still have plenty of time to make those long-range decisions. But thanks to the encouragement and support they receive at the Center, they have a confidence and ambition that will surely stand them in good stead! We are happy to help them along the way.



*Yunis & César Zacarías Olivera, two bright stars in the constellation of students at the Center.*

# A Strong Finish To Our Fund Raising In 2011

December was a banner month for *Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center*. Response to our end-of-year fund raising letter was generous, and 2011 surpassed all others in total individual donations. On December 23rd, in response to our very first proposal to a U.S. foundation, Halloran Philanthropies awarded us a US\$20,000 grant for 2012. This assures that The Learning Center will have a “prosperous new year” (as “happy new year” is expressed in Spanish)!

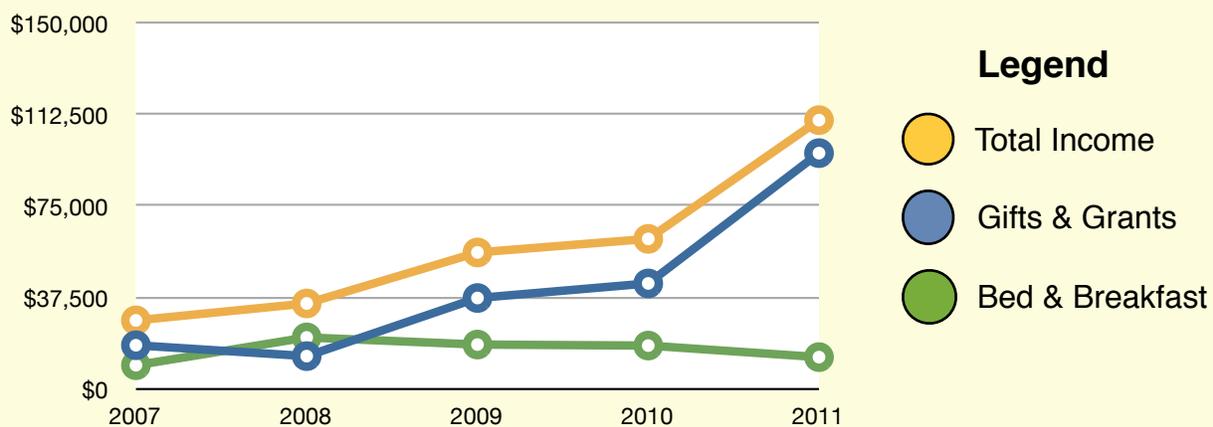
**Halloran Philanthropies** is a sponsor of the local branch of “The Hub,” a community center that offers support and coordination services for social innovators operating projects in southern Mexico. Halloran learned of TOLC through its local representative in Oaxaca, Mark Beam. He visited our Center on the recommendation of Cath Kumar, the director of the Cambridge English Program which has generously offered scholarships to high achieving students and staff of the Learning Center. Thanks are due to both Cambridge and Halloran for their support for our 2012 program.

The generous grant from Halloran Philanthropies will allow us to more than double the number of students who benefit from our tutoring and related program activities during the school year. We will also significantly increase the number of beneficiaries in our summer program and the preparation course for students planning to sit for the university admission exams. The grant will allow us to hire our program director and coordinator of the tutors full time (they were half time in 2011), hire 4 additional tutors and rent additional space to accommodate the increased activity.

Our fund raising goals for 2012 will focus on:

- finding increased support for developing our women’s and gender equity programs,
- enhancing our expertise in “coaching” students to maximize their potential, both academically and personally, and
- the identification and development of satellite centers in one or two low income neighborhoods in the outskirts of the city.

## Yearly Income Figures



## Financial Summary

We are happy to report that the Center’s income has grown steadily every year, despite the depressed economy worldwide. While our B&B receipts have fallen, due to fewer travelers coming to Mexico, donations have more than made up the shortfall. The Halloran grant really put us over the top last year! Our sincere thanks to all of our friends for their continuing interest and support! We could not do it without you!

## Volunteer Accountant Needed

The Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center (our new non-profit in the U.S.) is looking for a volunteer accountant, familiar with the accounting needs of non-profit organizations, to help us set up our bookkeeping system. If you or one of your friends has this ability and would be willing to help us, please contact our president, Fay Henderson, at: [henderson.fay@gmail.com](mailto:henderson.fay@gmail.com).

## A Door Swings Open

With the arrival of a grant from the Halloran Foundation — the Center's first-ever gift from a philanthropy — a door has swung wide, revealing a terrain beyond that is both enticing and awesome.

From the very beginning, when there was but one coach (founder Gary Titus, himself) and only one client (now in his 40s with his own successful business), that personal, coaching-learning interaction has remained the sole reason for the Center's existence, its driving purpose. The infrastructure that has emerged around it has taken shape, bit by bit, to keep that purpose strong, accountable, responsible and effective. As the Center is today, there are six tutors coaching between 60 and 70 students per month in its year-round programs and about 100 students during its summer sessions. The Halloran grant is about to change these numbers drastically. What will that mean?

When you ask him that question, Armando Carmona Cruz, the Center's 26-year-old coordinator of the tutoring program, takes on a look of thoughtful elation, like a dog presented with a succulent bone so large he's not quite sure what to do with it.

"Well," he says, "it's like this: The essential thing is that we'll be able to take on four more tutors. With a total of 10, we should be able to provide our everyday services to about 100 students...and probably something like 150 in the summer!" Here, his gaze shifts wonderingly to the top of the trees in the courtyard. "More space...more tables...more chairs...more blackboards...more outreach to schools...more of everything."

That "everything," of course, also includes more organization and administration, which is Armando's primary bailiwick. It's his responsibility to recruit able tutors and train them in the Center's unique style of coaching, to select the students who enter based on their need, ability and motivation. It's his responsibility as well - in the case of tutors and students alike - to supervise their work and attitude once they join the Center. "Yes," he acknowledges, "it's a big job even with our present numbers, especially because we're different from anywhere else. Our kind of 'su-

pervision' means being alert to every student's inflexible schedule beyond the Center, his or her family and personal problems, difficulties in fitting into our collegial atmosphere, anything that may be hindering that student's progress. We don't just offer a student information. We provide psychological support to the whole person. Soon, we're going to have the wholeness of a lot more persons under our care."



*Armando Carmona is our charismatic and enthusiastic coordinator of the tutoring program.*

The Halloran grant presents opportunities other than serving more students, as well. Might it be possible to broaden the number of subjects and scope of the courses the Center currently offers? Could there again be a second Center in a needy neighborhood, akin to the one that existed in the hills of Las Lomas? It's too soon to answer such questions, but it's clear that exploring that land beyond the just-opened door is going to be a challenging adventure!

## Cookbook Selling Like Hotcakes!

If you haven't already ordered "*¡Salud!, Mexican Vegetarian Recipes from the Oaxaca Learning Center*," now is a good time to do so, since the newly-added PayPal option makes it incredibly easy! The Friends of the Oaxaca Learning Center are delighted to report that over 250 copies of the cookbook have been sold since its release last December.

A big "Thank you!" to our friends in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico who have helped to support the work of the Learning Center by ordering copies for themselves and their friends. The Learning Center receives 100% of the proceeds from the sale of the cookbook. Copies of the cookbook are still available at the Learning Center and are also showing up at key locations around Oaxaca.

This superb collection of Mexican vegetarian recipes has received enthusiastic reviews from all corners of the world. Bernie Goldray of New York wrote, "*¡Salud!* is beautifully produced and the recipes are delicious, easy to prepare, and healthy." From Nova Scotia, Bill and Carol Watts praised the Aztec soup recipe - and



*Andres' magical Aztec soup will delight the taste buds of all you serve it to!*

and Andres, the cook - but also commented on the "excellent introduction . . . giving a good history and overview of the Oaxaca Learning Center."

In Mexico, vegetarian cuisine is gaining in popularity. Doña Ade, a Oaxacan cook, was happy to be able to accommodate a long-term houseguest who was a vegetarian. "After two months, I was running out of ideas for interesting dishes," she said. "When I saw the cookbook, I was excited to try something new."

Some people have told us that they appreciate the bilingual format, which gives them a chance to practice their Spanish (or English, depending upon their nationality), and others are grateful for the suggestions about suitable substitutes for ingredients that might be hard to find outside of Mexico.

*"We used some cayenne pepper and substituted jalapeño for the guajillo pepper... Quite simple to make and very tasty! We had it with a mixed green salad and for us it was a complete meal. We will definitely make it again!"*  
- Bill and Carol Watts

*Ordering a copy of our cookbook is quick and easy! Just click on the PayPal 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)

## More Info Just A Click Away

Do you want more information about The Oaxaca Learning Center? It's easy to get! Go to either of the internet addresses tucked into the corners of the masthead at the top of this newsletter. Clicking on the "TOLC" link will take you to our English language website. Click on "iiacaprendizaje" and you will zoom to our student-produced Spanish website. The latter will not only give you an insight into our students' perspective, but let you practice your Spanish, as well!



*Miguel gets an English lesson from Michel.*

## Guest Interaction

One of the things that makes a stay at the Center's Bed & Breakfast truly special is the opportunity guests have to interact with the students and staff. This interplay between people of differing ages, backgrounds and cultures enlivens every day and enriches all parties involved.



*ABOVE: Tracy from Massachusetts, one of our B&B guests, teaches a roomful of young people eager to learn English in the new satellite center classroom.*



*LEFT: Drew, a guest from Colorado, has a jam session in the reading room with Andrés, the Center's amiable and multi-talented cook.*

*"The Bed & Breakfast at the Oaxaca Learning Center has crisp white sheets on the beds and bowls of papaya, homemade yogurt and granola on the breakfast table.*

*Better yet are the incredible smiles of the students who come and go throughout the day. Their spirit is infectious and inspiring.*

*I never expected a B&B could change my life, but it did!"*

*- Tracy Roach*

The

## Oaxaca

### Learning Center

*Our bed & breakfast has two bedrooms, one with a double bed and the other with two twin beds. Both have private baths and access to the patio.*

*We also have a rooftop apartment for rent. 100% of the funds raised from the B&B support the programs and operation of The Oaxaca Learning Center.*



*For more information or to make a reservation, go to [www.tolc.org.mx](http://www.tolc.org.mx).*