



## Expressions of Hope and Gratitude



At the last celebration honoring donors and scholarship recipients, the students gave us handwritten thank you notes. Here are some excerpts:

"I thank you for your unconditional support. It allows me to continue my studies and complete my dreams to be a better person each and every day."

"Thank you for the opportunity you have given us. We don't know you in person but you are always present in our hearts and prayers."

"May you be blessed today, tomorrow, and always."

"Education is the principle clothing for the party of life."

And from an 8<sup>th</sup> grade girl: "I say goodbye to you hoping for successes in your life, much wisdom in your work and that the Creator gives you a great deal of patience, good health, life, and humility."

*Scholarship student, Sandra Beatriz Castro Atz, the newly crowned AMIDI queen.*

Matiox, pronounced ma-ti-osh, is a Kakchiquel Mayan word that means "thank you". Kakchiquel Mayan is the language spoken by our scholarship students, and the sentiment is theirs.





## Creative Fundraising: A Coop for a Roof

In 2000, ten brave Mayan women, predominantly war widows, chartered a course for AMIDI. Over the years their focus and fortitude have been recognized, and donors have contributed support allowing the group to expand their membership and influence. In 2006 three donors provided the funds for AMIDI to build a Community Center in Pachay las Lomas.

AMIDI membership has now increased to 40 women. The Center has become the hub of ongoing education for youth and adults, membership meetings, award ceremonies, and festivals. To accommodate all interested attendees (and often their families) events have been held outdoors under the intense, high-altitude sun. With their limited financial resources, construction of an enclosed addition to the Center is out of the question. Building a large shaded area would, however, meet their needs. It would expand seating capacity and protect the entryway, which annually can turn into a thick mud puddle, heavy enough to pull shoes off one's feet.

The challenge for the AMIDI Board of Directors was to find the money to fund the roof project. They looked at their two large chicken coops, built about 20 years ago, from which they had run a short-lived egg business, a venture too small to be economically viable.

The Board drew up a resolution, approved by the members, to sell one of the coops to an AMIDI member, Elbia Aracely Jacobo Chali. Over 15 years ago she was one of our first high school scholarship recipients. Now she has started a chicken business with 50 hens for eggs and 50 *criollo* chickens, their heritage breed, for meat. Her customers all live nearby, but she dreams of expanding the business to 500 chickens and developing sales in the nearby market town. The proceeds from her coop purchase funded the large metal roof adjoining the Community Center (above photo).



# Sacred Incense

Archeologists commonly discover incense burners at sites in Mesoamerica; Mayans have used them in communal ceremonies for over a thousand years. The smoky aroma of incense has carried Mayan prayers to their deceased and the divine.

Guardians of Mayan culture, AMIDI members and their children accompany their rituals and celebrations with incense made from pine resin and burned in a small, ceramic vessel made of local clay. At weddings they burn incense to bless the marriage. During births the calming smoke creates a welcoming, joyful atmosphere. Inside and outside church, sweet, dense incense smoke envelopes prayers and conveys them to “the Creator”. Every celebration to honor the scholarship recipients and the donors is blanketed with its rich aroma.

*(Right) Previous scholarship recipient and the President of AMIDI carries a traditional incense burner to a dedication at the AMIDI Community Center.*

*(Below) Creating a sacred atmosphere and embracing tradition, a scholarship student swings an incense burner, opening the annual celebration honoring students and donors.*



# Cambio Climatico, Climate Change

The rainy season in Guatemala has become unreliable. Traditionally the season starts at the beginning of May and ends six months later in early November; however, this year the rains in May and June were so sparse that the vital corn crop began to fail. Corn, the main stay of the Mayan diet, provides food this year and seed for next year's planting. The coffee trees, planted in 2014 as part of a promising, long-term project, show signs of stress from water deprivation, and some of the carefully maintained, mature trees, have died. The delicious, high-altitude coffee is the villager's cash crop.

During the rains AMIDI members look forward to foraging in the woods, gathering edible mushrooms and wild herbs for cooking and for medicine. The knowledge of what to pick is passed from generation to generation. So far this rainy season, no mushrooms have appeared.

Under these conditions, our scholarship program becomes even more important in providing hope for the future. The AMIDI families are subsistence farmers who accept the challenges and gifts of nature. They have done so little to contribute to the causes of climate change, yet they are greatly affected by "cambio climatico".



*Maria Cristina Castro Pumay, several years ago, when rain was abundant and mushrooms flourished.*

## Learn More About AMIDI

Should you prefer to receive an electronic version of Matiox, please sign up at [www.amidiguatemala.org](http://www.amidiguatemala.org).

Visit Facebook under AMIDI: Mayan Women Who Farm and Weave.

The Matiox newsletter is written and produced by Marilee Wingert, Barbara Bowman, Bill Bowman, and Anya Glenn. No donations to AMIDI are used to fund this newsletter.

## To Make a Donation

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the AMIDI scholarship fund, please make your check payable to Slow Food Sonoma County, a 501(c)3 non-profit that manages the funds at no cost. Please send the check to:

Slow Food Sonoma County North  
P.O. Box 1494  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

Or visit [www.amidiguatemala.org](http://www.amidiguatemala.org) to donate via Paypal.