



Community Service for Lourdes

Although providing scholarships is the main focus of our work with AMIDI, generous donors will occasionally offer financial support for a special project. This year, when funds became available, the AMIDI women knew exactly what they needed: water storage tanks for each of their homes.

Over the last few years, droughts and unusually hot weather have plagued Central America. 2019 was different, more severe. AMIDI members worried there would not be enough water for their families and farm animals.

Through special donations, AMIDI was able to purchase 660-gallon storage tanks to capture water from rain, springs, and wells. They bargained with the supplier and secured a 10% discount on the tanks, each costing \$256. Now every AMIDI member can store water at their homes. This is not a government-subsidized project, but rather an accomplishment of donors and a group of indigenous women striving to solve a climate-change induced problem.



As part of her community service, scholarship recipient Clara de Lourdes Chali Bonon (in the turquoise skirt) helps to unload the water storage tanks.

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.

The Chicken Project

All 40 AMIDI members now have sturdy, long-lasting chicken coops at their homes. Special donations provided funds for materials: nails, metal roofing, supplies to make concrete foundations, wood for the doors and the frames, and chicken wire for the walls. Each family was responsible for building their structure, one large enough to accommodate 25 chickens comfortably. Once their coop was built, each member received five chickens - four hens and a rooster.

Eventually the families will sell the eggs; but now they eat them. When the hens stop producing eggs, they will become soup ingredients. Three generations ago, eating eggs was a rarity. In a family of six, one egg, when available, would be divided into six portions.

The AMIDI women took adult education classes about best practices for raising poultry. They learned how to make chicken feed by grinding corn and mixing it with greens and other vegetables. They cover the floors of the coops with dry corn husks. The manure adheres to the husks, making it easy to remove and place on the compost pile for later use as organic fertilizer.

The Community Center now has three chicken coops and a rabbit hutch. The mayor of the local market town donated 100 chicks for that project.



The chicken project meets two of AMIDI's goals: improving nutrition and providing income.



Many of these girls are or have been scholarship recipients.

Our Program Makes a Difference

The November 2019 edition of National Geographic features an article about women's well-being around the world. It includes a chart that compares 167 countries with regard to female empowerment. One of the measurements is access to education. Unfortunately, Guatemala ranks last in comparison to all countries in the Americas. This statistic is even more alarming considering it is a measure of the general Guatemalan population, not only the indigenous people. Past research shows the Mayans rank even lower than the national average.

In another National Geographic article, interviewers asked powerful women to identify the most important change needed to empower women in the next 10 years. They asked the question of Christine Lagarde, chosen by Forbes Magazine for their 2018 List of the World's Most Powerful Women. A French politician, lawyer, and economist who serves as the President of the European Central Bank, Ms. Lagarde would like to see girls, especially in developing countries, have access to at least seven years of quality education. She adds that educated young girls, compared to the uneducated, find themselves on a more equal footing with boys. This translates into increased status and parity later in life. In addition, these educated girls tend to marry later, have fewer children, and in general make better choices. AMIDI's focus on scholarship and education is making these differences.

Accounting

Fundraising in 2019 was successful, thanks to the generosity of the donors. The donations totaled \$25,640.00. The AMIDI women and their families send their heartfelt gratitude.

Music and Dancing

Everyone dances – young, old, alone, in pairs, or in a group. On stage or over an earthen dance floor. Music and dance are parts of contemporary Mayan celebrations and ceremonies. Every year when the students honor the donors and scholarship recipients, dancing is part of the festivity.

The Mayans have always enjoyed a rich musical culture, favoring wind and percussion instruments: trumpets, flutes, whistles, and drums. When the marimba came to Central America (from West Africa) in the 17th century, the Mayans adopted it as their own. Preservation of Mayan culture is a priority for AMIDI. Dimaz Atz, husband of one of AMIDI's founding members, has a deep interest in ancient Mayan instruments and music, as well as the modern marimba music of Guatemala. Following his passion, he started music classes for children in the nearby provincial town, San Martin Jilotepeque. Dimas and his students played music for the annual celebration pictured here. To see beautiful footage of the Guatemalan Highlands and hear lilting marimba music, visit Dimas Atz's video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jtt8FMxRBUE



Lilian Sucely Coxol Ajabal and her sister Ingrid, both scholarship recipients, dance at the annual celebration to honor the donors and the students.

Learn More About AMIDI

Should you prefer to receive an electronic version of Matiox, please sign up at 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, Aletha Soule, 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 to donate via Paypal.