



## Adult Education

### *The AMIDI Bee Project*

Our support of AMIDI's adult education program made it possible for members to take beekeeping classes in 2012. Funds were available for hives and beekeeping equipment such as hats with veils. On Ana Maria Chali's visit to Sonoma County last summer, she visited local beekeepers and learned about best practices. She returned to Pachay las Lomas full of information to share with AMIDI members, and they collectively turned the ideas into reality. Their newfound knowledge inspired an AMIDI member one day while she was out foraging. She spotted a swarm of bees and was able to capture them and transfer them safely to a hive.

Some of the AMIDI hives are located on the land surrounding the Community Center. Nearby is a long raised bed full of flowers planted specifically to provide food for the bees. With safety in mind, the women,



wearing protective clothing, calm the bees with the use of smoke. They observed that their multi-colored, hand woven blouses seemed to agitate the bees, so they wear solid colored sweaters and jackets when they open the hives. The honey is very dark in color, delicious to taste, and full of nutritional value.

The AMIDI members have a message for those who support this project. "We are grateful that the Creator granted you life."

*Adelina Jacobo Guicoy and her husband, Carlos, open a hive.*

Maltiox, pronounced mal-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.

# Opening the Road

Maria Antonieta Colaj Camey is one of our dream scholarship recipients. She entered our program in 2003, the first year we offered scholarships. At the time she was a 10th grader just entering high school.

One of 10 children, she always wanted an education that would prepare her to help the Mayans of Guatemala. Fortified by her dream and her backbone, she aspired to study agronomy in high school even though there are no schools offering this course of study anywhere near her home in Pancuy, a village near Pachay las Lomas. The school Maria Antonieta selected is located three hours away by bus in the traditional Mayan town of Sololá, overlooking picturesque Lake Atitlan. Because of the distance from her home, she boarded at school. Living away from home took courage for a female, Mayan teenager who grew up in a tightly knit and protective community. Almost all of her classmates were male.

Because her mother is an AMIDI member, Maria Antonieta qualified for our scholarship program. Although she received our scholarship support, the amount of our financial aid did not cover her school costs including room and board. Determined, she applied for and obtained an additional scholarship through the school. She and her family provided a small portion of the costs, a requirement of the AMIDI scholarship program. With three sources of support – AMIDI, the school, and her family – her funding was secure.

Upon graduation in 2005 she landed a five year contract to work with an international group, funded by the United States Agency for International Development, to provide agricultural assistance to small farmers in Guatemala. She was able to move back to her home village and work in nearby rural areas. To her delight she traveled briefly to the United States to attend an agricultural trade show.

When the project and her contract ended, another agency offered Maria Antonieta a job in her field. That was an accomplishment and honor because, in Guatemala, jobs in agronomy are scarce and normally awarded to non-Mayan males. Nonetheless, she turned down the job offer and began a course of study at one of the finest universities in Guatemala, Mariano Galvez University.

Last November she finished the course work for her three year technical degree in social work. She completed her practicum in the health clinic located in a Mayan town, San Martin Jilotepeque, near her village. Her activities covered a wide spectrum including family planning and attending to the needs of victims of the civil war. She proudly paid the full costs of her education.

Her dream is to continue studying social work for 2 more years and earn the U.S. equivalent of a bachelor's degree. Maria Antonieta sincerely thanks the donors for "opening the road" for her. In her humble way she sums up her philosophy succinctly. "I look for ways to move forward under my own force." Determined, successful, and self-reliant, Maria Antonieta will cover the expenses of her additional two years of university study.

In addition to her academic and career accomplishments, Maria Antonieta is a master weaver, wife, and mother of two. She is also an example of an emerging movement best described as Mayan Pride. She realizes the importance of honoring and preserving her culture, and she still lives in her community where she inspires everyone.



*Maria Antonieta Colaj Camey upon graduation with her hand woven thank you message.*

# The Mayan Creation Story

*A Conversation with Dimas Atz Mejia*

Dimas lives in Pachay las Lomas with his wife, Mayra, who is an AMIDI member, and their son. By profession he is a public school teacher who has a passion for learning about his Mayan roots and sharing that knowledge with others. Here is the creation story as told by Dimas.

According to Mayan lore, time can be divided into five periods, each 5,200 years long. The first epoch was devoted to creating the plants and animals as well as the land, the sea, and the universe. The plan did not include people. It was a time to order the elements. The first attempt to create man occurred during the second epoch. Man was made of mud. When the Creator noticed that man did not have a conscience He decided to send torrential rains in order to destroy that version of man. During the third epoch, the Creator tried again to create man. This time He used wood; but again the Creator was displeased as man did not behave well. Again man was destroyed.

During the fourth epoch, the one that ended on December 21, 2012, the Creator attempted once again to make man. This time He used white, blue, yellow, and red corn, all milled together. The Creator decided to let this version of man survive; but He

had a question. Was man good enough? So the Creator decided to dedicate the next epoch, the one that we have just entered, to teaching people that they are from nature and that they are one of the elements, not the center. It is a time in which man will cultivate respect, observation, and intelligence. This young epoch is one that favors the entire universe according to Mayan beliefs about cosmic energy and offers hope for a brighter future.



*The "H" shape in the two narrow rows represents the Mayan calendar. The women always weave this design into their huipiles, blouses.*

## Exhibition of AMIDI Weavings

Last December and January, a professionally curated exhibit featured AMIDI weavings in the first floor lobby of San Francisco's historic Mills Building on Montgomery Street. The weavers were honored as they never dreamed that their weavings, hand woven outside their humble abodes, would be displayed in such an exalted place and would be seen by thousands of people. Thirty AMIDI pieces were showcased.

Should you be interested in purchasing an AMIDI weaving, please contact Marilee Wingert at [marileewingert@earthlink.net](mailto:marileewingert@earthlink.net).



## On Their Own

In the beginning of the relationship with AMIDI, the members were asked about their dreams. They had three: scholarships for their children to attend school, a community center to provide a gathering space for AMIDI and the greater community, and a potable water system. In response to the third dream, a group of three private donors provided the funds to buy a mountain-fed spring and all of the materials needed to bring the water into the village homes. A Guatemalan engineer volunteered his time to design the system; and AMIDI members provided the labor. Now, years later, AMIDI membership has grown to 58. Some of the women live on the steep mountains that surround the village in areas where it is not feasible to link into the donated water system. Nonetheless they kept their dream of clean water alive and investigated Eco-filter, a product that uses a system of micro channels to transform contaminated water into sparkling clear and delicious potable water. They accomplished this by learning about the device, listening to feedback from users, and finally submitting a petition to a local non-governmental organization for a donation of filters.

AMIDI was successful on many fronts. The interior of the filter is made in Guatemala of locally sourced clay. The Eco-filter has received numerous awards, including two from the World Bank and one for innovation in Latin America. AMIDI took action to improve their health conditions, and they were successful. (Their other two dreams have come true too.)



*The home version of the Eco-filter.*

### Accounting

Fundraising in 2012 was successful due to the generosity of the donors who contributed a total of \$14,079. These scholarship funds support children's and adult education. Last year the AMIDI weavers received \$7,875 from the sales of their beautiful hand woven weavings in California.

### Newsletter

The Maltiox 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 Global Community Works, a local 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

### Thank you!

Also visit [www.amidiguatemala.org](http://www.amidiguatemala.org) and Facebook under AMIDI: Mayan Women Who Farm and Weave.