



Maya Educational Foundation

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Dear Friends,

We are glad to report that we have weathered the changes which the recent economic slide imposed upon us, and we continue our work with a smaller staff and a reduced office. We have been able to fund all our programs in Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize at their usual levels, but we have had little extra to meet the always-growing list of requests, though we did approve a small university scholarship program in Tzununá, Guatemala where MEF already has supported a community library. We are enormously grateful to Elisabeth Nicholson who, with the assistance of Guisela Asensio in Guatemala, has capably shouldered the job of director and kept our organization functioning in excellent form.

Today, we would like to draw your attention to the MEF scholarship programs in Chiapas in southern Mexico. This is an area still in turmoil from conflicts between the government and the small autonomous Maya communities aligned with the Zapatista movement. The federal and state governments, in league with large land owners, continue to use force and government aid programs (funded in part by the US) to extend their control over communities seeking alternatives to top-down government economic development. One of the most recent involves a rural cities project in several areas of Chiapas. Mayas drawn into these cities lose their land and community connections as the government extends its zone of control over land, labor and resources in the interests of industrial development. Some Maya communities are organizing a resistance to this development, particularly in the township of San Pedro Chenalhó.

MEF supports two small scholarship programs in this area, one for four students from the Chenalhó area (two in high school, two in middle school) where we would like to accept two more high school students for the coming school year. The other program is in a more remote town of displaced, formerly Guatemalan Chuj speaking Maya who are now Mexican citizens. The Chuj program has one MEF student in university, and four high-school students. There are three other students waiting to be approved for high school scholarships this coming year. For all these

applicants, whether we can say yes will, as always, depend on the funds we can raise.

MEF also has two larger-scale university scholarship programs that are supervised by our partner organizations Sna Jtz'ibajom and FOMMA in San Cristóbal de las Casas, the major city of southern Chiapas, now a site of many displaced Maya. Both organizations grew out of the long term work and commitment of Dr. Robert Laughlin and his wife Mimi in Chiapas. Sna Jtz'ibajom (The House of the Writer) consists of a writers' group, an internationally known theatrical troupe, and a publishing house. FOMMA (The Strength of Maya Women) also runs a theater group in addition to their workshops, courses in job skills, and a day care center. Both also offer literacy courses, which MEF helps with. Both are trying to keep their organizations running under the same kinds of economic duress that we have been facing. This year, Sna supervised 12 MEF scholars, of whom three have graduated. FOMMA has 15 university students and five graduate students. For the coming year, they have asked for help for several students who need support for their high school education.

Each middle school scholarship means a commitment of \$600 a year; high school scholarships \$950 a year, and university grants are \$1,800. As always, what we can do is dependent on your generosity. The support we receive from you is essential in continuing this important work. We are both honored and grateful to be your hands and heart at work in opening doors and providing tuition, school fees, workshops, books, and teachers to Maya children, young people and adults. Their successes and their joy in learning are our reward.

Thank you so very much for being our partners in this effort to change the future in this small corner of the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marilyn M. Moors". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marilyn Moors, MEF Board President

FOMMA scholarship students



Blanca studies to become an elementary school teacher.



Emiliano (back row) on the day of his graduation.



Chenalhó scholarship students.



Chuj scholarship student, Lenita, the first woman from her community to graduate with a professional degree (midwife).



Children participating in one of the literacy programs provided by Sna Jtz'ibajom.



For information on these and all other MEF programs in Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize, please visit our web site mayaedufound.org



Thank you for your interest and support.