



PARA SERVIR

TO SERVE

JULY 2010 UPDATE

- CLINIC RETAINING WALL
- VOLUNTEERS REPORT FROM MAY/JUNE TRIP
- WEAVERS COOP RE-FORMED
- PIG PROJECT PROPOSED
- UPCOMING...

Banner Photo - *The 13 women of the newly formed "Tesoros del Corazón" cooperative - all weavers with children in school or widows - gathered on the sun deck of Xela Aid's June Russel-Glennon Clinic and Community Center to show their weaves to Xela Aid volunteers (also pictured). See related story this issue.*

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR NUMBERS

Many charitable organizations spend 30% and more of contributions on office space and administrative overhead. We are proud that Xela Aid is able to apply **98%** of your valued contributions directly to funding projects in Guatemala!

Of Each \$1 You

Greetings!

It's been a busy year, with two groups of Xela Aid Volunteers visiting San Martín and surrounding communities this summer. Read about the May/June trip below, our newly reformed weavers cooperative, a proposed pig project and more.

And, if you haven't already, please **join us on Facebook** so you can see the great photos from our most recent trip and stay in touch with your Xela Aid family (see "Find us..." button below).

You can also **share this email with your friends on Facebook, Twitter,** and your other social networks by using the SHARE button at the bottom.

As always, we appreciate your ongoing interest and support.

Sincerely yours,

The Xela Aid Directors

Carlos de la Rosa · Luis Enrique de León · Mel Dinkel · Colleen Dodds · Karen Edwards · Debi Lyn Esquivel · Sheryl Fontaine · Susan Lominska · Patricia Maxwell · Leslie Baer Dinkel

Know someone special who wants to make a positive difference through humanitarian service, or who might wish to otherwise support the work of Xela Aid?



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Contribute:

90 Cents • Goes directly to health, education and the other projects you've elected to support that directly benefit underserved children and families.

8 Cents • Augments other donations to pay our doctor, nurse, medical director and caretaker at Xela Aid's June Russel-Glennon Clinic and Community Center in San Martín Chiquito. These professionals are there daily serving the needs of the community.

2 Cents • Covers the minimal costs of staying in touch with you and our other supporters (largely, without cutting down trees) including costs of website, email, newsletters, and postage.

ZERO! • What we spend on staffing in the U.S., expense accounts, office space, or telephones. This is possible because **our Xela Aid USA Board and Staff are 100% volunteer and our office is efficiently virtual!**

Thank you for your support



Join us for our Family Festival Wednesdays, June, July, August

To supplement revenues for Clinic operations, Xela Aid teamed with Event Manager Oscar de León to launch the [Celebrate Claremont Family Festival](#). The City of Claremont, California, is home to a number of past and



New retaining wall shown here under construction mid-June 2010.

CLINIC GETS NEW RETAINING WALL

Wall will keep the Clinic dry and open

A generous donation by **June Russel-Glennon**, namesake of Xela Aid's Clinic and Community Center, made possible the completion of a retaining wall that will ensure rainwater does not enter the Clinic. Water intrusion became a problem after the construction of a nearby building diverted runoff onto Clinic grounds.

Protecting the Clinic from flooding is especially important since the building, the largest and arguably the sturdiest in San Martín, is often a base of relief operations and shelter during flooding in the community. And, of course, "it's difficult to tend to patients if you're ankle deep in water," pointed out **Luis Enrique de León**, Xela Aid's director in Guatemala.

Special thanks to June for her continued generosity, to Xela Aid Director **Mel Dinkel** for lending his engineering skills to the project, and to Luis for his diligent management of the project which was completed end of June.

Learn more about Xela Aid's [June Russel-Glennon Clinic and Community Center](#) and how you can help support it.



Xela Aid's May/June 2010 Volunteer Vacation - Sponsored children enjoy Lake Attitlan with volunteer McKenna Potter, standing.

SUMMER VOLUNTEER GROUP PROSPERED DESPITE THE INCONVENIENCES OF MOTHER NATURE

Volcanic eruptions, a hurricane and landslides didn't keep them from San

current participants in Xela Aid Volunteer Vacations and on our Board of Directors.

Held Wednesdays during June, July and August, the Festival was created a family event in downtown Claremont in the evenings when the City has plenty of capacity for visitors. Visitors to the event are also introduced to Xela Aid, located in the sponsor's booth.

The event featured artists, interesting products and service businesses, delicious and affordable foods, a petting zoo, pony rides, face painting and great music.

Learn more [here](#), and plan to join us at Xela Aid's Sponsor's booth!

ONGOING PROJECTS

June Russel-Glennon Clinic & Community Center

The June Russel-Glennon Clinic and Community Center is open weekdays from 8 AM - 2 PM. The clinic sees people from miles around, many of whom otherwise would not have been able to see a doctor.

An ultrasound kindly provided through Direct Relief International ([DRI](#)) was delivered mid-2007 and is now serving patients weekly. We welcome your support as a KCO Club member (for "Keep the Clinic Open") to help us continue to provide health services to those who need them most.

All contributions are wisely administered and greatly appreciated. Learn more about the [Clinic](#) and [KCO](#).

Children & Young Adults Educational Scholarship Program (PEX)

Nearly 70 children and young adults are currently sponsored

Martín Chiquito

Xela Aid's May/June volunteer vacation - the first of two Xela Aid groups traveling this summer - got off to an "exciting" start as Guatemala City's closest active volcano erupted while eight in the group waited to board their flight at LAX. The flight was canceled.

In the meantime, **Alexandra Webb** and **Katherine O'Niell** from England, and **McKenna Potter** (age 18) from Arkansas, had already arrived in Guatemala City. Xela Aid's Director in Guatemala, **Luis Enrique de León**, braved falling ash and talked his way through road closures to arrive at Guatemala City's closed airport to pick up the three exceedingly grateful girls.

While the three young ladies awaited the arrival of the balance of the group, Luis put them to work helping in an evacuation center. Back in the states, the Intrepid Eight waited it out - delayed once again when Hurricane Agatha hit.

Five days late but in good spirits, the group arrived in San Salvador (GC airport had remained closed). Making lemonade out of lemons, the group visited a museum on the way out of town. Bus driver **Hugo** avoided landslides and mile-long lines of trucks as he maneuvered the van across the border and to its destination: Quetzaltenango. Tired volunteers settled in to recuperate before a busy start the next morning.

The group managed to squeeze most of the trip's activities into five days while making new friends and invigorating existing projects:



Volunteer **Kathy Logan** is part of a group that had visited Xela Aid's June Russel-Glennon Clinic last year with [Direct Relief International](#), one of Xela Aid's valued partners. (At left, Kathy makes purchases from a weaver in Panajachel.)

"After meeting the women called 'Las Hermosas/Preciosas,' I was excited to see them again!

"These 'precious' women are dedicated to working together to create additional income to alleviate their extreme poverty. They are an outgoing, friendly group who are quick to offer hugs and heartfelt gratitude for our expressions of friendship and support."

During the trip, Kathy generously committed to head a "pig project" for Las Hermosas, and spearhead the re-formation of Xela Aid's weaving cooperative (see related stories following),

Linda Chesterfield, another alumni of the previous year's DRI trip, said, "The trip to Guatemala with Xela Aid was one of the most eye-opening and heartfelt trips of my lifetime. Our adventures were many - from the volcanic explosion and tropical storm to the incredible people in the village of San Martín Chiquito.

"The women of the village were amazingly open and deeply grateful for the assistance we provided," Linda continued. "Their situations of having to take care of their families with so little was heart wrenching, but their spirits were so positive. What strong women!

"My daughter and I are sponsoring the education of a girl who wants to be a doctor," Linda continued.

"Such lofty goals from such a background! It's truly a

for school through Xela Aid's PEX program (Proyecto Educativo de Xela Aid, PEX). Sponsor support makes it possible for these students to register in school and to buy books, supplies and clothing required to attend.

Children sponsored also receive a yearly medical exam and parasite treatment paid for with sponsor contributions.

Learn more about the PEX Program, or email PEX Director [Patricia Maxwell](#) for additional information or to sponsor a child.

"El Centro de Estudios" (Xela Aid Study Center)

The new "Centro de Estudios" welcomes children from the PEX program and all others who wish to participate in peer tutoring and afterschool activities.

Xela Aid is proud that the tutor employed is a graduate of our own PEX program.

To learn more, visit Centro de Estudios, or email [Sheryl Fontaine](#) or [Debi Esquivel](#).

San Martín Tots Preschool

The preschool, or "guardaria," opened in 2007 serving an average of 34 children aged 3 to 6 each school day. The facility was built through the generosity of June Russel-Glennon, and the kitchen facilities built with contributions by Xela Aid Director Mel Dinkel.

A teacher and several assistants tutor the mostly mām-speaking children in Spanish, reading, writing and local history, and serve breakfast foods and a hot meal for lunch. The preschool is a joint effort with the Guatemalan government.

Thanks to several generous donors, Xela Aid has been able to augment the salaries

trip to take again!"

(At far right is Marta, with mother Fabiana at center and grandmother Fabiana at right.)



Volunteer **Sherry Robin** also visited last year with DRI. This year, she said, "Speaking with all of the students who are sponsored was wonderful" (referring to sponsored children of Xela Aid's [PEX program](#)). The children were so very happy to have a sponsor - someone far away who believes in them.

"A child I sponsor, Maickol, has Cerebral Palsy and it was a pleasure speaking with him and realizing what an intelligent individual he is," she said.

"Observing the women of Las Herosas as they read letters from a women's group in Santa Barbara, feeling a connection with a college student, Rosario who my daughter Meaghan and I got to know, being given eggs from a women who we had provided with baby chicks last year; and hearing Leslie sing 'Yo quiero tener un million de amigos' at Hotel Modelo; volunteering in Xela Aid's pre-school and my daughter and I watching the children totally absorbed in an activity we had brought - these were all wonderful moments." *(Below, a preschooler concentrates on a learning activity Sherry and Meaghan brought.)*

Sherry, a lifelong teacher, also generously sponsored a project in the nearby community of Las Nubes to assist with construction at that community's school.

"Learning, exploration, self-discovery was taking place and I was thrilled to be a witness," Sherry said.



Sherry's daughter, **Meaghan Yolles**, said her trip was made special by "lots of smiles and wonderful people!"

"This trip was quite an adventure with all the obstacles we overcame. I remember the first night we got barely any sleep, but I completely forgot how tired I was as I was playing with all the smiling children on the first day.

"The people of Guatemala have beautiful hearts and are so kind," Meaghan continued. "Throughout the trip we were always greatly appreciated and the Guatemalan people we met made me feel welcome and special. I was especially moved by the junior high school of Las Nubes 2, about 10 miles from the clinic. Within a country where education is not a top priority and people have so little, the parents at this school are so encouraging that they even have a small PTA.

"Parents at the school work together to make the school better, and recognize how important education is. Three out of four of the junior high teachers are volunteers, and listening to them tell of the importance of education and how hard they

of teachers and provide for hot meals, learning materials, and repairs to keep the facility safe and comfortable.

For additional information, see [San Martín Tots](#) or write us.

Support one of these Projects [Now](#)



ABOUT US

Founded in 1992, Xela Aid, a non-profit, non-denominational, humanitarian organization responds to requests for assistance from economically disadvantaged communities of Guatemala in ways that restore health and well-being to the people and the environment, promote cultural understanding, and preserve dignity.

A private charitable organization, Xela Aid receives no government funding. Team members pay their own expenses and fund projects by way of a project fee that each person contributes.

The good works of Xela Aid are made possible by the generous gifts of ordinary people who wish to do extraordinary good



work to make a living, volunteer, and go to school inspires me to do more in my privileged life.

"As I am studying to be a teacher, it moved me to tears to hear the words of Juana, the teacher of the study center at Xela Aid's Clinic. She said, "If one day I can help one child, just one, to learn something new and improve, that is all that matters." (Above, Meaghan with children from Xela Aid's Study Center)

Concluded Meaghan, "I can't wait to go back next summer!"

Thanks, too, to the balance of May/June trip volunteers not mentioned above for sticking it out and giving their all: **Kelsey Chesterfield, Mel Dinkel, Amy Logan** and **Janet Taylor** (Leslie Baer Dinkel, reporting).

Learn more about Xela Aid's Volunteer Vacations by clicking [here](#).



Coop member Fabiana demonstrates the ancient art of backstrap weaving.

WEAVERS THRILLED AT REFORMATION OF COOPERATIVE
Tesoros del Corazón are weaving for their children's future, and will soon have a storefront from which to sell

"By this we eat, by this we live," declared Luciana Vasquez, president of the newly formed "Cooperativo Tesoros del Corazon" (Treasures of the Heart Cooperative). For eight years, Xela Aid returned money to the women of its "El Nuevo Amanecer" (New Dawn) weaving cooperative. But due to lack of a coordinator, the 40-woman group disbanded in 2007.

The reformation of a Xela Aid weaving cooperative in San Martín Chiquito was made possible, in large part, by the interest and generosity of this year's volunteers who purchased more than \$1,000 of hand-loomed pieces of art from the women. The new cooperative hopes to fuel a U.S.-based business being

for others - people like you.

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launched by this year's volunteers **Kelsey Chesterfield** and **Kathy Logan**. A high-school senior, Kelsey - wanting to help the weavers whom she met on last year's DRI trip - presented the business as her senior project including a prototype of a purse line she hopes to market. Kathy - a friend of the family and retired marketing maven - signed on to the project which just produced its first prototype purse (*at right - look for this product to be available on Xela Aid's website soon!*).

In Guatemala, the Cooperative will function under the leadership of **Luciana Vasquez** supported by Xela Aid Director **Luis Enrique de León**. Luciana and Luis assembled 13 women who "wanted to work harmoniously in support of a better life for their children," Luciana said.

Xela Aid's Clinic sits along a road that many tourists travel to Chiquibal, a crater lake high in the mountains that is the site of sacred Mayan ceremonies. In other very exciting news, Xela Aid Volunteer Kathy Logan who was moved by the women of Tesoros, is in the process of designing a tienda for their special wares which has generously offered to fund. The store will be built in front of the Clinic along that well-traveled road next to Xela Aid's recently completed retaining wall.

Said Luciana, "Weaving is a gift our mothers gave us. We want to use it to help our children have the advantage that our parents could not give us - an education."

The Xela Aid directors thank Kathy for her generosity, Kelsey for her vision, and each of this year's volunteers who made purchases from the weavers.

Look for additional information about this exciting project on Xela Aid's website soon! (Bookmark soon-to-be-updated [Weavers Coop](#) page)



PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD BRING HOME THE BACON

Las Herosas propose to raise piglets to adulthood to augment income

The women of Las Herosas, a women's support group based at Xela Aid's Clinic, were prepared with a project idea when the organization's first summer volunteer group arrived in early June. They want to raise pigs.

After a pitch by the women, volunteer **Kathy Logan** offered to head up the endeavor building upon her experience in the village with last year's DRI group - as long as an expert is involved who can help ensure the success of the project.



"Last year, our DRI group did a chicken project - we built a henhouse, fenced in a coop area, and funded the purchase of chicks and feed. The project met with

limited success, but provided us with some insights into how to approach another project," she said.

"The proposed project we have begun referring to as the "pig" project, would provide each woman with a piglet. She would raise it to adulthood, and sell it at a profit...

"We've asked an expert to counsel us on the process to be certain that we're all clear on the economics and the time and money required to raise a healthy pig," Kathy continued. "We are committed, if the project does go forward, to keeping this expert involved on a monthly basis to help ensure the project's success."

Xela Aid Director **Luis Enrique de León** is currently following up on this proposal, and will soon send details along for review. The women, of course, are in *hog heaven* at the prospect.

Said Catarina, guardian for Xela Aid's Clinic and a member of Las Herosas, "My son can help raise the pigs. It will teach him a skill that he can use later, and bring us money for food and to help my children to each get to stay in school, like I wasn't able to do."

Have an interest in this project? Email [Leslie Baer Dinkel](#).

UPCOMING IN FUTURE ISSUES...

- Xela Aid's Second Summer Group Overview
- Dates and Itineraries for next year's Volunteer Vacations
- PEX Waiting List - Children available for Sponsorship

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