

¡Que Sepan!

October 2012 Newsletter
Santa Elena Project of Accompaniment



What an exciting time to be involved with SEPA!

Major SEPA projects

Education Scholarships and teacher support for residents of Santa Elena and Copal AA, Guatemala

Sponsorship of human rights accompaniers

Assistance with development projects in Santa Elena and Copal AA

Sponsorship of Oberlin College student Winter Term trip to Guatemala

Promoting awareness of Guatemalan human rights issues

August 2012 Trip to Guatemala

John Gates and Betsy Bruce recently returned from Santa Elena and Copal AA where they once again renewed SEPA's commitment to these returned refugee villages.

Good News from Santa Elena:

This summer saw the completion of an all weather (crushed rock) road to replace the path from Santa Elena to the national highway. This should also pave the way for electricity in the near future.

The road was completed in early September and Santa Elena celebrated! They welcomed people from 8 different communities, sponsored community soccer games, shared meals, and welcomed their enhanced ability to connect with the outer world.



While in Santa Elena, John Gates focused on planning for the upcoming Oberlin College Winter Term trip. He lined up Spanish language teachers and planned agricultural and other

education projects for the students who will spend 12 days in Santa Elena in January.

Copal AA:

John and Betsy's trip to Copal AA was especially meaningful to Betsy Bruce, a local Oberlin weaver. The weavers of Copal AA and Betsy shared techniques and patterns, and then Betsy and John had the opportunity to select and purchase samples of each weaver's work. The textiles are now on sale at the SEPA Oberlin Farmer's Market stand and other venues.



Over the past 6 months, in addition to supporting student scholarships and teacher stipends, SEPA has been able to meet the following requests:

- *Full funding of GAP Accompanier
- *1/3 of costs of soccer shirts for school teams in Santa Elena
- *1/3 of costs of the *Road Completion Party*
- *1/2 of costs for middle school typing certification fee in Copal AA
- *Field trip fees for students in Santa Elena.

SEPA Appreciation Dinner

The serenity of Oberlin's Common Ground retreat center was the backdrop for a festive Appreciation Dinner hosted by the SEPA Board to express thanks to many of the organization's dedicated supporters. Forty donors and volunteers gathered on Friday evening, September 7 in a candlelit setting to enjoy a buffet of favorite dishes cooked up by Board members.

Following dinner, guests heard from returned accompanier, Viviana Gentry, a recent Oberlin College graduate (OC '11) whose six-month term of service in the Guatemalan departments of Huehuetenango and San Marcos (October 2011-- May 2012) was sponsored by SEPA.

Gentry's illustrated presentation and powerful stories offered a better understanding of the political, economic and environmental struggles that many Guatemalans face in their daily lives, and provided insight into the intense and emotional work of being a human rights companioner. "I think you are very brave," quietly remarked one guest to Gentry as she concluded her



presentation. It was an inspirational and energizing evening as SEPA supporters were able to meet and connect with one another and appreciate their common commitment to make a difference in the lives of those serving and living in northwest Guatemala.

Annual Fund

In November all friends of SEPA will receive the annual fund appeal.

SEPA continues to enlarge its activities. Your financial support will help fund ongoing and ever-changing needs in Guatemala.

For example, last year, SEPA funded 18 scholarships for Santa Elena girls and boys to continue their education beyond 6th grade; this year 27 students have requested aid to help them attend middle school or high school. These scholarships provide about 75% of what is needed to continue their schooling, with the remaining costs covered by the students and their families.

This year's appeal goal is to raise \$10,000 by December 31, 2012, which makes up about one third of SEPA's annual budget.

Please be generous when you donate by check or online (www.obsepa.org)

Oberlin College Winter Term Trip 2013

The application form and itinerary for the January 3-26 Winter Term trip to Guatemala may be downloaded from SEPA's website: www.obsepa.org. John Gates will lead the trip, and 10 students will be selected from the applications received by October 19, 2012. Community members are also welcome to join the trip and should contact John Gates if interested: 440-774-5484.

2013 Calendars Available

NISGUA Guatemala Calendars

Bring in 2013 with this beautiful calendar designed by NISGUA's network of activists. With each purchase you support NISGUA's and SEPA's critical work for social justice, while enjoying truly powerful photos.

Each calendar features:



- * 12 stunning photographs
- * Scenes that reflects Guatemala's natural beauty, daily life, spirituality and human rights work
- * U.S. and Guatemalan holidays
- * Text in English and Spanish
- * Descriptions of Guatemala's culture and human rights struggles

Calendars may be purchased for \$15

Sold at SEPA's booth at the Oberlin Farmers Market

OR

Call Barbara @ 440-774-1804



Guatemala in the News

Guatemala has hundreds of little villages like Santa Elena and Copal AA and each one is influenced in some way by current political activities in the country. News from Guatemala doesn't often make the headlines, but the information is out there.

Stay up to date:

- Follow the live Google news feed on SEPA's website, www.obsepa.org.
- Subscribe to news updates @ www.nisgua.org.
- Learn about local workshops and solidarity action groups by reading about the InterReligious Task Force of Central America. <http://www.irtfcleveland.org>

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