

*Mary Anne Wise and Farmer to Farmer have been working closely with Susie Glanville in Santiago Atitlan on the Huipil Project in the Panabaj refugee camp. The project is Susie's brainchild. We thought you'd like to hear from Susie, so here is a letter from her. To date, we have sent down \$8,000. In November, Mary Anne Wise, Jody Slocum and B.J. Bobrowski will travel to Santiago Atitlan. We are excited to see the survivors' progress first hand. Watch the next issue for more on the trip and the project.*

## *Letter from Guatemala from Susie Glanville*



**top: Huipil Project class in session  
bottom: Susie with project participants**

I am a 20-year resident of Santiago. My husband and I have an established Inn about 10 minutes from the refugee camp in Panabaj. We have employed many Panabaj-Tzanchal residents over the years. But I had never worked closely and intimately with the women-until the mudslide (Hurricane Stan, 2005). Immediately after the mudslide, I knew I had to help them. I told my husband he would have to run the Inn without me. I could not turn my back on the survivors. I applied for and received grants of money or materials from Oxfam, Pueblo a Pueblo, Mary Spence, Catholic Groups, Save the Children and several private foundations.

The money bought looms and materials for 760 women so they could weave their traditional clothing. It is my belief this helped the survivors repair the broken threads of their lives. Through my daily work with the women I began to envision a long-range plan for sustainable income for them.

Based upon my successful administration of the Huipil Project, I received more grant money to initiate classes. Keep in mind, the women are all illiterate, and they have never been to school. Until my classes, they had never painted before. Many had never put pencil to paper. If you could observe my classes, even if you don't speak Spanish or a word of Tzu'tijil, I believe you could sense the women's joy from attending class.

My classes are open to all female heads of households in the Panabaj refugee camp. Participating in my classes has numerous benefits. The idea has been to work with women who want to expand their skill and knowledge base, and produce a greater variety of textiles which would be easier to sell. In turn, they are financially rewarded for their investment of time and energy. Participating in the program means we pay them for their work, and just as importantly, find markets for their textiles. This program only buys textiles from women who participate in my classes.

About 230 women have participated in my classes, but there is a core group of about 80 women who continue to take

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## **Farmer to Farmer**

is organized to build mutual friendship and cultural understanding among rural people so that we might better understand and accompany each other in our common struggles. We seek to promote peace within ourselves, within our community, and across international boundaries. We envision agriculture that is sustainable and respectful of the earth, and one that remains in the hands of the people who live on and work the land. We support grassroots agricultural projects that are democratically initiated and managed.

Always, our decisions about a project will be guided by the respect that characterizes the relationship between friends. As an organization, we affirm the sacredness of the earth and shall work for and respect the rights of all people and cultures to self-determination.

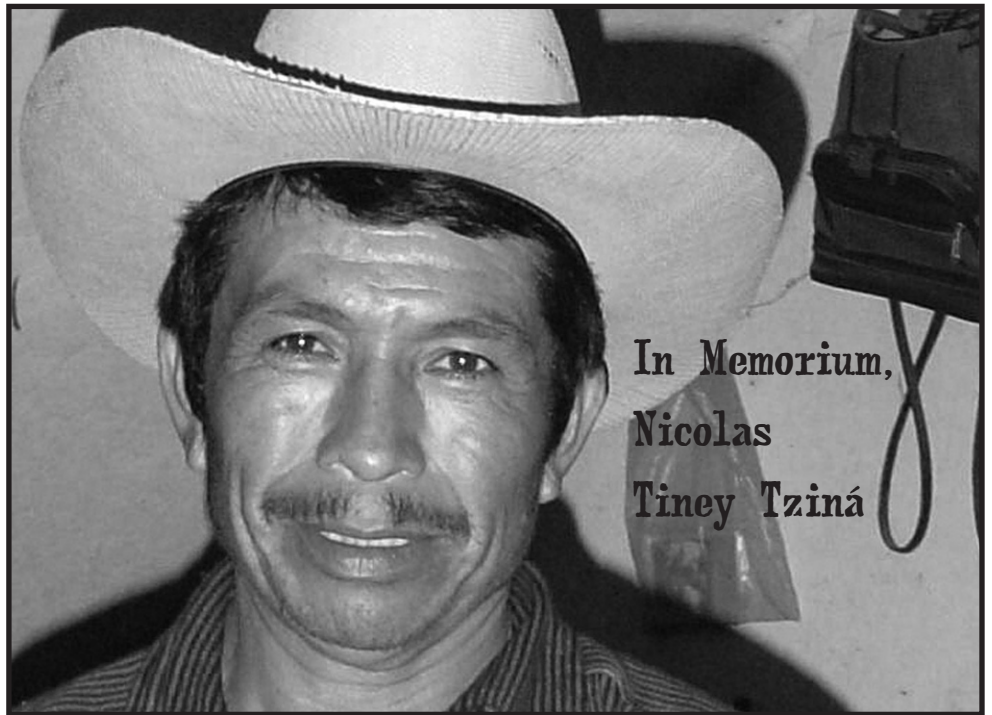
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## **Contact Information**

We're always pleased to hear from you. You can get in touch with us by mail at:

**Farmer to Farmer**  
**PO Box 303**  
**Glenwood City, WI 54013**  
or by e-mail at:  
**info@farmertofarmer.org**



**In Memorium,  
Nicolas  
Tiney Tziná**

We at Farmer to Farmer wish to honor compañero Nicolas Tiney Tziná, a member of the Comité de Tejedoras (the Weavers' group in Santiago Atitlan). Nicolas and his brother-in-law were assassinated July 31, 2007, on the shore of Lake Atitlan, Guatemala. Nicolas was a fisherman.

He left behind a wife and eight children. Nicolas was very active with our group, and was very much liked. He is well known for his wide smile. Many of us worked with Nicolas on the weavers workshop and have many memories of his laugh and smile. He was a wonderful person.

Farmer to Farmer member Roberta Popp, had just moved to Santiago Atitlan when the murder occurred. She was there to grieve with the families, offer support and represent Farmer to Farmer personally in this difficult time. Roberta was honored to say a few words at Nicolas' funeral, which was held at the weavers' workshop that we helped complete last January. Roberta estimates that nearly 3,000 mourners came to pay their respects.

Farmer to Farmer has given some support to help pay for the funeral and is now sending down money requested by the family to help Nicolas' daughter finish this year of school. We're looking into ways we can give the family more support. If you would like to give directly to the family, please send a check with a note asking that your donation go directly to Nicolas' family to: Farmer to Farmer, PO Box 303, Glenwood City, WI 54013.

This is the first time in the 15 years we have been working with the Weavers' Committee that there has been a murder, and we are all deeply saddened and shaken. It is our first personal contact with the current rise in violence in Guatemala, and greatly concerns us. According to Amnesty International, these killings are a systematic assault on indigenous communities, human rights activists and women in Guatemala. A Senate Resolution condemning the killing of women has been introduced by Senator Bingaman (D-NM). Please urge your Senators to cosponsor this important resolution. For more information about what's happening in Guatemala, go to Amnesty International's site at [www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org). Another organization that tracks human rights abuses, and their impact on women and families, is Madre ([www.madre.org](http://www.madre.org)).

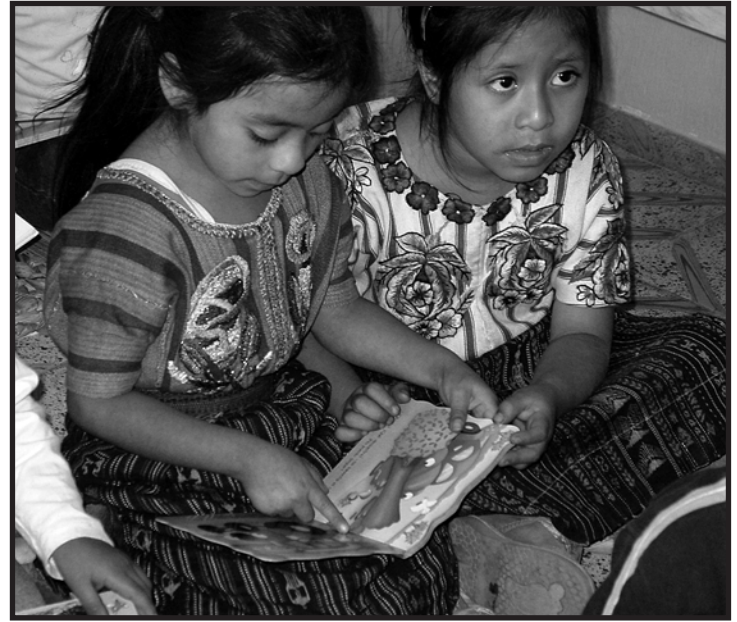
# CHILDREN'S LIBRARY OPENS ITS DOORS

A focus for Farmer to Farmer through the years has been education. We've supported individuals, as well as children's basic education for members of the Weaver's Committee, and the Huipil Project has an emphasis on education. So when we heard about a new children's library opening in Santiago Atitlan, we were happy to support it.

Forty-four percent of the Guatemalan population is illiterate, and this percentage is much higher in rural areas. Studies have shown a direct correlation between literacy and poverty. The hope is that teaching the children of Santiago to read will contribute to their quality of life .

"The Open Door Children's Library of Santiago Atitlan was designed to create a comfortable and inviting space for local children to explore literature, improve their reading skills and discover the joys of reading," says Amanda Flayer, cofounder of the library.

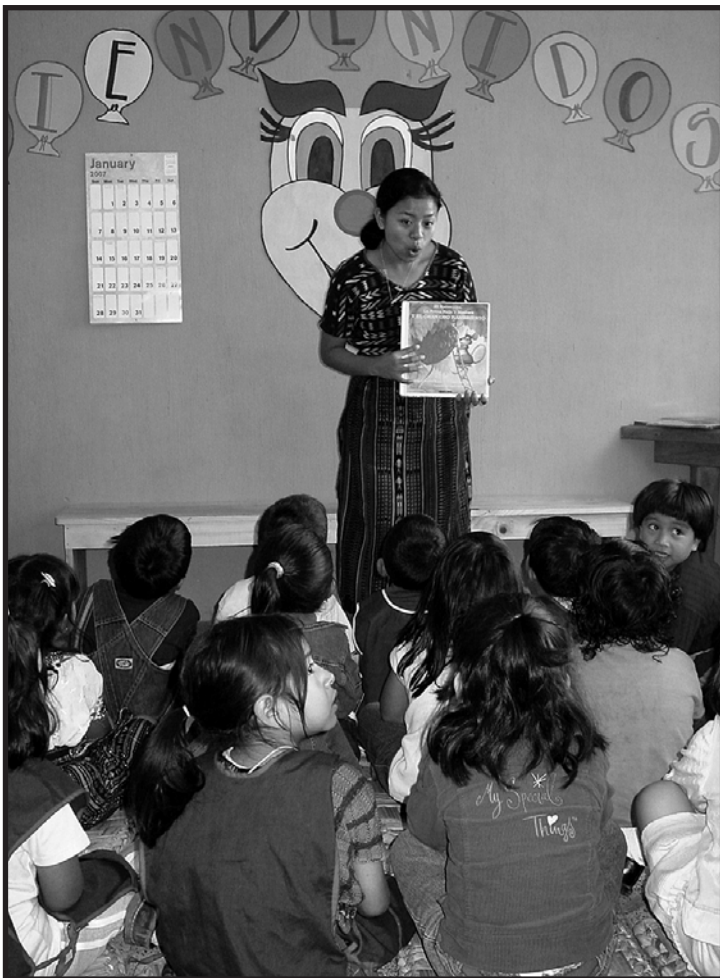
The Open Door Library was founded by Karen Hedrick, a retired California teacher, and Amanda Flayer, an educator from California who now lives in Santiago. Sharing the Dream, a non-profit organization based in South Dakota, also has been active in sponsoring the library throughout the past year.



Reading for fun is a habit which is often neglected and books are hard to find. The Children's Library is free and welcomes visitors of all ages. The center encourages alternative learning such as reading clubs, puppet shows, and story hours. The local staff not only works with children, but also hosts seminars for teachers to motivate them to integrate creative teaching styles into their daily curriculum. The reading center is open five days a week to the general public and welcomes individual and class visits.

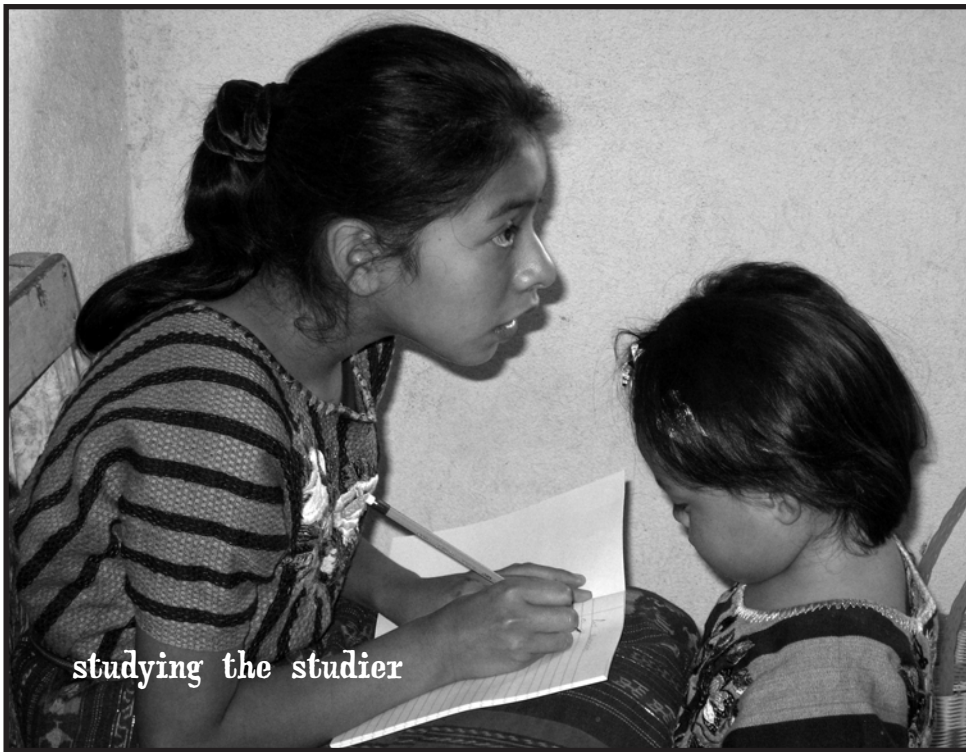
The children's library is funded completely by the generous donations of different individuals around the world who believe in our project. A \$15 donation can sponsor the transportation for two class visits to the library and a \$50 donation can pay for a part time librarian for one month. The library's wish list includes Spanish books for children, a computer, patio furniture for an outside reading area, and funding for internet.

For more information, please contact Amanda at the-[mandoo@yahoo.com](mailto:mandoo@yahoo.com). If you'd like Farmer to Farmer to provide more support for this project, please contact us.



**Story time at the new  
Open Door Children's Library in  
Santiago Atitlan.**

# On the Ground with Roberta



*Roberta Popp is exploring the option of having a Farmer to Farmer representative in Guatemala (see the article in the last issue of our newsletter). She's found a place to stay and is settling in. Here are some of her observations and activities.*

Every Saturday morning I teach English to about 20 children (children and grandchildren of Committee members), and every Saturday evening I teach about 5-10 Committee members words and phrases that will help in the store. Tuesday evening I teach a class on writing (several members wanted to learn how to write their and their children's names), and during that time we have a tutoring session for those who are having a hard time.

At the workshop, security bars are on one window, heavy-duty screening on the other (though they also wish to put security bars on this one). This was in response to a robbery; the shower fixtures in the bathroom were stolen, and pretty much everything else that wasn't firmly attached to the ground. Luckily, at that time, all merchandise was stored at Rosa and Francisco's house when the store wasn't open.

Windows were also recently installed for each room; they're very nice, and each one opens up for air circulation. Also, a new sink was installed

The garden looks great. Several weeks ago I bought a yellow rose for the Committee.

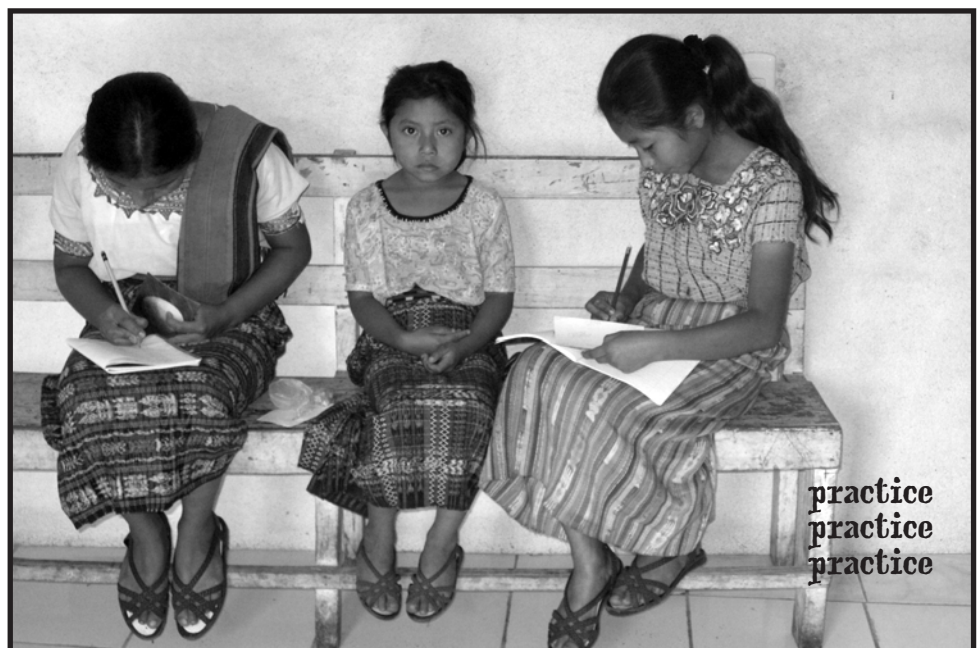
I printed 100 fliers with description and a map in both English and Spanish for the store. I will eventually make

posters with the same information, but am going to wait until they decide if they are going to make organizational changes. There will be a vote on this at the end of October, as well as elections for a new board of directors.

I'm also working on a price list and inventory, as well as producing price labels for the products in the store. The biggest challenge is getting people to work at the store when business is slow.

Within the next two months I hope to organize two workshops, one on cleanliness (an on-going problem both in the store and in people's homes) with the help of the Hospitalito, and one on business skills (with the help of Friendship Bridge). Amanda Flayer is helping me to obtain contact information. She's also placed a small order for weavings—what a great support!

I'd like to propose two long-term fundraising projects. One would be a fund to support education, at least at the basic level, for children and grandchildren of Committee members. Another would be a health fund so members can go to the Hospitalito without fearing the heavy costs they need to dish out for consultation and medications.



# What I Found in Guatemala

## The Fun Stuff by Jonas Popp

My wife, my daughter and I have been to Guatemala a number of times since our first visit in early 2002. Since getting involved with Farmer to Farmer, most of our recent trips have involved work on various projects, but we always take time to see the sights and enjoy this astonishing country. It occurred to me that others might be interested in some of the gems we have discovered along the way, so I decided to put pen to paper, so to speak, and share a few of our experiences and contacts with others.

One caveat: some changes occur extremely slowly in Guatemala, while other things change with the speed of lightening, so a good guide is a must. I especially like the *Lonely Planet's Guide to Guatemala*. It includes all sorts of interesting information about the country, including a brief history, places to visit, lodging ratings, and more.

Here are a few things learned the hard way:

1. When you arrange transportation through a travel agency, make sure you get a receipt and do not lose it. Even though you may be on someone's list to be picked up by the shuttle bus driver, if you don't have the receipt, you will have to pay again.

2. Whenever engaging the services of a guide, negotiate your price before you leave. This can eliminate a huge amount of unpleasantness.

Now for the good stuff.

We like to fly into Aurora Airport and take a shuttle directly to Antigua and spend a few days there before moving on to the Lake Atitlan area. Besides being a much nicer place than Guatemala City, Antigua is a great beginning for many excursions to other parts of the country.

Antigua can be a noisy place. If you want a quiet, inexpensive, clean and centrally located hotel in Antigua, Casa Christina is a personal favorite! It also has the most efficient and simple ventilation system I have ever seen. There are

some very clever builders in Guatemala.

A little forewarning: "agua caliente" does not necessarily mean the water in your hotel is hot. It can mean that hot water is available a few hours a day, or that lukewarm water is available on no known schedule, or it may mean that the water used to be hot, but not any more!

Take some time to sit in the Central Park of Antigua just to sit and see what happens. Wear sandals or tennis shoes if you don't want to be approached by any one of the numerous shoeshine vendors in the park.

You'll notice that many communities in Guatemala specialize in particular crafts. I took a ten-minute tuk-tuk trip to the little town of Pastores, known for its handmade and custom boots. I picked up a pair of very nice and comfortable handmade café colored cowboy boots for a little over \$30 U. S. While on my way back, I ducked into a local barbershop and got the most attentive and thorough haircut in my life.

Leaving Antigua, we head for Panajachel on Lake Atitlan, which is the usual jumping-off point for boat trips to the local communities around the lake. Our absolute favorite hotel in Pana is Hotel Utz-Jay on Calle 15 de Febrero 502-762-0217. They offer same day laundry service, a Mayan steam bath and a small outdoor restaurant for breakfast. The Jardine Deli at the foot of Calle Santander St. is a delightful place to go for breakfast and the Bombay Café, just up Calle Santander St. has fantastic vegetarian fare. Meat-eaters will not scoff at vegetarians again once they have eaten here!

It was in Pana that I had the great fortune to meet Humberto Samalaj Buch, the proprietor of Lago Aventura travel agency ([www.lagoaventura.com](http://www.lagoaventura.com)). For years I have wanted to climb Cerro del Oro (Hill of Gold), one of the smallest volcanoes around the Lake. I was wandering down

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\_\_\_ \$15    \_\_\_ \$25    \$ \_\_\_\_\_ other (extra donations appreciated)

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Farmer to Farmer is a 501(c)3. Your donations are tax-deductible.

## THE FUN STUFF, FROM PAGE 5

Calle 15 de Febrero looking for a travel agency when I found his place. I asked him if I could climb Cerro del Oro that day and he said to be back in 45 minutes. Expecting to find myself on a shuttle bus, I returned to find Humberto closing down his shop to guide me himself.

Humberto is a most engaging guide who speaks excellent English, and is very knowledgeable about the local customs and fauna. The two-hour hike up to the top was strenuous but well worth it. We passed many farm fields along the path up steep mountainside. At the top we were rewarded by fantastic views of Lake Atitlan and the surrounding towns. On the way back, we visited a local family living the old way, in a cornstalk hut with packed dirt floors. I purchased a hand woven fan and then it was back to Panajachel via chicken bus, an experience in itself. I will definitely be taking more trips with Humberto!

On to Santiago de Atitlan where the weaver's committee and workshop are located. Everybody recommends the Posada de Santiago ([www.posadadesantiago.com](http://www.posadadesantiago.com)), hosted by California ex-pats David and Susie (see cover story in this issue). The food is excellent, the accommodations are spectacular and comfortable, and this is one place where you *can* drink the water. The dining and reception area provides an excellent example of local stone masons' work. A soak in the hot tub overlooking Santiago bay and the formidable Volcan de San Pedro is an experience I will not soon forget.

Guatemala is a country that will grab you by the heart. I've described a few of the places and people that have had a long-lasting effect on me; this list could be expanded many times over. People in the same places and meeting the same people I have described here have had completely different experiences. That is one of the reasons I keep coming back to this complex, breathtakingly beautiful country.

## SOA Update

We are very excited that President Evo Morales announced that Bolivia will gradually withdraw its military from the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the School for the Americas (SOA). Bolivia is now the fifth country after Costa Rica, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela to formally announce a withdrawal from the school!

This is a great victory for torture survivors, social movement leaders and human rights activists of Bolivia and the Americas. The SOA/WHINSEC has played a significant role in Bolivia's recent political history, Hugo Banzer Suarez, who ruled Bolivia from 1971-1978 under a brutal military dictatorship, attended the school in 1956 and was later inducted into the school's "hall of fame" in 1988.

Come celebrate this amazing victory with us at the November 16-18 Vigil to Close the SOA/WHINSEC! To find out more about the Vigil, schedule of events, volunteering, travel suggestions and more visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org) and look under the events heading.



## Check This Out

Here's a link to an extraordinary couple who began a bicycling trip in the Arctic Circle in June 2006. Their destination is the bottom of South America. Right now, they're in Denver recuperating from whooping cough, but they were most recently in Guatemala. They've produced a small booklet on the work Friendship Bridge is doing there. They've got a very interesting blog with lots of photos.

[www.hobobiker.com](http://www.hobobiker.com)

[www.friendshipbridge.org](http://www.friendshipbridge.org)

# Letter from Guatemala, from page one

classes, and develop new designs. As other women in the camp see the advanced skills of my class participants, and see my participants getting paid for their work, we are slowly attracting more students.

I should tell you that part of the problem has been their disenfranchisement. Before the disaster hit, these women were already the poorest of the poor in this region and had the most social problems. They are the outcasts of Santiago.

Many aid organizations work in the region, but a big problem with many programs is that the people grow to expect that they will be given what they need, and that there is no end to the resources given to them without any obligation. They are used to handouts. When the handouts don't come, they withdraw emotionally, and some resort to stealing and violence. Because there



*I have seen the pride of the people, not just the women, but their husbands and their sons. The very ingredient is that they get work.*

is no work, people often sell what was given to them for the cash. They feel that mainstream society has abandoned them, and if they aren't given what they need, their only option is to steal.

They feel powerless, and lose the sense that they can create a better life with their minds and hands and they are left without the dignity and self-respect of having done so. I know this because I have witnessed it in the women. I have seen their self-esteem and confidence and sense of worth grow exponentially as they create a better life for themselves. I have seen the pride of the people, not just the women, but their husbands and their sons. The key ingredient is that they get work.

I am proud of something else we are doing in the camp. In addition to the classes and paying the women for their work, we have researched forgotten textile patterns and techniques, and have found people to teach them. We now have a catalog of 130 designs that qualify for reproduction. Although most of the women would be content to let me continue to orchestrate the classes, find markets, and dole out the money for their textile work, I cannot fulfill this role indefinitely. After careful consideration I came to the conclusion we need to form an Association.

Just as most of the women have never put pencil to paper, they have little experience participating in a demo-

cratic organization. Slowly, very slowly, I have built trust—not just with me, but also within the group itself. We have elected representatives to speak for the group in our decision-making process. Even voicing their opinion in a group is a major step for some of the women.

Currently, there are seven elected representatives that form the “junta” and another 13-17 participating representatives of the sub-groups. The junta makes decisions about classes and other issues for the entire group. From the junta, we have elected three women, me and two others, whose names must be signed on all checks. I've hired a bookkeeper who does monthly accounting, and all of this information is out in the open, available to all the women at our monthly meetings, and to the entire community of Santiago Atitlan.

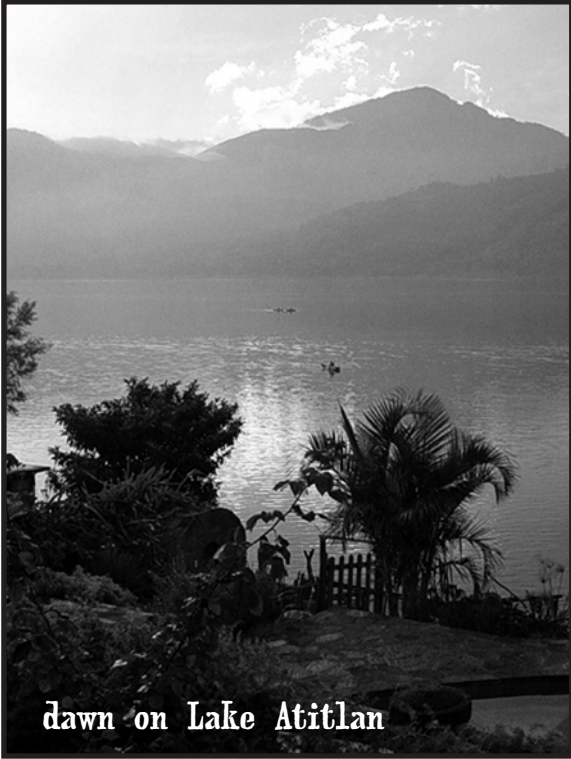
Sometimes there is jealousy, or

a rumor starts that so-and-so received more money for her work, so we also air grievances at these meetings. This has built trust in the group process.

When Mary Anne Wise, whom I met through Jody of Farmer to Farmer, first came to me with the trunk show fundraising idea, I thought I wanted the proceeds to pay the women a stipend so they could afford to stay in my classes. Through consultation with Oxfam, I realized this was a mistake. The incentive to participate in classes had to originate with the survivors. We then decided to use the trunk show funds to supply the women a grant of yarn so they could continue their artistry. But a year later, and a world of experience in working with the women, tells me the money is better spent to expand the project: continue my classes, develop the association, find markets, and pay the women with a focus on sustainability. In addition, my classes supply the women the materials to weave their products.

The response to my classes tells me these women yearn for knowledge, that they are positively hungry to learn. They never dreamed they would have this opportunity. The plan has evolved slowly, maybe more slowly than you envisioned. I have also come to this slowly, but given everything I've learned in my two years in the camp, I am now confident this path is the right direction. I look forward to your continued support and interest.

# JOIN FARMER TO FARMER AS WE RETURN AGAIN TO EXPERIENCE GUATEMALA



dawn on Lake Atitlan

Our trip to Guatemala this year will be from January 12 to 21, 2008. An optional language school is available the week before, from January 6 to 11.

The majority of our days will be in Santiago Atitlan, where we'll meet and reconnect with the weavers group and learn more about their way of life. *Farmer-to-Farmer* has been connected with this group of weavers for over a decade and we invite you to join in this relationship!

There will also be daily volunteer and learning opportunities at the local hospital, the library that Farmer to Farmer is supporting, the coffee fields and the refugee camp that was established after the mudslides wiped out a section of this town several years ago. We will connect with other organizations working in the area, such as *Sharing the Dream* and *Pueblo a Pueblo*.

Of course, we'll visit historically and culturally significant locations like the ancient ruins and colonial churches of Antigua, and the Chichicastenango market, world-famous for its array of beautiful work by Mayan artisans.

This is an opportunity to immerse yourself in the daily life and culture of Guatemala. The trip may at times be difficult, and at other times relaxing. Lake Atitlan is beautiful and the weather will be warm. Take a leap and come with us!

The group will meet either at the airport or in Antigua (by way of an arranged transport) on January 12, 2008. We will spend a night in

Antigua and then go together to Santiago Atitlan. There are several Spanish schools in Antigua if you wish to come early, but the recommended school is APPE. Check them out at [www.appeschool.com](http://www.appeschool.com).

Trip Costs: Airfare generally runs between \$500 and \$600. In-country expenses (lodging, meals, travel) range from \$25 to \$60 a day...depending on your lodging needs and standard of travel. Spanish school (optional) including lodging and meals would cost around \$200 for the week. A voluntary suggested donation (if you are able) of \$150 would help cover Farmer to Farmer's organizational costs for this trip. Partial scholarships are available for students and first-timers to Guatemala, if you apply early! We need letters of application by November 10, 2008.

Please contact Erin Altemus, trip coordinator, to join the trip at 715-265-4014 or by email at [ealtemus@hotmail.com](mailto:ealtemus@hotmail.com).

## FARMER to FARMER

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Glenwood City, WI 54013

[www.farmertofarmer.org](http://www.farmertofarmer.org)

**THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE.**