

From Heart to Hand

The Next Chapter in the Huipil Project Story

by MaryAnne Wise



photos, top to bottom:

Lynn Barnhouse & Mary Anne Wise, taking a break during the installation of the trunk show

Trunk Show Co-Sponsors: Carol Belz, Stephanie Odegard, Tom Gunkelman (Not pictured: Lynn Barnhouse, Jody Slocum, BJ Bobowski, Mary Anne Wise)

Phoebe Nyen & Jan Stunkard survey the final install as Meg Singh, Odegard staff member, fields a telephone inquiry about the trunk show (the phone was ringing off the hook).

I'd like to thank everyone who attended the Trunk Show in April. I'd never produced a fundraising event before. At times I thought I would fall off the learning curve. And more than once, I woke up in the middle of the night, second-guessing myself, wondering, "what was I thinking???"

It was the fifty people who volunteered their time and expertise that made the event a success. (Their names are listed below). When self-doubts clouded my mind, their enthusiasm kept me going.

There are many, many stories of generosity surrounding the trunk show. This newsletter would have to print several extra pages if I told all of the stories. But I will tell one story that characterizes the kindness and generosity surrounding this event.

It was two o'clock on the afternoon of the last day of the three-day long sale. By now, everyone working the show was feeling simultaneously exhausted yet thrilled with our obvious success: out of nearly 450 textiles, only 30 were left.

I walked a childhood friend I hadn't seen for 20 years. She had seen the article Rick Nelson wrote in the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune* and the article jarred her memory. Years ago she collected Guatemalan textiles. Most of her collection became pillows, or curtains, or were given away. One piece was "too pretty" to cut up and she hung on to it. Eventually it was buried deep in a closet. But Rick's article gave her an idea. She dug out the pretty textile and brought it down to the trunk show. She wanted to donate the piece, provided I thought it

was good enough for our collection.

I was skeptical. Well. Out of a brown paper bag she pulled the most gorgeous Aquas Caliente huipil I'd ever seen. Stunning. I was momentarily speechless. I'm not an expert, but I felt confident the huipil was museum quality. I told her she'd get a nice tax write-off if she donated it to a museum. She didn't want that. She wanted the money to go back to the women in Guatemala.

I put \$1200 on the huipil but I was doubtful we could sell the piece; the show was almost over. I mentally began a list in my mind of people who might be interested. I would phone those people in a day or two, after I'd had a chance to recuperate. As my mind was drawing up a list, a collector walked in. We said our hellos and she joked with me, saying she'd delayed coming to the show until the very end hoping nothing would be left to tempt her. The collector bought the huipil. I later learned my childhood friend is facing breast cancer.

The net profit from the show was \$30,400. In combination with donations from Mary Anne's slide show presentations and Farmer to Farmer newsletters, we have \$37,500 to put into this project.

Both Jody Slocum and I are committed to making sure the plan is sound and the money is well spent. We're in steady contact with Susie Glanville, who works with the weaver survivors in the Panabaj refugee camp. The three of us are working on the financial plan for the trunk show proceeds. It is an extraordinary opportunity.

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

Letter from Guatemala

June 4, 2007

Esteemed Brothers & Sisters in Solidarity of Farmer to Farmer,

Greetings to each and every one of you. By this means we wish to inform and thank you for your support.

1. Many thanks for supporting our agriculture.
2. Many thanks for supporting our construction.
3. Many thanks for the new Artisans workshop.
4. Many thanks for supporting our students with scholarships.
5. Many thanks for windows and doors of to quality for the workshop.
6. Many thanks for the recent money we received for the doors of the rooms.

Today the Cedar doors of three rooms were installed and tomorrow three more will be installed. They are well finished and adjusted. We will send you a photo. We only are lacking the windows, but the carpenter will try to do it later. It costs a lot to find wood of top quality, but it should be delivered to us within a week because we need to dry it well. We are very proud and you also should feel proud.

As usual in Atitlan, on the 22nd of May it began to rain and is raining every day, which is good for the crops.

Again we thank you for the top quality doors. The windows we will wait a bit longer for the wood to dry. We thank everyone personally that accompanied us in working on the rooms in January 2006, especially thanks to Andy and to all.

Jeronimo, the husband of Dalila is installing wiring of the lights. He will finish this week. It already seems really nice.

We now have one bathroom but only one stall, which we will use as "unisex". We are very content.

Greetings to all and thank-you for your effort,

Francisco Esquina for the Committee of Development of Weavers

Farmer to Farmer Member Runs for Senate

Longtime Farmer to Farmer friend and peace and justice activist Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer is seeking the DFL nomination for U.S. Senate in Minnesota. Jack is native to the Twin Cities area and is currently Assistant Professor of Peace & Justice Studies at St. Thomas University. Jack's book titles include *Hunger for Justice*, *School of the Assassins*, and his latest is *Saving Christianity from Empire*. His website is www.mostimportantdecade.com.

In Jack's words, "Many of us are frustrated by the invisible wall that seems to separate us from elected officials and by the corrosive influence of money in politics. At the heart of a people's campaign is the view that politics is most effective when politicians emerge from and are accountable to citizen-based movements. I am humbled by the amazing people who are encouraging me to run for Senate. Let's partner together and revitalize our democracy by building an effective people's campaign to face the pressing issues and embrace the opportunities of this most important decade."

**Send us your inspiring, your interesting,
your commentaries on the news. We'll
put them in the newsletter.**

Some News from Craig Adams

Costa Rica to Cease Police Training at the SOA/WHINSEC!

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias announced on May 16, 2007 that Costa Rica will cease to send police to train at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly the School of the Americas).

Arias, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, made the decision after talks with an SOA Watch delegation, including the Rev. Roy Bourgeois, founder of SOA Watch.

Costa Rica is the fourth country to announce a withdrawal from the SOA/WHINSEC, joining Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela.

SOA/WHINSEC Survives by a Six Vote Margin in Congress

On Thursday, June 21 at 11:52 pm, Congress defeated the McGovern/Lewis amendment to cut the funding for the SOA/WHINSEC by a margin of only six votes, the smallest margin in its history.

The grassroots mobilizing effort was tremendous: tens of thousands of emails, faxes and calls flooded the halls of Congress. Still, 214 Members of Congress missed the chance to stand up for human rights, justice and democracy.

Wisconsin Congressmen Kind and Obey stood up for human rights by voting to shut SOA/WHINSEC down.

You can get more details and a listing of upcoming events at www.soaw.org.

Time is Now for Guatemalan Congress to Ratify UN-backed Commission Against Impunity

The Guatemalan Congress must ratify the new International Commission Against Impunity (CICIG) if the country is to tackle clandestine criminal groups.

Once approved by the Guatemalan Congress, the UN-sponsored CICIG will act in support of the Public Prosecutor's Office, suggesting methods of investigation and presenting evidence.

The term "clandestine groups" has been used to refer to criminal networks involving the business sector, private security companies, common criminals and gang members, as well as members of the police and armed forces, some implicated in past human rights abuses. These groups are probably responsible for an increase in violence against human-rights defenders—over 300 last year in Guatemala.

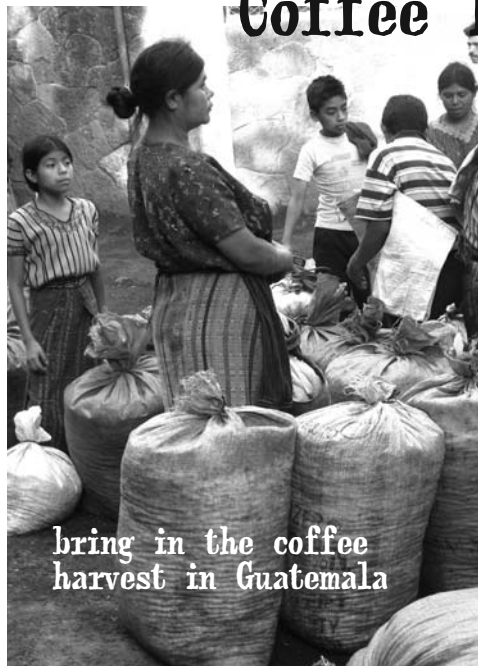
It's been over three years since this proposal was initiated. The longer action is delayed, the more entrenched criminal networks become in state institutions and the more difficult it becomes to reform the system.

Join the Guatemalan human rights defenders in calling for the Guatemalan Congress to approve the commission now. Please send a letter to Guatemalan lawmakers in support of this commission!

An e-mail letter can be sent directly from the website: www.humanrightsfirst.org.

Roberta on the Ground

Farmer to Farmer has decided to sponsor activist Roberta Popp, the daughter of Board President, Nancy Keith-Popp. Roberta is a recent graduate of UW-Stevens Point and will work on various projects in the Santiago Atitlan area, home of the Weavers' Development Committee. She will assess the feasibility of several different projects including honeybees, a tree nursery, coffee certification, and ongoing Panbaj refugee needs. She will also do much of the legwork to set up the annual Farmer to Farmer delegation to Santiago in January.



Coffee Project Update

The coffee program is continuing steadily. We are working on the details of our 2008 shipment of coffee from San Lucas Toliman due to arrive in early August. We are seeing an increase in competition from other fair trade coffee groups and are realizing that we need to continue to look for more markets for our beans. If you have any ideas, please email us at info@farmertofarmer.org

bring in the coffee harvest in Guatemala

The Power of a Genuine Smile

by Emmet Fisher

Before I went to Guatemala, multiple people asked me how well I thought I'd do seeing real poverty, or asked if I was "prepared" to "deal" with it. When I was 11 I went to a border town in Mexico, and seeing the beggars there made me cry. I had to swallow hard at 16 when we passed by the rows of cardboard shanties along the commuter rail from Paris to Charles De Gaulle airport. So, I expected to be strongly influenced by poverty in Guatemala; I expected to have to consciously "deal" with it.

Perhaps one of the things that surprised me most about the trip, then, was that I never felt at all overwhelmed by the poverty, although we certainly saw enough of it. Maybe this had to do with the happiness of the Guatemalan people, impoverished or not.

What I didn't anticipate was the sadness of coming home to all the luxuries after getting a taste for how simply people can live.

I went on the Farmer to Farmer trip to Guatemala in January. We went to language school for a week in the historic city of Antigua and then went to work with pre-schoolers in the Panabaj refugee camp just outside of Santiago Atitlan.

I think the most important things I came

away from Guatemala with were confirmations of things I've always believed. I've always believed that one person can make a difference in the world and saw solid proof of it when our group went to see the Dump Project in Guatemala City. Hanley Denning of Maine started the project on her own in 1999; now the project has nearly six hundred children from the streets of Guatemala City in their schooling program.

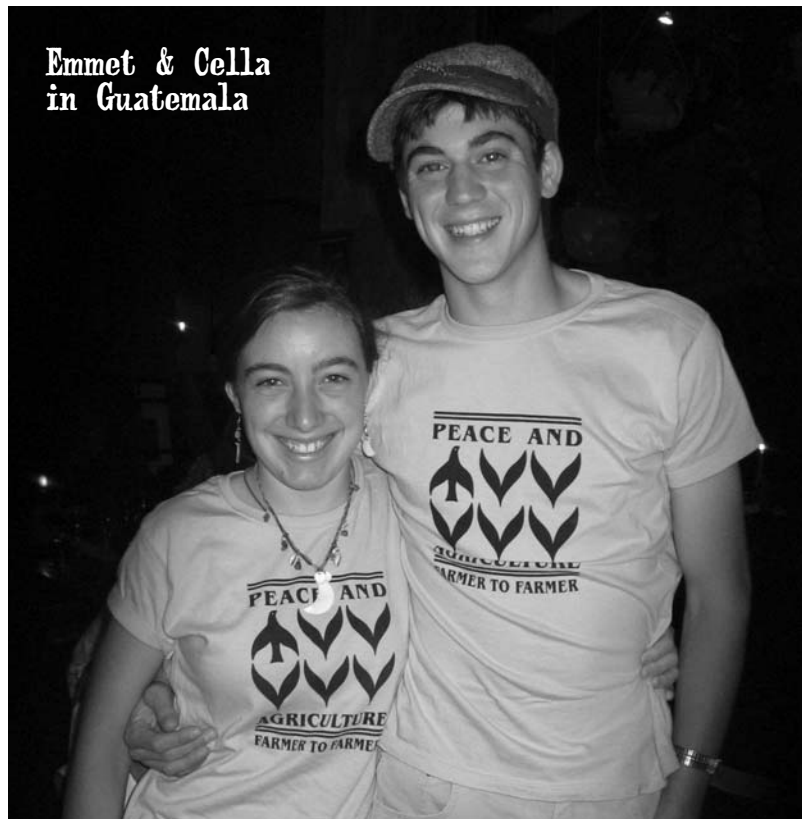
Having been raised in a more simple lifestyle than many here in the U.S., I have also always believed that in many ways people who lead the simplest lives might well be the happiest.

Despite their complete poverty, the Guatemalan people on the whole gave off a very strong sense of happiness and seemed to show that they were enjoy-

ing life in a way that I wasn't used too. That people can be so happy living such mundane lives—sitting by a roadside stand or at a loom all day long—was one of the biggest eye-openers for me.

Finally, I have always been a strong believer in the power of smiles; of being open and friendly with people. This was especially helpful in surmounting the language barrier in Guatemala. At the refugee camp, where the kids spoke their native tongue and knew about as much Spanish as me, (not much) we communicated by smiles. I think my friendliness has never been so rewarded with equally genuine and strong friendliness as it was by the people of Guatemala.

My trip to Guatemala in January opened my eyes to many different forms of life and culture. It was a wonderful traveling experience for me because I felt I was doing something worthwhile in working with the refugee camp kids. But the solid confirmations of things I've always believed are the things from the trip that will stay with me. Confirmations of my beliefs in the happiness to be gained from a simple lifestyle, the difference one person can make, and the power of open spirits and a genuine smile.



Emmet & Cella
in Guatemala

This is one of a series of articles by young people who participated in the January 2007 trip to Guatemala. To read back issues of this newsletter, go to farmertofarmer.org.

From Heart to Hand, continued from the cover

Exactly one year ago I came home from Guatemala after touring the heartbreaking mudslide fields of Panabaj. I had no intention of becoming an international volunteer, let alone a fundraiser. Once home, something happened to me, I'm still trying to figure it out. The trunk show was an opportunity to help others- but in so doing, I was energized, I learned a lot, my world expanded and my heart grew. Thank you.

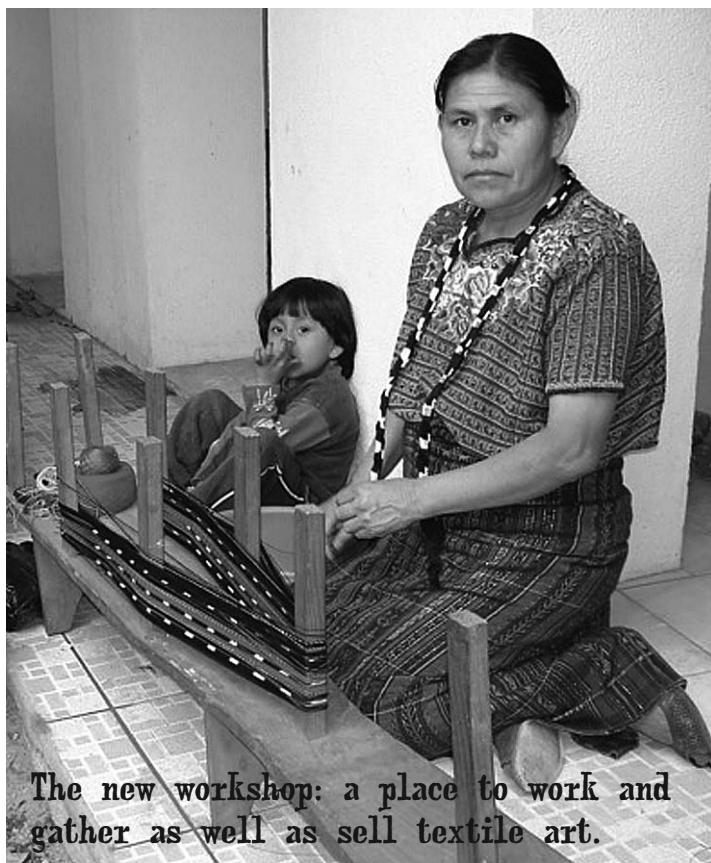
Truly, Mary Anne Wise

p.s. Stay tuned! We're beginning to plan a second trunk show, tentatively scheduled for April '08

Our Thanks to the Volunteers That Made the Trunk Show a Great Success!

Jean Accola
Carol Belz
Kim Birks
Barabara Bobrowski
Midge Bolt
Burnie Bridge
Mary Ellen Buscher
Lynn Barnhouse
Lorna Call
Pat Carlson
Linda Coffey
Terry Cuddy
John Danneker/Pine Creek
Woodworking
Riana deRaad
Stephan Freathy
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The new workshop: a place to work and gather as well as sell textile art.

Please consider joining Farmer to Farmer.

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Send to Farmer to Farmer, PO Box 303, Glenwood City, WI 54013.

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

Unexpected Problems Close Refugee Camp Preschool

June was the sixth month of the preschool classes, sponsored by Farmer to Farmer in the Panabaj refugee camp. The children and the parents were enjoying the morning activities. It was a nice reprieve from day to day life in the camp. Mandy Flayer, from the nonprofit Sharing the Dream, was working with us overseeing the teachers. She met with the five teachers biweekly to talk about how the classes were going and distribute their pay. In mid-June I received an email asking me to call her right away.

Mandy told me that the teachers had just met with her and were very distraught. Daniel, the head teacher, had received a note threatening his life and demanding a large amount of money. The note appeared in the classroom and was signed by a group calling themselves the Committee for Social Cleansing. This group had just claimed responsibility for murdering a

Mayan healer in Santiago Atitlan. It's unclear whether the threat was really from this group, but it was not to be taken lightly.

Daniel went onto explain that in the refugee camp there was growing hostility toward him; people were starting to gossip about his receiving pay for teaching and where that money was coming from. The situation in the refugee camp has been deteriorating in the past few months. It isn't hard to imagine this considering that the people have been living in this stressful environment for almost three years. The poverty is overwhelming, the conditions are cramped and there is a high level of distrust.

So after consulting the elders in the church, Daniel and the other teachers decided to close the doors of the preschool. It wasn't worth the risk. The teachers are now working with preschoolers at a school in town.

We are reminded that when a group from the outside of a community gets involved there will be unforeseen consequences. We at Farmer to Farmer have always made our decisions with this in mind; there were extensive discussions before we began supporting the classes. The board felt it was a place where we could offer real help to families in the refugee camp.

We had an impact, alright, but it wasn't all what we'd hoped for. We are saddened that it had to end so abruptly. We are still talking to Mandy and now Roberta Popp will be down in Santiago and she can survey the situation more closely and help Farmer to Farmer determine how and if we want to try to continue some program in the refugee camp.

Submitted by Jody Slocum.

"There's no turning back. We will win. We are winning because ours is a revolution of mind and heart."

+César Chávez

Next Issue: Details on the January 2008 trip to Guatemala! Watch the website.

FARMER to FARMER

PO Box 303
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www.farmertofarmer.org

THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE.