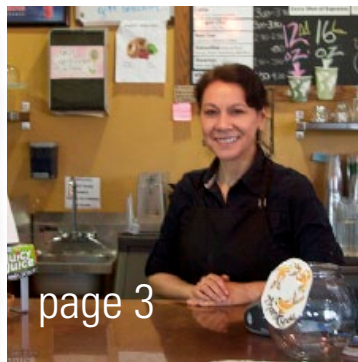


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Growing Community at the Dunn County Jail Garden *by Trevor Peterson*

When I was taking a short course in calculus during my college days, my professor presented us with a problem. He gave us the rate of growth for the U.S. total population and the rate of growth for the U.S. prison population.

He challenged us to find the year in which every person in the U.S. would be imprisoned. I arrived at the answer during that class period. I correctly projected a U.S. prison-state within my lifetime. While this exercise was meant to teach some principles of mathematics, the lasting lesson for me was the absurdity of prison growth in my county. Its rapid swelling would one day overtake the rate that we were populating our country. And, even before that moment, the number of people going through our correctional facilities would surpass the number going through our educational system: more folks with a rap sheet than a high school diploma. That's the course we're taking. What is one to do?

In the face of the unpleasant reality of a skyrocketing prison population – over 7 million under correctional supervision (prison, parole or probation) in 2009 according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice

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Trevor curing squash from the jail garden.

Women's Work in Guatemala *by Jody Slocum*

Every now and then it's possible to step outside of our daily life and experiences and see the world through somebody else's eyes. Last September, three Maya women from Guatemala travelled to Downsville, Wisconsin, to talk about their art and their lives, giving us that opportunity.

Rosa Garcia, Yolanda Calgua and Lucia Chavez are leaders in their communities. They were chosen to represent the more than 400 women involved with Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads), a women's empowerment organization based in Panajachel, Guatemala, on a tour of Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The tour included attendance at an invitational Hooked Rug Exhibition featuring ten rugs crafted by women of Thirteen Threads. They travelled with Ramona Kirchenmen, the director of Thirteen Threads (learn more about this excellent organization at thirteenthreads.org.) The trip was made possible by a grant from the Delta Foundation.

Dressed in brightly colored traditional clothing, each woman introduced herself in Quiche, their Mayan language, and English,

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Yolanda, Lucia and Rosa

Friendship and cultural understanding among rural people...



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

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We're always pleased to hear from you!

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School Scholarships Continue

by Jody Slocum

The importance of education can't be overstated in Guatemala. Every parent hopes for a better life for their children and talks about school being the most important key to that better life.



Sheny Esquina

In January we will give out our biannual scholarships to the 24 students, children of the Weaver's Committee in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, thanks to the financial

support from our members.

One of our oldest students Sheny Esquina, will be graduating as a lawyer in 2012! Sheny's father ended school in the 6th grade and her mother never went to school. Sheny's brother and sister also attend San Carlos University. Her graduation as a woman Maya lawyer will be a huge accomplishment. I asked her to briefly talk about the importance

of education and the Farmer to Farmer scholarships.

Why did you want to continue your education?

In Guatemala in order to excel you have to have higher education. Today even with an education it is hard to find work. School helps us to be better prepared for life and have more opportunities.

How does your Farmer to Farmer scholarship help you?

It costs a lot to go to school, especially to attend the university. All of us university students have to work while going to school but the F2F scholarship helps and I am very grateful for that help.

What do you like about going to school?

I like many things. Everyday I learn more things. I like getting to know other people, my friends, and learning more about Guatemala and other countries.

Thanks Farmer to Farmer for your help! - Sheny



Scholarship Sisters

Jail Garden . . .

Continued from page 1

Statistics – one can try to scrape together some positive residuals.

Well, it takes more than one; actually, it takes a whole bunch of volunteers to turn these statistics into a positive outcome.

Here in Menomonie, at the Dunn County Jail, a slew of services are offered to the inmates, including creative writing, GED education, Alcoholics Anonymous, anger management and most recently, a jail garden.

My involvement with programming at the Dunn County Jail began this year when I joined a team of community members working with inmates in a patch of garden behind the jail facility. This was the second garden season at the jail and the program was still malleable, ready for each volunteer to make their mark.

So, we – Claudia, Bill, Diane, Rose, Judith, Arthur, and I with the blessing of jail staffers, Sherry and Dale – set out to lead the inmates in growing a vegetable garden.

We started with the soil, because without healthy soil, there can be no healthy plants. Two composting operations drive our healthy soil campaign. The first is a small compost bin made of an eight foot section of fence encircling a pile of kitchen scraps, garden refuse and yard waste. This pile is used to process the excess from the jail kitchen and teach composting to the inmates.

The second operation is much larger. Loads of straw and manure are trucked in after the Dunn County Fair each year, fashioned into rows, and maintained with tractors loaned from a supplier up the road. These rows of compost are the key to enriching the soil and increasing the yield from the garden.

Making our jobs as volunteer coordinators breezier were a few committed inmates that took a liking to garden work. Al, Greg, and Bob took advantage of the opportunity to work outdoors, in the

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Golden Leaf Cafe - Serving Farmer to Farmer Coffee

by Mimi French

I am constantly reminded as to how lucky I am to be involved with Farmer to Farmer. Today was another example as I visited with Elena Hines, the owner of one of Menomonie's gems.

Her establishment, the Golden Leaf Cafe, serves up some of the tastiest coffees and edibles around, and as she shared with me, “the quality of the coffee is part of what makes the customers return.” Elena serves Farmer to Farmer coffee, along with two other fair trade varieties. “All three sources for coffee have wonderful causes behind them.”

Elena spent her early years growing up in Ecuador, before moving to the United States twenty-seven years ago. She is very in tune with the importance of groups like Farmer to Farmer, and appreciates the approach our organization uses in connecting with countries like Guatemala and Honduras. We are all learning and working together, opposed to trying to go in and change communities. She knows how much care goes in to the growing and harvesting of the coffee. She tells her customers that the coffee the Golden Leaf serves, comes from “Pure Love.” Elena and I also discussed her passion towards helping the women in these cultures, and we were both pleased with the connections Farmer to Farmer has made with the women’s co-op in Central America.

I encourage people to visit the Golden Leaf Cafe where Elena has been the owner for three and a half years. She is serving up an eclectic lunch menu, combining flavors of Italian, German and Spanish influences. Then to round it all out, the cafe is baking their own Artisan breads that are made of the finest ingredients, and again, made with love. I can personally vouch for their delectability!

With places like this, it’s easy to do our part in working towards change. We support the cafe that is purchasing coffee from Farmer to Farmer. Our organization is then able to work with our friends in communities in Guatemala and Honduras, and together we continue to make the world a better place.

Golden Leaf Cafe
1706 Stout Rd Menomonie, WI 54751
ph (715) 231-5323
website: goldenleafcafe.com



Elena Hines, Owner - Golden Leaf Cafe

Land and Justice Today in Guatemala

by Jody Slocum

When we first visited Guatemala in 1992 and started our working friendship with the Weaver's Committee of Santiago Atitlan, the members spoke of the importance of Farmer to Farmer as an international connection and a voice they could count on if violence and injustices were inflicted on their community again.

Over the years we've written letters to congressional representatives, to the local leaders in their Guatemalan communities and to the ambassador of Guatemala. The security that our involvement, this international voice, gave to the Tzu'tujul Maya families was surprisingly important and effective. With the terrible civil war and the direct U.S. involvement, we felt it was a small thing we can do for these innocent, powerless people.

I have heard about the forced evictions of villages in Guatemala located in areas that mining companies and other businesses plan to take over, but I hadn't given it much thought. With our Farmer to Farmer work in Guatemala we find plenty of issues facing the Maya people we work with directly, so it's easy to block out these reports of human rights problems in other parts of the country.

But recently I heard first-hand accounts when I attended a presentation at Macalester College, at a presentation by Maria Cuc Choc, sponsored by the Guatemala Human Rights Commission's (GHRC). Maria is a Q'eqchi' Maya human rights leader, and works with indigenous farming communities to organize against the encroaching threat of illegal land-grabs and forced evictions by large landowners and international mining companies.

She began by saying, "My work is to educate women to organize, resist and denounce the human rights abuses being inflicted on our communities." Maria's family is involved in this human rights work and they've been targeted for this work. In 2009, her brother-in-law was killed by security guards belonging to the nickel mining company CGN-Hudbay. Her brother Ramiro Choc is one of Guatemala's most high-profile political prisoners.

Maria presented alongside the director of GHRC, Kelsey-Alford Jones. Their talk focused on communities in the Polochic Valley and in El Estor, Izabal northeastern Guatemala that are being displaced by biofuel and nickel-mining companies. Last March fourteen communities were violently evicted to make way for export agribusiness production of biofuels. Maria showed photos of the military police and security guards of the companies working together to evict the villagers, burn their homes, and destroy their cornfields, forcibly pushing the families off their land. These families have nowhere to go and their historical and ancestral rights to the land are ignored.

Maria's personal stories, with explicit photos, left me filled with a mixture of horror, sadness and

outrage. How could this be happening after the Peace Accords were signed in 1996? Wasn't this type of injustice ended then?

Kelsey also spoke of the newly elected president, Otto Pérez Molina, a former military leader accused of taking part in massacres during the civil war. He fears that the violence and human rights abuses targeted on the Maya population will increase. We are entering a very uncertain time in Guatemala that calls for our involvement once again. I left feeling that we must speak for those people whose voices are being ignored.

From the GHRC website here is what we can do:

1. Tell the Guatemalan government to protect the communities in the Polochic Valley. At this webpage you'll find more information: salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2690/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=8522
2. Contact your U.S. representatives and ask them to:

- Urge the Guatemalan government to fully implement the Peace Accords, including special attention to issues of indigenous land rights.
- Provide ongoing support to strengthen the Attorney General's Office, particularly the unit devoted to human rights cases, justice sector reform, and the Interior Ministry, as well as ongoing support for the UN-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).
- Continue the ban on military funds for Guatemala maintained by the U.S. Congress.
- Support national policies that focus on prevention which include civil society participation, with a focus on regions with the highest levels of conflict, and the dismantling of criminal, armed and clandestine structures operating outside the rule of law.
- Urge police reform initiatives that include a professionalization of the police force, effective internal investigations,



Kelsey and Maria



specialized training on response to gender-based violence and investigation of femicide, and strengthening of the Specialized Criminal Investigation Unit.

- Push for a halt to all forced evictions until the government performs a detailed analysis of the land registry and the right of indigenous communities to their ancestral lands, and can insure compliance with international human rights obligations.

**For more information, please contact:
Kelsey Alford-Jones Director Guatemala
Human Rights Commission
kajones@ghrc-usa.org 202-529-6599**



Jail Garden . . .

Continued from page 3

sometimes sweltering heat, by logging hundreds of combined hours in the garden. The result: over 1,400 pounds of potatoes, pumpkins, onions, tomatoes, mixed greens, peas, beans and other vegetables grown for the Stepping Stones Food Panty. This donation was worth a USDA estimated \$2,100, making the inmates working in the garden some of the most charitable members of our community.

The inmates have started to use hoop houses to extend the growing season and have looked to the adjacent woodlot for potential forest harvests such as raspberries, blueberries and mushrooms. They've planted apple trees with the expectation of providing a perennial source of fruit for their community.

Moreover, roughly 300 pounds of produce found its way into the jail kitchen. The sweet corn, squash, potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes and greens that were fed into the jail kitchen were worth nearly \$300.

That's money that the dietary staff can budget into their production for next year. That's money that can be reinvested into grass fed beef, free range eggs and local dairy. That's money that can grow into a more sustainable jail that requires fewer

tax dollars to run.

Right now, the jail garden is at the tipping point of sustainability. The further development of this project hinges on volunteers and donations to keep up with the prison population. As inmates cycle through the jail, they are ripe to be exposed to lessons in an encyclopedia of sustainable lifestyles, including gardening, composting, forestry and construction. These skills are the best tools to fight the cycle of recidivism by easing the effect of poverty through increased sustainable practices in the households that need it most.

As they learn these lessons, inmates are in the position to grow food for the elderly and impoverished while providing for their own kitchen.

The patch of garden behind the jail, fueled with volunteer hours and an impressive mound of compost has the potential to provide the fresh vegetable needs for not only the jail kitchen. It could also supply the Elderly Nutrition Program, which runs the Meals on Wheels Program, provides daily meals at ten sites around the county, and operates from the same kitchen at the Dunn County Judicial Center.

Suddenly, this small garden has the big potential to provide fresh produce to the most underserved portions of our county's population.

With the right kind of involvement from us privileged members of the community, we can catch our neighbors at their lowest point, support them by giving them the ability to support themselves and create a whole new class of community leaders.

While our prisons are not going away and our tax money continues to be spent

on corrections rather than schools, we can make the best of this situation by giving inmates a new education – one that we would wish for a member of our family.

I know there are dozens of apt, informed and active citizens in Dunn County that believe in the values we're teaching at the jail garden. Now, it's time to join us in creating a better community by giving the least fortunate a chance to improve themselves.



Jail crew: Bob, Trevor, Greg and Al

Trevor Peterson serves as an AmeriCorp VISTA working for food security initiatives in Dunn Co. through UW-Stout's Involvement and Leadership Office. Aside from working in the jail garden, Trevor has co-organized events such as the Food for Thought Film Series, MLK Jr. Day Concert and Conversation, and the Dunn Co. Local Food Summit. He currently has an advisory role with the Menomonie Parks Department and strives to make accessible growing space a part of the parks system. Stay tuned for upcoming VISTA projects, since Trevor will be serving in Dunn Co. through November 2012.

If you would like more information about VISTA projects or would like to become involved with the Dunn Co. Jail Garden, you can email Trevor at: peterstr@uwstout.edu or (715) 232-1328.

Local Farm in the News
Hay River Pumpkin Seed Oil grown and produced by local farmers Ken Seguine and Jay Gilbertson of Prairie Farm, WI is in the Wall Street Journal!
See the article online at: <http://online.wsj.com> or <http://hayriver.net>
Congratulations Jay and Ken!

Women's Work . . .

Continued from page 1

learned especially for this trip. (There are some pictures on our Facebook page.)

Lucia told us about her struggle to be able to attend school after sixth grade. Her family believed girls belong in the home and weren't interested in continuing her education, even if they could have afforded it. Through years of hardship, hard work and determination, Lucia was able to finish high school. In 2012, at the age of 32, she will graduate from the San Carlos University with a degree in social work. Lucia is convinced education must be the root of development in Guatemala and is the road out of poverty. She advocates both formal and non-formal education, and is committed to helping girls go to school. Her message to women in Guatemala is "I did it, and you can, too." Lucia is the Assistant Director of Thirteen Threads.

Yolanda described her artistry in traditional weaving as the work her ancestors passed down to women. "This work takes a long time. We don't buy our clothes. We make them all with our own hands. Ideas for the designs come from our grandmothers and mothers." Yolanda started weaving at the age of twelve.

Weaving is often the only way that women can bring some cash into the household, and yet it is hard work with very little profit. Yolanda got involved with Thirteen Threads four years ago with a group of four women in her community. Although the custom in Guatemala is that women stay in the home, her husband and her mother gave her permission to attend workshops and work with Thirteen Threads.

Working with women's groups is very important to her. Yolanda said: "All the workshops I've attended have helped me. We learn new techniques to make new products. We now have ten women in our group. I am happy to be here thanks to the great support from my husband and



Lucia, Ramona, Jody, Yolanda and Rosa

these organizations."

Rosa also spoke of the difficulty of attending school. "When I was thirteen years old, just a child, I left school. I never had shoes to wear to school and the walk on the road hurt my feet. I quit school because I felt I needed to help my family. I went to work at a coffee plantation and earned \$2 for two weeks of work. It was hard work hauling water on my head for a half mile to water the coffee plants."

After a time she found artisan work in Panajachel, a nearby tourist town, and found she loved to draw and embroider. Now she draws for others in her community. Rosa got involved with Thirteen Threads four years ago, and in 2009 participated in the first rug hooking workshop. She has shared this technique with women in her community, and spoke

of one woman who wasn't good at other artisan techniques but has done really great hooked rugs. Rosa ended by saying, "Everything I do I share with the women in my group."

Rosa, Yolanda and Lucia face many obstacles from the Latino culture of Guatemala, which often treats the Maya as second-class citizens, as well as their own Maya culture, that believes a woman's place is in the home. With enduring determination they are helping their families and communities move out of poverty. They have held on to their open hearts, senses of humor and concerns for others in the midst of many adversities. We left feeling fortunate to have been able to look into their world for an evening.



Oxlajuj B'atz' (Thirteen Threads) was founded in 2004 to facilitate processes for Maya women artisans to bring about change, through their own efforts, that will alleviate the adverse effects of poverty and improve their quality of life. Our mission is guided by the principles of harmony, democracy, and sustainability. Through the encouragement of Oxlajuj B'atz', our members become empowered by increasing their knowledge and skills. Their participation in democratically run cooperatives with other women they trust and respect provides them with the ability to earn a sustainable income, which is beneficial to both their families and communities.

Learn about their programs, and ways to support their work, at their website thirteenthreads.org.

What We Are Reading:

Javatrekker: Dispatches from the World of Fair Trade Coffee

by Dean Cycon - Book review by Andy Gaertner



What does it mean to live sustainably? Do you need to make your life smaller in order to care for the planet and all of the living beings who reside here?

When I think about “sustainable living,” I tend to imagine a small cabin with a little wood smoke trailing out the chimney, surrounded by a garden and an orchard, maybe with solar panels on the roof. It is a sort of detached and individual way of caring for the earth. To read Dean Cycon’s book *Javatrekker* is to imagine a different sort of sustainable lifestyle. Dean is an indigenous rights lawyer who started an organic coffee business. Dean thinks big, and his sustainable world is dynamic and risky and full of possibilities for human connection.

Javatrekker takes us on a series of journeys to all of the major coffee growing regions of the world. Each chapter is a story about a specific place and a specific group of people where Dean buys coffee for his Boston roastery, Dean’s Beans Organic Coffee. Dean is able to buy so much coffee and visit so many places because he is connected to a network of fair trade buyers known as Cooperative Coffees, which includes local friends Peace Coffee and Kickapoo Coffee, among many others. The vision for Cooperative Coffees is to change the lives of coffee farmers throughout the world. Dean is there to negotiate and document that change, and it is not easy. His book is full of cautionary tales as well as success stories.

The book is organized by continent. First we find him in Ethiopia, which claims to be the birthplace of coffee. Then we move on to Kenya, where the government-managed cooperatives strangle the industry. The poverty of the farmers in Africa reveals just how rigged and entrenched the current system is.

The prices are determined by far away commodity traders and sometimes dip below the cost of production. At every step, the coffee profit pie is carved into smaller and smaller pieces until sometimes the farmers are left with nothing. Dean presents himself in the role of advocate, friend, warrior and businessperson.

In the subsequent sections, he tours Peru, Columbia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Sumatra and New Guinea. Each chapter highlights some element of the life of coffee farmers and their families. The chapters tell the details of an ethical business attempting to do right in complex world. More than that, each chapter gives us real people and their sometimes heart-breaking stories. The chapters, when taken as a whole, tell the story of the whole world through the lens of coffee, ranging from climate change, to immigration, to war and land mines, to indigenous rights.

Going into reading this book I believed strongly in the superiority of our Honduran and Guatemalan coffee. I have a strong bias for the coffee raised by our friends. I thought of our method of “direct trade” as somehow one step above fair trade because we keep it personal. After reading *Javatrekker* I am also drawn into the personal stories of each of the characters. I wish that all business relationships could be conducted with such respect solidarity. We at Farmer to Farmer are kin to Dean Cycon and to read his book is a further education in what we are about. It is also a fun read, an adventure tale.

What if all aspects of sustainable living were an adventure story full of connectedness?





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Land School Craft Sale

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Artisans and local food producers will join Lake Country students with an array of crafts and local foods just in time for holiday shopping. Farmer to Farmer will be there with bagged coffee, which makes the perfect gift.

For more information see go to website:

lakecountrylandschool.blogspot.com



Follow our Honduras and Guatemala trip blogs this January at:
<http://farmertofarmerblog.blogspot.com>

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