

VOCES Y MANOS

POR EL DERECHO A LA SALUD

Mayan culture thrives at the Rabinal Marketplace



We are proud to announce that as of January, Voces y Manos is officially recognized by the California Secretary of State as a public-interest nonprofit corporation!

This is an exciting step for us as we transition from a college-based student group to a government-recognized corporation, capable of taking larger steps in our work building toward a healthier, more just world.

As a fundamental part of becoming a nonprofit corporation, we recently had the great pleasure of forming our first official board of directors. Though we have always consulted with experts in health and education to increase our understanding of the challenges Rabinal faces, creating our board of directors brings these experts into the heart of Voces y Manos. They

will be helping us plan and implement our projects. All members of the board of directors have been involved with Voces y Manos in varying capacities over the past few years and have become intimately familiar with our vision and mission. We are extremely excited to work with these talented and experienced individuals.

You can meet the nine members of our board at vocesymanos.org/staff

So what's next? Well, a couple of things. Attaining our status as a nonprofit corporation is only the penultimate step in our corporate development. While being a nonprofit grants certain advantages, it does not yet give us federal tax exemption. For that we have to receive certification as a 501(C)(3) corporation, which not only exempts us from federal income tax, but also makes all donations to Voces y Manos tax-deductible. We filed our application with the IRS in early autumn. The process may take a few months to complete, but we hope

that by the end of the year, we will be operating as a fully tax-exempt nonprofit corporation.

In the meantime, we are preparing for the second official meeting of our board of directors this winter. It will focus on developing our programs for 2012, many of which you can begin reading about in this newsletter, and will shape much of our work for the next several years. We are very excited about these developments, and we look forward to keeping you up-to-date on our progress.

What's Inside:

Summer Updates	2+3
Scholarship Program	4
Higher Education Introduction	5
Support Us	6



This is our last printed newsletter. Get on our email update list!

Over the past few years, we have kept our supporters updated through our beautiful printed newsletters. Now that our organization is growing, we want to be able to give more frequent updates to a larger network. Monthly email newsletter updates will now be the main way we communicate with our donors. There are two ways to get on our email update list: 1. Go to our homepage, vocesymanos.org, and put your email into the "Subscribe to our email list" box. 2. Send an email to: jessica@vocesymanos.org asking to be put on the list.

Unexpected Changes

Voces y Manos arrived in Rabinal this summer to surprising news about health services in Guatemala.

In the last year, the Guatemalan Ministry of Health changed its approach to health care. An unfortunate effect has been the reallocation of funds away from many of the organizations that provide medical treatment in remote areas of the country, such as Rabinal.

In the wake of these cutbacks, many of the groups with whom we put on health fairs in past years have switched from providing curative services to purely education and preventative care. Funcafé, an organization whose doctors provided both checkups and follow-up care for patients at our health fairs, disappeared completely- almost overnight.

The Centro de Salud clinic, which provides free care to anyone who can afford to make the trek to Rabinal from the outlying villages, is understaffed, under-supplied and overburdened.

The reduced ability of the Centro de Salud to address the health needs of these distant communities, where the majority of the people in the Rabinal area live, has undermined most of the residents' confidence in the remaining health-care providers.

Unfortunately, because of limited communications, we did not find out about many of these changes until we arrived this summer. Because of this, we had to readjust some of our summer plans.

Health Fairs Update

This summer brought some changes to a major component of our project: the health fairs.

Each summer, Voces y Manos collaborates with local organizations, students and residents to put on health fairs that provide curative and preventative health services to communities with limited access to health care. The health fairs were our first project and are still a major part of our program. Though our organization has since expanded, the volunteers returned this summer, excited to begin work on the health fairs.

Unfortunately, when we arrived in June, we discovered that changes had occurred that would force us to shift plans.

The medical infrastructure had deteriorated significantly, and there were fewer doctors available. This lack of resources made it impossible to coordinate a health fair this year. It was disappointing, both for the people of Rabinal who were looking forward to the fair, and for us.

We understand that the health fairs' success played a large role in attracting many of our supporters, and we want to emphasize that suspending our health-fair program was a very difficult decision. Improving community health remains a major priority.

As we have matured, we have expanded our goals to address not just immediate health needs, but creating solutions to eliminate systemic barriers to health-care access. The health fairs thrived off the enthusiasm of the community and our ability to provide

important services at a one-day fair. But the health fairs were less effective for creating a system where people can receive treatment the other 364 days of the year.

Suspending the health fairs, though disappointing, gave us the opportunity to step back and conduct a more rigorous evaluation of the community's health needs and how our strengths can best address them.

We decided to use this summer to gather as much background data as possible on health in Rabinal. Volunteers went into the outlying communities to interview villagers about their lives, their health needs, the health-care resources they use and which needs were most pressing. As we rode along with members of other organizations, they gave educational talks and provided what curative care they could.

We also examined other organizations' programs: their design, implementation, effectiveness, and the public response.

The health assemblies conducted with Dr. Linda Walsh and ASECSA also gave us valuable insight. You can read more about them in the next article, "Listening to the Community."

By the end of the summer, we were optimistic about the future of our health-care work in Rabinal. Our next step is to compile a comprehensive report with Dr. Walsh. We will use this document over the next few months to plan our next health program, which will not only address the health needs of the people of Rabinal, but will do so in a way that is far more sustainable than the health fairs ever were.



A FNE student lending a helping hand on a community project.



Dancers performing La Costeña, one of the traditional Bailes de Achí, on the steps of the church in the center of town.



Summer volunteer, Cynthia, dressed in traditional Achí attire with the youngest member of her host family.



Listening to the Community

"All too often, well-meaning people go into the developing world and do their own assessments, then tell the communities what interventions the visitors think are needed. Who knows better about perceived needs than those who live and work in a community?" – Dr. Linda Walsh, professor of nursing at University of San Francisco and new member of the Voces y Manos board of directors

In July, Voces y Manos partnered with the University of San Francisco School of Nursing and the Asociación de Servicios Comunitarios de Salud (ASECSA) to organize community-wide assemblies to better understand the community's health needs.

With the recent decrease in health services available in Rabinal, residents are in more dire need of health care than ever. These assemblies identified critical gaps in the health system and helped us determine how to partner with local organizations to fill them. We gathered valuable data for developing culturally relevant and sustainable health-intervention projects.

"The goal ... was to really listen to what the community members identified as health needs that Voces y Manos could possibly address in a partnership with them," said Dr. Walsh.

We sought a wide variety of perspectives, including lay health workers and public-health professionals. We enlisted ASECSA to recruit health promoters, midwives, doctors, nurses and nutrition specialists from throughout the region. While perspectives differed, a common theme was the dramatic impact of budget cuts on community health. We also recognized the increased need for traditional medicine.

"What came across very strongly ... was that the current economic forces prevent individuals from having access to even the most commonly used pharmaceutical agents," said Dr. Walsh. "A return to traditional Mayan medicine reflects respect for the non-Western medicine approach to health and healing and also provides a cost-effective way to prevent and treat disease."

Now that we have compiled the assembly findings, we turn our attention to developing projects to address these needs.

In December, our team will return to Rabinal to review the key findings with the original participants. A subgroup of the original participants will form a local advisory board to develop a four-year plan for creating long-term, culturally relevant community health-care solutions.

"Community members are the experts in identifying needs and potential interventions that would be in concert with the beliefs and rituals of the culture," said Dr. Walsh. "There is a history of numerous initiatives that end up being short-term fixes without any follow through due to lack of acceptability in the community and/or lack of economic sustainability ... Community involvement is essential for bringing about necessary change."

We are currently working with Dr. Walsh to compile a comprehensive report. We will use it to plan our next health program. We are confident that by involving community members each step of the way, the end result will truly meet their needs and set the foundation for sustainability.

Summer 2011 Volunteer Spotlight



Elizabeth Berryman

Elizabeth Berryman is part of the PRIME-HEq (Program in Medical Education- Health Equity) program at the UCSD School of Medicine. She is currently on a leave of absence from medical school to study Public Health at Harvard University.

She first became involved with Voces y Manos in the summer of 2009, participating with the group in a full summer program. She has remained involved with Voces y Manos since, and was able to return this past summer as support crew for the volunteer team.

Elizabeth recognizes that her time with VyM and her connections with the community of Rabinal hold significant sway for her life. Along with her home community of San Diego, they are the lens through which she sees public health paradigm, the patients whom she continues to learn from.

After finishing her Masters of Public Health at Harvard, she plans to finish Medical School in San Diego and complete a residency in either obstetrics/gynecology or family medicine. When completed with her medical training, her goal is to work as a doctor in both Guatemala and the United States

August Meeting with USAID



This summer, Voces y Manos had the opportunity to meet privately with USAID at their office in Guatemala City. The purpose of the meeting was to present our Scholarship Program to the Health & Education Department, and to discuss opportunities for future support. Rather than simply explaining our work, we decided to bring three scholarship recipients to demonstrate how our Scholarship Program has impacted students directly.

Although it was their first time formally presenting to a national organization, our students did an excellent job relaying their personal stories in a professional setting. Julia Gomez Gonzales explained how she has managed to continue her education and service to her community alongside supporting her own family as a single mother. Marcario Vasquez Reyes displayed his fervor to become a leader in his own community while currently pursuing a teaching career through his scholarship. Edelman Ramirez, a medical student in Cuba, expressed how his participation with Voces y Manos inspired him to pursue medicine in order to improve health for those most marginalized. We are extremely honored that our students presented on our behalf, and hope that this meeting will open the door for a potential partnership with USAID.

Voces y Manos Scholarship Students: Living Out New Hope



Él es mi Abuelo." He is my grandfather.

Benjamin, 16, speaks these words softly as he gestures to a neatly framed black and white photograph hanging from the wall of Rabinal's Cultural Museum.

"It is important that we remember our grandparents who died in the massacres, so that we never lose our culture, and make sure that the violence they experienced never happens again."

Hearing Benjamin speak these words during our field trip to the community museum reminded me of the first time I visited this museum over 4 years ago. It was here at the museum, where the haunting specter of death meets a renaissance of life and hope, that I became committed to work alongside the people of Rabinal in the quest to build a better future.

Benjamin's Family History

Benjamin Tecu Osorio's grandparents raised their family along the banks of Rio Negro, enjoying a peaceful life. When they refused to leave their land to accommodate a government-sponsored hydroelectric dam, they were labeled "subversives" and became victims of a brutal campaign of mass murder.

In one of these massacres, Benjamin's grandmother and grandfather were both killed, leaving his father, Jesus Tecu Osorio, an orphan at age 11. Traumatized and alone, the young Jesus was kidnapped and forced to work as the personal slave of a paramilitary officer for over two years.

For many years, Jesus could not speak of his past. But when he saw that silence only exacerbated the a toxic climate of impunity, Jesus risked personal safety by bringing his case before an international tribunal. Jesus' life and work in pursuit of human rights has had a profound and lasting impact on post-war Guatemala. His decision to found Fundación Nueva Esperanza (The New Hope Foundation) was rooted in a belief that lasting social justice could only be achieved through education.

Living Out New Hope

I first met Jesus not in person, but through a video I saw in 2007. The scene that has stuck with me pictures Jesus playing outside his home with his young children. He says: "My children bring me most joy, and my greatest desire is that my children will not have to suffer as I did, that they will be able to grow up in a world where there is justice and a new hope." I marveled at Jesus' capacity to envision new hope when his life has been blighted by such tremendous despair.

Now in 2011, as I listened to Benjamin's sensitive and wise reflections on the tragedy that his family survived, I realized that he embodied the spirit of new hope that Jesus had envisioned. I can only imagine the joy Jesus must feel knowing that his 16-year old son shares his vision for remembering his past, and creating a just society. What does social justice mean for Benjamin? As he explained it, social justice begins by keeping his indigenous culture alive. It also involves engagement: taking part in projects to make one's community better.

Just over a month ago, Benjamin and two of his classmates--Glenda and Juan de Jesus put this lesson into practice to address the issue of contamination in their community. They met with the mayor of Rabinal, convincing him to send a garbage truck to their community once a month. Meanwhile, the trio organized local elementary students into community clean-up crews.

Thank you to Juan de Jesus, Glenda, Benjamin, and all our students for your inspiration, and for giving me a clearer idea of what "new hope" is all about.

By: Michael Bakal

2011 SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECTS

Team Nimacabaj

Maynor and Mardoqueo, residents of Nimacabaj and Pacux respectively—have developed a tree reforestation project in Nimacabaj to repopulate a deforested hillside.

Team Chiticoy

Dinora, Estefani, and Griselda—all residents of the community of Chiticoy—have developed a community garden that is currently providing fresh vegetables to 25 families.

Team Pacux

Benjamin, Juan de Jesus, and Glenda, all Pacux residents, successfully lobbied the Mayor of Rabinal to provide trash cleanup services to Pacux. Meanwhile, they organized local elementary students into community cleanup crews.

Team San Rafael

Horacio and Selvin, close neighbors and friends in the community of San Rafael, joined forces to start a community garden in the community of San Rafael to improve the nutritional status of 10 families.

GLOBAL HEALTH INTEREST NIGHT

Mon, Oct. 17th 6:30-8:30pm Great Hall

Get inspired and find an outlet for your passion in Global Health! Speakers include Dr. Maria Zuniga (Associate Professor and Behavioral Epidemiologist, UCSD Medical School), Dr. Yarris (visiting professor for Global Health Minor) and Travel Nurse Anne Stein.



Global Health Interest Night at UCSD

On October 17th, Voces y Manos partnered with the International Affairs Group, Student Sustainability Committee, and the UCSD School of Medicine's Global Health Initiative to coordinate the Global Health Interest Night.

The event was part of our commitment to create learning opportunities with a people-centered approach to Global Health. We developed the idea as a way to help create greater collaboration between student groups, and to show students the growing academic and service opportunities available at UCSD.

Various global health-related student organizations, professors, the Global Health minor, and the UCSD School of Medicine's Global Health Initiative were excited to participate.

The evening was a huge success! Students packed the venue, nine student organizations participated, and there were presentations by the Global Health Minor program, Dr. Maria Zuniga from the Global Health Initiative, Dr. Yarris (a visiting professor from UCLA), and a nurse from the travel clinic at Student Health Services. Fair Trade coffee and tea, and catering were provided through the Food Co-Op. It was inspiring to see so much passion for Global Health from such a diverse group of people and organizations.

This was a thrilling way to start the academic year for our organization. Not only was it an educational event, it gave us a chance to build key relationships with other groups. Our interns are now re-starting the student organization at UCSD, and it is exciting to see all the ideas and opportunities available for the coming year.

Higher Education Committee

Since Voces y Manos began, we have been creating ways to give University-level students meaningful, hand-on opportunities to learn a human-centered approach to global health.

In a world where billions lack access to health, it can feel overwhelming figuring out where one can start to make a difference. We are inviting students to join with us, engaging their voices and hands to create a healthier, more just world.

This year, we have formalized our work with university-level students with our Higher Education Committee. This group will be developing the summer volunteer experience, working with student interns and creating student organizations on college campuses.

Currently, we are focused on starting student organization chapters at UC San Diego and UC Berkeley as well as developing relationships with the academic institutions.

Contemporary Issues in Global Health:

Three Years Strong

In 2009, the Voces y Manos team developed the syllabus for the group study course, "Contemporary Issues in Global Health." Dr. Ivan Evans, Professor of Sociology at UCSD, has facilitated the class through the Third World Studies Department for the past three Spring quarters.

The course is designed to provide undergraduates with the theoretical and practical skills to engage effectively and ethically in global health work. A major part of the class revolves around students developing their own research proposals based on Community-Based Participatory Research, a method that focuses on conducting research based on partnership between trained experts and members of a community.

Dr. Bron Anders, Dr. Samantha Hurst, and Dr. Regina Fleming, also of UCSD, have provided supporting facilitation and lectures.

The course has become popular among students. We were excited to learn last year that it is now being accepted as course credit toward the UCSD Global Health Minor.

Global Health Internship Program

In September, we officially launched our new Global Health Internship.

The program is a unique opportunity for students in the San Diego area to learn about global health issues, while gaining practical experience working with a nonprofit.

Interns play an integral role in solidifying our organization's core programs and building its future. Our current group comes a diverse background, including communications, public health, pre-medicine, Latin American Studies, and education.

It is our pleasure to welcome Allison, Isela and Nicolette on to our team! Their passion and experience enriches our organization.

You can read all of their biographies on our blog, vocesymanos.wordpress.com

Join us for our winter fundraising campaign!



**We love hearing from you,
connect with us online!**



Facebook.com/vocesymanos



Vocesymanos.wordpress.com



Twitter.com/vocesymanos



Flickr.com/vocesymanos

Thanks for your support! We have some amazing results to report: In four years, our Community Leaders Scholarship Program has grown to support 29 passionate, dedicated students. This program, that was founded on the conviction that young people have limitless potential to transform the health of their communities, is now proving its success.

We have set a big goal: By January 31st, 2012, we want all 29 of our scholarship students to have sponsors, and we need your help to do this.

For just \$1 a day, you can become a sponsor for one of our students. As a sponsor, you will receive personal letters from your student, allowing you to take full part in fostering the development of one of Rabinal's next generation of great leaders. We feel so strongly about ensuring that your support goes directly to impacting an individual student's life that we make this guarantee:

100% of sponsorships will go directly to the student that you are supporting!

The gift of sponsorship is much more than a monetary one: Sponsorship is your vote of confidence in a student's potential. It is an opportunity to impact a student's life, empowering them to change their world. We hope you will consider becoming a sponsor today!

Simply go to www.vocesymanos.org/BecomeASponsor

Voces y Manos
PO Box 10864
Oakland, Ca 94610