

NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2016

Building a Healthier Future in Xepanil

Life has changed over the past year for the 125 Maya Kaqchikel families who live in the rural Guatemalan community of Xepanil, according to our staff on the ground and community members themselves. In February 2015, Xepanil began partnering with ALDEA to implement our full integrated approach to building healthier communities, which includes programs in nutrition education; water, sanitation, and hygiene; family planning; disaster risk reduction; sustainable agriculture; and empowerment. Xepanil community mem-

bers have invested their own time and money in these programs, along with the resources committed by their municipality of Santa Apolonia and the financial support of UMCOR, Feed the Dream, and ALDEA donors including Global Legacy, MOGUATE, and individuals. Together, we have made great progress over the past year: the potable water system, properly vented stoves, sanitary latrines, gray water filters, and other infrastructure projects are complete, and trainings in nutrition, sustainable agriculture, family planning, and empowerment are well

underway. Community members are taking more and more leadership for the continuation of these programs, and as we complete our second year of partnership we expect they will be ready to continue this work on their own.

What do these changes look like in practice, and what do they mean to families in Xepanil?

We hope the following photographs and first hand perspectives from the community



MICHELLE HANAVAN

Work in Progress: Women from Xepanil participate in a sustainable agriculture training, led by an ABPD staff member, in June 2015.

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

What does *50 years of strengthening Mayan communities* mean to you?

Maybe it brings back memories of everything you learned while working with our founder, Dr. Carroll Behrhorst, as he provided health care in the Department of Chimaltenango from the 1960s through the 1980s. Perhaps it reminds you of a more recent tour to see our programs first hand and visit with Mayan villagers who changed your perspective on what it means to face the challenges of daily life. Or you may think of a respected friend or relative from whom you first learned about our vision for a world where communities have the tools they need to build healthier futures for their children.

We each have our own connection to ALDEA and our own reasons for supporting the vital work that takes place in our Guatemalan partner villages. We are turning 50 in 2017, and we are busy making plans to celebrate with all of the people connected to ALDEA as donors and supporters. You are so critical to ALDEA's accomplishments over the past five decades. And, as we look ahead, we are excited to grow our connections to create an even stronger network of support that will help carry our work forward another 50 years.

Whether you are just learning about our work or have been with us for all 50 years, you are part of the ALDEA family, and we hope you will celebrate with us in 2017! Here's a glimpse of what we have planned so far:

- **50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner in Antigua, Guatemala**
Save the date! Plan to join us on June 18, 2017.
- **Anniversary Tour in Guatemala**
Travel with us in June 2017 and see our current work first hand.
- **U.S. Anniversary Events**
Host or attend an event in your area! We'll be sending speakers on a tour throughout the country.



Dr. Carroll Behrhorst consults with a patient in 1968.
Photo courtesy of Gordon Starkebaum.

I want to emphasize that your friends and family are most welcome to celebrate with us. And if you would like to get involved in the planning process, now is a great time to join us! For more information please contact our Executive Director, Jessica LaBumbard, at (313) 205-4249 or aldea@aldeaguatemala.org.

In this newsletter, you'll learn about the transformation toward better health one partner community has achieved over the past year. These stories represent a small part of the larger picture of the long-term improvements your contributions have enabled us to support. We hope you will read them with pride and, if you are able, ***please help us change even more lives by contributing to our Volcano Challenge!*** When you do, you'll also be supporting our amazing staff members who have agreed to climb two volcanoes when we reach their goal of raising \$50,000 by April 25.

It has been an incredible 50 years, and I am convinced—thanks to you and other dedicated supporters—the best is yet to come.

Muchas gracias!

Patricia O'Connor

Dear Friends of ABPD and ALDEA,

In October 2016, Asociación BPD (ABPD) will mark the 10th anniversary of our founding as ALDEA's sister organization in Guatemala. As ALDEA enters its 50th year, our organizations will also commemorate a decade of working together to strengthen Mayan communities. During this time, ABPD has carried out ALDEA's mission on the ground, implementing grassroots development projects hand in hand with those they benefit.

Every day, we focus on addressing the health and development problems that confront the people of rural Chimaltenango, working alongside indigenous families as they try to overcome the poverty resulting from centuries of marginalization to give their children a better quality of life and a better future. While engaged in this important work, it is difficult to pause and reflect on all we have accomplished—with your support—during the past decade. But these cumulative results serve as an encouraging reminder that both our efforts and yours are truly making a difference here in Chimaltenango.

During the last 10 years we have worked with a total of **90 communities in three municipalities**. We have collaborated with them to construct **24 primary schools**, where thousands of students have now had access to education who would not otherwise have been able to attend elementary school.

In 2012, we embarked on our new strategic plan, which entailed working with our partner communities to reduce the high rate of chronic childhood malnutrition. Our integrated approach has been highly successful. Through its sanitation and hygiene component, we have constructed **56 water systems**, all of which continue to function without external support. These systems bring potable tap water to more than **6,000 families**, ensuring **34,000 people** can drink and bathe in their homes without contracting a water-borne illness. We have also installed **5,988 gray water filters** and **5,249 latrines**, which further reduce the risk of gastrointestinal diseases



caused by lack of proper human waste disposal and polluted water. **5,350 vented stoves** continue to improve indoor air quality and reduce the time women and children have to spend collecting firewood.

We have trained **9,000 people** in family planning as an essential part of our program. Although confidentiality makes it difficult to know exactly, we estimate that **between 40 and 45 percent** of the women with whom we have worked now use some type of birth control method, be it modern or natural. These options for determining the number and spacing of their children give families greater control over their health and nutritional resources.

More than **1,800 women** have attended our nutrition trainings, which provide the information they need to keep their children healthy. We have provided follow-up support to help **1,500 children under five** recuperate from malnourished to normal nutritional status, laying a foundation for optimal growth and brain development.

All of these achievements must be maintained over the long term to be effective, and sustainability is the center of our strategy. Our evaluations show that **our efforts to create empowered communities have been successful**, meaning, our partners have continued working for better health and development once we leave the program in their hands.

We look forward to celebrating this milestone along with ALDEA and continuing our work together for many more decades. With the help of our friends and supporters, we hope to bring these vital programs to thousands more families in new communities.

Thank you for your support, and we expect to continue sharing good news from the communities of Chimaltenango.

Sincerely,



Paco Enríquez

help answer these questions. Though our grassroots development approach takes a different shape in each of our partner villages, the outcome—a stronger, healthier community—is almost always the same.

Johanna Cap Olcot, ABPD Nutrition Educator:

“When we started working in Xepanil, the rate of chronic childhood malnutrition was 89.7 percent. It was difficult to work in this community at first, especially with the women, as people did not want to make certain lifestyle changes that are necessary in order to reduce malnutrition in children. Initially, the community members were not able to relate the individual project components to improvement in the nutritional status of the children, including improved hygiene and the addition of nutritional resources. People were not very accepting of the discussion on family planning due to their lack of knowledge on the subject and because of familial and religious influences. Very few women participated in trainings and expressed their feelings or their viewpoints. It was also difficult to start the early childhood stimulation classes, led by the community’s trained youth, as it was hard for the mothers to leave their children because of the deep attachment and bond, and due to initial mistrust of the project.

Now, after 13 months in Xepanil, we see that women and men are participating in family planning discussions and understand the shared responsibility. We have observed through our monitoring that personal and household hygiene practices are improving and family lifestyles are changing. The level of empowerment of women in the home and community is remarkable. The families under-



MICHELLE HANAVAN

Community members apply compost to a garden plot during a June 2015 training.

stand that all of the components work together—that in order to be healthy and strong, it is necessary to practice various activities at the same time. We are seeing significant changes in the nutritional status of the children and we are observing a substantial reduction in childhood malnutrition due to the participation and engagement of the entire community.”

Lidia Victoria Pérez Salvador, Community Member and Health Promoter:

“Now that we have the water system and stoves, we do not have to spend hours collecting water and firewood, and we have more time for weaving huipils [traditional blouses]. We can sell them and earn income for our families. This helps us have more equality with our husbands.



Lidia harvests onions in her new garden, which is producing its third vegetable crop, in January 2016.

A big benefit of the empowerment program has been greater self-esteem. We understand our rights as women and realize that family problems are not all our fault—our husbands share responsibility for them. You can see this change in the community—people sweep their houses more often and take better care of themselves.”

Francisco Tzay Mucia, ABPD Field Supervisor:

“In order to be successful, all the components of our integrated approach—nutrition education; water, sanitation, and hygiene; family planning; disaster risk reduction; sustainable agriculture; and empow-

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2016 Volcano Challenge: Climbing for a Cause

Help us raise \$50,000 to strengthen Mayan communities by April 25!

When we reach this goal, three of our staff members will complete a physically challenging climb up two of Guatemala's volcanoes: Tacaná and Zunil. Here's what motivates them to take on such a difficult commitment.

"I am participating in the Volcano Challenge for the second year in a row because I believe in what we are doing. People are hungry and malnourished due to systems of inequality, poverty, and racism. Our work is to do all that we can to work with communities in developing their infrastructure and knowledge, and thereby their capacity to change these systems. This volcano challenge is not easy, but people's lives are much harder. The money we raise in the challenge *will* make a difference."

—Jessica LaBumbard, ALDEA Executive Director



"For me, the Volcano Challenge is a recognition and a form of expressing my solidarity toward the women in the communities in which we work, who each day exert tremendous strength in order to carry water and firewood for hours for the well-being of their families, and probably in less than a week cover more kilometers that we will walk during this challenge. With my effort, I hope to be able to contribute so that some of these women will no longer have to do these hard daily trips and will instead be able to devote this time to their own selves."

—Paco Enríquez, ABPD Executive Director

"This challenge is really important to me—it allows me to support the children in the communities where we work, not in a direct economic way but through the moral support, energy, and good spirits I can dedicate to climbing and raising funds. The Challenge requires a lot of strength, energy, and physical determination in order to arrive at the established goal. I am motivated by the opportunity to support the children suffering from chronic childhood malnutrition who I know will benefit from these collected funds."

—Jose Ajuchan, ABPD Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist



Please help our climbers and our partner communities reach their goals—*donate today!*

Mail: Use the enclosed envelope and write "Volcano Challenge" on the memo line.

Online: Visit our secure site at [ALDEA.myetap.org/fundraiser/Volcano2016/](https://aldea.myetap.org/fundraiser/Volcano2016/).

erment—must be implemented together. Xepanil community members have taken a very active role in all these programs so far. The water system project has been especially important to them, because, before we installed it, the women and some of the men were spending hours per day carrying and boiling their water. Now all they have to do is turn on the spigot at home and they have clean water for their families.

Having water in the home means that women can use the two hours they would have spent collecting water to participate in our other programs, or to make crafts that they can sell. People can safely wash the vegetables they grow in their new gardens, and it is easier for them to put into practice the new balanced recipes they have learned in our nutrition trainings. Personal and household hygiene, from the bathing of



MICHELLE HANAVAN

Before their new water system brought potable water to their homes, Xepanil residents gathered their water from a spring like this one, carried it back home, and boiled it over a fire to sanitize it before drinking.



MICHELLE HANAVAN

A Xepanil family poses in June 2015 with their brand new stove, which will burn wood more efficiently and keep toxic smoke out of their home.

Francisca Macario, Community Member and Health Promoter:

“For me, everything that the ABPD staff has taught us is really important in my life because there were a lot of things we did not know. For example, in the area of nutrition, we have learned about general and personal hygiene, household hygiene, eating habits,

and the routes of contamination, etc. These ideas are all really important and we should always put them into practice. I learned that we should not eat many canned foods. This was new to me, but since I came to understand the consequences of not eating well, I’ve avoided eating junk food that is harmful to me and my family.

I learned a lot about my rights as a woman, that we are all equal and that I should respect myself. We as women can also make productive projects and this helps us to strengthen the association. Everything they have taught us is very beautiful and interesting for me and my community.

Thanks to the agriculture training, our food is improving with the family gardens. We now have vegetables in our own homes and have a more balanced diet. Our water is clean. This means that we no longer have to go to the river, and we are able to bathe the children more often.

Before ABPD helped us install our latrines, human waste was everywhere by our homes. Everything was contaminated and there were many disease vectors. Now everything is more hygienic. The gray water filters help to get rid of the bad odor caused by gray water, and there is no longer mud around the home as the water is drained away. As regards the stoves, I can say that there is no longer smoke in our kitchen and we save firewood. This stove is a great tool for the women.

Thanks to ABPD for the whole project that they brought to us. May God bless ABPD for working with us.”



*A vision is not just a picture of what could be,
it is an appeal to our better selves, a call to
become something more.*

The Dr. Carroll Behrhorst Legacy Society honors those who partner in our work with indigenous communities in rural Guatemala through a gift in their wills or estate plans. Legacy Society members include our full Board and Executive Director. **As ALDEA approaches our 50-year anniversary, honor “Doc” by ensuring his visionary programs are funded for another 50 years.**

Become a Legacy Society member today!

- **Name ALDEA as a beneficiary of your IRA or retirement account**—specify a dollar amount or a percentage. This does not require a will or trust, and the benefits to ALDEA are tax-free!
- **Make a bequest** to ALDEA in your will or trust.

Let us know your intent by visiting our website at www.ALDEAGuatemala.org/donate and downloading the Declaration of Intent form; calling us at **313-205-4249**; e-mailing ALDEA@aldeaguatemala.org; or checking the box on one of our donation envelopes.



LETTY MANNE

ALDEA's 50th Anniversary Mini Tour

*Join us in Guatemala **June 18–21, 2017**, for a 4-day/3-night tour celebrating 50 years of ALDEA!*



MICHELLE HANAVAN

Fun and informative tour activities will include:

- Participation in ALDEA's 50th Anniversary Celebration Dinner in Antigua June 18;
- A “Behind the Walls of Antigua” slide show plus socials and discussions with ALDEA/ABPD board members;
- An optional guided walking tour of Antigua;
- Visits to the ALDEA/ABPD office and the Behrhorst Clinic in Chimaltenango for first hand program updates from staff;
 - Site visits to two Mayan partner communities—one just beginning their projects and one with projects completed.

All meals and in-country transportation will be included, with lodging based in Antigua.

Optional pre- and post-tour in-country excursions can be arranged with local tour agents or coordinated individually before arrival.

Tour space will be limited, with registration available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those interested in joining us should mark these calendar dates and check our ALDEA website in the next few months for more details on pricing and registration.

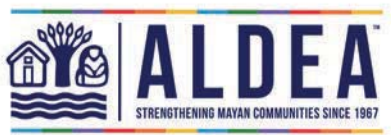
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Newsletters are occasional publications of ALDEA, 1732 1st Avenue #26867, New York, NY 10128. ALDEA, together with our collaborators at the Asociación BPD (ABPD) in Guatemala, works in partnership with communities to improve their health and well-being. Our approach to partnership and community development is based on the principles espoused by Dr. Carroll Behrhorst in his work with the Mayan communities of Chimaltenango. All contributions are tax-deductible. Restricted contributions to ALDEA are forwarded directly to projects; unrestricted contributions are forwarded directly to projects except for the amount required to maintain the US office. ALDEA is non-sectarian and non-political.

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The staff of Asociación BPD (our sister organization in Guatemala) works on the ground in villages in the Department of Chimaltenango, implementing our vital programs in their capacities as Executive Director, Administrator, Accountant, Field Supervisors (Agronomist and Water Specialist), Nutrition Educator, Social Worker, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Sanitation Technician, Program Support Specialist, and Housekeeper.

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