

EL Nahual's Bi-Monthly Newsletter

Free/Gratis
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Www.languageselnahual.com
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The Jovenes Program

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By Kate Buckholz

The Guatemalan education system and the economic hardship faced by the majority of the population makes it virtually necessary for school children to leave their studies after the 6th grade and work to support their families. El Nahual began a pilot program to address this challenge during December of 2007 with a group of ten intelligent, motivated and committed teenaged students. The goal of the program is to allow the students to study and work in a cooperative environment, therefore achieving both goals of continuing their studies and learning a trade. El Nahual has provided full tuition for them (including uniforms, books, dictionaries, shoes, calculators, etc.) to attend the local secondary school- Telesecundaria- and in return the students, with the support of their parents, have promised to

complete a secondary education.

A typical day for our jovenes means arriving at 7 am to start doing their chores (which they rotate), working on homework for school, having a reinforcement class in math, physics, chemistry or English and then cooking together to eat lunch before heading off to school for the afternoon. In the meantime, they are also charged with running a small cooperative tienda out of the school which sells beans, rice, and other basic grains as well as some super-yummy donuts. The Pacaja community has had an incredibly positive response to the tienda and the bittersweet part is that the students are interrupted fairly consistently to answer the bell that rings all morning long. (There is a schedule posted; pues, eso es la vida aqui!) Everything the students do involves te-

amwork on some level- we view this component as being highly important to their development as positive members of the community.

The Jovenes Program serves as a source of hope and the first step in the future path envisioned for El Nahual. It is our sincere dream that each and every student who is a part of this program will not only complete high school, but will go on to a university education. In addition, we would like to have a program in which we are more a part of the children's- and therefore the community's- development



The Jovenes dressed to impress



Kate and the gang



The Jovenes judge a dance-off

If you would like to get involved, visit the webpage at www.languageselnahual.com or come to our weekly volunteer recruitment event at the Blue Angel Café at 17h30!

The Latte Campaign

By Kate S. Buckholz

I sat sipping my lukewarm cup of rather weak coffee brewed in the giant pot upstairs at El Nahual and found myself daydreaming about a grande, non-fat, vanilla latte from my favorite love-to-hate corporation. After shaking myself from my reverie (and silently cursing my clear addiction to the culture of consumption and caffeine) I thought, "wow, I used to spend a lot of money, EVERY DAY, on coffee." I come from a coffee culture and am now living in a culture that depends on coffee as an export- though the coffee profit hardly ever makes its way to the actual people who grow it here in the mountains of Guatemala. At the same time I knew that school registration was coming up

for our scholarship kids, not to mention the start of our brand-new Jovenes Program. I had also seen the school accounts and knew we really needed some support. Wheels started turning, visions of all of my friends and family in NYC putting down that infamous siren-emblazoned cup and saying "today, this latte money is going to El Nahual" flew through my head. Pow! A fundraiser was born!

The internet gods were smiling on me that day and somehow I managed to encode a PayPal donation button on my blog (what? I used to not be able to restart my Mac at NYU without help; necessity is truly the mother of invention) and put up a not-so-subtle plea for people to skip their latte:

"So imagine what we could do TODAY if everyone reading this blog skipped that latte and instead donated it to the kids here at El Nahual- whose families struggle to make ends meet on the best of days- and who could simply use some help. Your latte money will fund lunches for the kids in the Jovenes program, rent for the house we welcome them to each day, scholarships for kids entering primary school, and a Christmas party for them to celebrate the season with a trip to the zoo."

The results were truly amazing- particularly after the promise of a matching donation- and through this small campaign we raised nearly \$5000. That's a lot of lattes friends.



Jovenes Tienda News

By Mercedes Rey

After much thought but little preparation, El Nahual opened its own "tienda" on January 15, as a new project of the Jovenes Program. With the purpose of providing basic food products to the community at lower prices, while giving the jovenes the opportunity to learn and experience the management and day-to-day activities of a small business, the tienda was stocked with

beans, corn, oatmeal, rice, sugar and salt bought in large quantities and packaged by the youngsters in one and two pound bags. The tienda project was very well received by the jovenes, who decided to take the opportunity and make donuts for sale also. The community's response has been excellent and the sales have increased steadily as more families become aware of this new service. All proceeds from the sales contribute to the support of the Jovenes Program.



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Good Bye Alex

Hey Alex- yeah, so I was thinking about this whole situation of us leaving and saying goodbye to each other and El Nahual at the same time after mas o menos 6 months together and in my head I am envisioning this “You Can’t Do That on Television”-esque locker scenario...

Me:Heyyyy Alex?

You: Yes Kate?

Me: Remember how I got the little girls who are in the office in the morning to call you Profe Payaso?

You: Yeah Kate. I remember that.

Me: And then that time Wilmer started telling me a story about potatoes so loudly that you spit your green tea all over the back of my computer?

You: Yeah, that too.

Me: And how we always go to the comedor together and share one lunch with chorizo and one lunch with langoniza?

You: Yes Kaaaaaaate.

Me: Remember when you made us all watch National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation on the Thursday because that was YOUR Christmas morning?

You: What is your point Kate?

And the conversation would continue in this way with me trying to be sentimental and you telling me to get over it, but secretly agreeing with EVERYTHING I am saying. Which only makes me want to be more sentimental because part of our whole thing working together is me providing fodder for your jokes, you making the jokes and me cracking up hysterically- and in the meantime running 10 community programs and a Spanish school together.

I’m not sure you know what a contribution you have made to the school; your humor, down to earth pragmatism and huge heart (for human and beast alike) have a direct impact on the lives of those you work with. I watched you go from a Spanish student to a leader in a matter of weeks, always the first person to remind us of the point, the purpose, the end goal of what it is we are working toward as a community. You are the peas to my carrots and together we worked to create order, put plans in place for the future of El Nahual and continue all that was handed down to us from past coordinators.

The most important thing I have learned about you is that you are a person to be counted on whether it’s

jumping in to teach a class, giving endless vueltos to the ninos during the afternoon pausa, continuing the tradition of Wednesday night futbol without fail, feeding Xela and Ugly Dog our leftover tortillas, or offering to come in early to clean the school because due to unforeseen circumstances that is what needs to be done.

So Alexander, even when it was a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day- you were my partner in crime, fending off Long Island invasions, ducking cheap shots on the pitch, waiting for the internet/phone/water to function—and always there to make me smile. Because at the end of the day, that’s what this has been about; us working together for El Nahual, for the children, and for what we believe in.

In the tradition of our friendship: I don’t love you, won’t miss you and certainly won’t be thinking of you nor keeping in touch.



Alex’s Dog



Alex’s Best Pals



Alex



Alex’s First Love

Good Bye Kate

Well then Kate,

That was a nice thing to say. As you surely know, I'd love to be able to make a joke out of all of this. But since you've been so nice, I'll just leave the jokes for when we see each other again. You arrived at El Nahual back in October when I was still a Spanish student. We had just said bye to Charlie and a bunch of us left you on your first day to go to San Cristobal. In that respect, you were certainly thrown to the wolves to learn on your own upon your arrival. While it was a busy time at El Nahual with nino numbers soaring, you worked like crazy and made the position your own in little time.

Just weeks after your arrival, the other coordinator position opened up and you were pushed into the role of the veteran as I crawled into the office like a kindergartener on his first day of school. After a week or so of figuring things out with your and Sharon's help, our time together began as a team that would work together for the next five months through all forms of ups and downs; struggles and triumphs.

November is the month that we always refer back to either to share a laugh about various "trying" moments or moments where we accomplished together a sense of order and structure during a time of such chaos that was November at El Nahual. On post-meeting Mondays venting away our collective stresses and meetings together in Jaime's office about who knows what, we slowly but surely put things together and found a way to improve the already great organization we had inherited and to create a sense of continuity that would allow us to feel confident in the future of El Nahual even as we leave it now.

All this "we" talk though is quite misleading. While I like to entertain the notion that "we" did many of these things, it is undoubtedly true that it was your commitment, leadership, and strength that carried this place through the winter and into the spring. It isn't hard to bear notice to what you have meant to the people at El Nahual. One may notice the nearly hundreds of nino cards, gifts, and art projects dedicated to you adorned on your office wall. Or one may note the three different good-bye parties that were necessary for everyone who demanded to get their chance to say good-bye. If that isn't enough, one need only look to the true tears on the faces of every single one of the kids in the Jovenes program as they said good-bye to someone they had come to look to as a friend and role model who to them, can never be replaced.

Your work with the Jovenes program above all, truly expresses the value that you added to El Nahual. While the job of Volunteer Coordinator was time consuming enough alone, you put all your additional time and energy into creating an innovative new program for young women sorely needed with our expansion into adolescence in the Jovenes Program. With the help of Monica, you implemented from the ground up a program and curriculum that will exist long beyond your time here and will surely be invaluable to the young women who have the opportunity to participate.

So anyway, there isn't much that I can say that hasn't already been expressed by everyone who has come through the doors of our school. Whether it is a Spanish student or teacher, a volunteer or nino, even Norma the cleaning woman and her family, you have been appreciated and admired by everyone who has crossed your path and have earned every bit of it. While we at El Nahual must say good-bye to you, we all relish in the knowledge that the next steps in your life will surely do for the organizations you work with and the people you touch exactly what you have done for us. So as you said in keeping with our friendship, I definitely don't love you, I won't miss you, and I certainly won't be keeping in touch.



Kate and her hombres



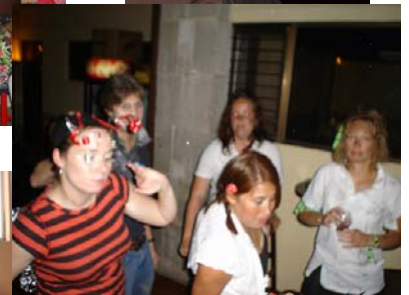
Kate hard at work



Kate's posse



Kate and her two favorite chicas



Kate and co On halloween

Get To know A...

Niño

Student

Rubi



Cuantos anos tienes? 9, voy a cumplir diez el 27 de mayo.

Cual es tu actividad favorita en El Nahual? Arte; porque hacen muy manualidades.

Que piensas de la comunidad de El Nahual? Que es muy bonito. Porque hay muchos ninos.

Que piensas de los maestros extranjeros aca? Que son muy buenos. Porque no son enojados y les gustan enseñar.

Que quisieras hacer cuando estuvieras grande? Doctora.

Que necesitas hacer para ser doctora? Estudiar enfermedades y hacer practica.

Como sientes ser la mas grande que 3 hermanitos? Feliz- porque soy la mas grande.

Cual es tu sujeto favorito en la escuela? Idioma español. Pq solo necesito escribir.

En donde quieres viajar? A Mexico- pq quiero la conocer.

Que quieres que las personas que estan leyendo esto saber sobre Guatemala? Que aquí es muy bonito. Lo mas importante parte de cultura aca son las costumbres.

Que quieres que las personas que estan leyendo esto saber sobre tu? Soy una chica feliz. Y que mi familia me apoya, que estudio en El Nahual.

Monica



How old are you?

23

Where are you from?

Oslo, Norway

What do you think of the El Nahual Community?

Its a fun, close community where everyone is included.

Whats it like learning a language in a foreign country?

Its definitely the best way of learning to be emerged in the language and the cultura.

What do you love most about Xela?

The people and the scenery

What do you miss most about home?

Friends and family

What do you want to be when you grow up?

I don't plan to grow up for quite a while, but I definitely want to do something involved with foreign aid. This is something I realized in my time here in Guatemala.

What do you think of the volunteer work at Manos De Colores?

I definitely think its an important job and it helps the community especially the children in Pacaja. Its fun and rewarding work to do and I love it.

What is your favorite overall class you have taught?

The older kids at Telesecundaria because of the environment and atmosphere in the class. It is joyful and a lot of fun.

Contact Us!

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**El Nahual**

Top 10 signs Your Homestay Family Is Not Going to Be the right fit.

10. You have to share your bed with a Quetzaltreker... And he sheds.
9. The directions to your house start with "begin at the summit and bring water"
8. Their dog is always chewing on a bone that looks strangely like your tibia.
7. Your homestay dad's name is Randy and you're certain you saw him on an episode of America's Most Wanted.
6. Your homestay mom tells you its safe to use the shower as long as you're standing on rubber.
5. When you ask about the last person who stayed with them, they say he was a good man but not a very fast runner.
4. They say, "you're Vegetarian, oh good so are the chickens."
3. They take you to a futbol game and root for Municipal.
2. On your first night, they offer to take you to the hospital as a pre-emptive measure.
1. They brag that their house was considered as a location for the film "Hostel II"



Carnival In Xela!

By Mercedes Rey

February brought renewed activity to the city when hundreds of people from all over the country came with their handcrafts, beautiful fabrics, hand-embroidered huipiles, furniture, housewares and more for a week of festivities and the traditional carnival before Lent. While most people were building their stalls and preparing for the week-long great marketplace established around the El Calvario Church, Tuesday saw the younger crowd braving

"cascarones" (eggshells) full of pica-pica (confetti) on each others heads, laughing, playing and enjoying the carnival. And, of course, the children of El Nahual did not miss the opportunity to have their own carnival in the school and also enjoyed the cascarones, masks, piñata and games they had made in their art classes during the previous week. For all students and volunteers both the carnival and the market were great and opportunities to see, experience and enjoy many of the mayan traditions of the city and the country.

