

## **Hello dear friends of the Juan Sisay Spanish School!**

This is our second NewsLetter and the very first thing we want to do in this NewsLetter is to say thank you for your interest in the School, in Xela and in Guatemala!

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We would like to thank Jayne Metcalf for providing an article to this NewsLetter!

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### **1. About the school**

- After working for the school for more than four years, Eduardo Lopez Queme has left the school January 4<sup>th</sup>. He now works for a primary school with children aged 10 to 12. His successor in the collective is Wilberth Gonzales from Retalhuleu who studies Law in Quetzaltenango.
- In the first week of February Tomy Mesa, who worked with us for two years left the school. He will do an internship to become an agriculturist.
- Elisabeth Gomez gave birth to a little boy! We wish her and her son the very best!

### **2. About the projects**

The school year started in mid January and will end in late October. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of January we celebrated this year's first dinner with the children of the project and their families. We were able to help them with school materials, shoes and clothing. Our students participated actively in the celebration and contributed to its success.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of February the English classes started for the children from the public school "Esteban Figueroa", which is located close to our school. We teach English to about 160 children aged five or six.

We need some volunteers teaching English in a rural school about 25 minutes away from the city centre. You can join this project for one month or longer, depending on your plans.

### **3. New organisational structure of the school**

In the yearly collective's conference the following structure for the year 2002 was decided:

- Dirección General: Yaneth Gramajo
- Dirección Administrativa: Marivel Gramajo
- Dirección Técnica: Lucrecia Rodriguez
- Coordinación de Actividades: Anibal Lopez and Ruby Leiva
- Coordinación Proyecto Niños/as: Juan Galicia, Lucrecia Rodriguez, and Wilberth Gonzalez
- Coordinación de Proyecto Inglés: Lizeth de Leon, Gabriel Alonzo y Julio Obando
- Coordinación Proyecto Reforestación: Mario Galindo and Magaly Pacajo
- Coordinación Diplomas: Elizabeth Gomez, Julio Obando and Yaneth Gramajo
- Coordinación Eventos Especiales: Juan Galicia and Gabriel Alonzo
- Coordinación de Limpieza: Laura Alonzo

#### 4. Quetzaltenango

At the end of December the new shopping mall “La Pradera” opened in Xela. It has more than 30 shops, 5 cinemas, cafés, restaurants, a supermarket, etc. Another shopping mall named “La Mocha” opened in the 4<sup>th</sup> street in zone 1.

The vegetarian restaurant “La Salida” has opened in Xela. It is located between 9<sup>th</sup> avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> street.

It became easier to withdraw money with your credit card, because 4 new ATM's were installed by the Bancared.

#### 5. Internet Cafés

- **La cafeteria@Net** - 15<sup>th</sup> avenue, zone 1 in the same block as our school. They offer special prices for and a 10% discount for food and drinks our students!
- **XEL@VIRTUAL** - 4th street, zone 1 at Plaza Polanco.
- **BW Computacion** - 12th avenue, 3rd street, zone 1 close to Central Park.
- **La casa de los abuelos** – 20th avenue, 3rd street in zone 3.

The average price for an hour is about 7 to 9 Quetzales.

#### 6. Security

To increase the security (as you may know, pickpockets are a problem in the more touristic areas) the local police initiated a program, which includes several areas on different days of the week.

Monday: Los Vahos

Tuesday: Las Georginas

Wednesday: El Baúl (the little mountain close to Xela)

Thursday: Las Georginas

Friday: Copavic Cantel

Saturday: Las Georginas

Sunday: San Juan Ostuncalco

#### 7. Websites and books

We added some more links and recommendations for books to our website. We hope that they are interesting for you!

Links: [http://www.juansisay.com/netsie/en/en\\_links.htm](http://www.juansisay.com/netsie/en/en_links.htm)

Books: [http://www.juansisay.com/netsie/en/en\\_buecher.htm](http://www.juansisay.com/netsie/en/en_buecher.htm).

#### 8. Jayne's Vacation in Quetzaltenango

It may not be everybody's idea of a vacation, but for me three weeks in Guatemala studying Spanish was just what I needed. After eleven years of part time study, I had finally finished my BA. A year and a half later I knew it was time to get back into an academic milieu. My next goal was to try and master the Spanish language.

I spent hours researching the options on the internet and finally decided to study in Quetzaltenango or Xela as the locals call it. Most foreign language students flock to the beautiful town of Antigua but with English speakers everywhere it is easy to have less than a total immersion. Xela on the other hand is less well known as a language school destination.

I flew into Guatemala City and spent the first night at a backpacker hotel close to the airport. The next day I jumped on a bus and four hours later I arrived in Xela. Although the city is the second largest in Guatemala, it is very maneuverable with just about everything within walking distance. I found the Juan Sisay Spanish school and before I knew it, had enrolled and was enroute to meet my Guatemalan home stay family. As soon as I met them and saw my large private room, I knew that this

was where I wanted to be (some students move families two or three times before they find the home that suits them).

The family owned a large estate two minutes from the school. Every morning after a 30minute run and a hot shower (what luck), I would join the cook, the family and the two other home stay students for breakfast. Tamales, tortillas, eggs, frijoles and hot cereal were the standard fare. Juanita, the 17 year old cook loved to chastise us if we spoke English and so we would struggle to find a few words to make ourselves understood.

Juan Sisay was an excellent Spanish school. Each student had their own teacher which allowed for five hours of private lessons five days a week! The teachers spoke very little English yet it was amazing how much one could understand with drawings and actions. Two or three days a week after the mid morning coffee and snack we would attend a mini conference and listen to discussions about the economy, women's rights or Mayan history. Fortunately one of the more advanced students would translate for those of us who sat desperately trying to understand the gist of the topic.

At 1pm school was over and we would return home to enjoy a hot meal usually of rice, beans and more tamales and tortillas. Then the day was our own. We could study at home or at one of the many coffee shops near by or attend an afternoon activity put on by the school. Monday might be salsa lessons, Tuesday a movie in Spanish, Wednesday a trip to a local town, Thursday a seminar on politics in Guatemala and Friday evening the weekly graduation and party. Dinner with the family was at seven and then we would either study or head into town for a night of dancing, attending a soccer game or partying at the local pub.

The school planned an optional outing every Saturday as well. We visited the market village of Chichicastenango one day, another we spend hours soaking in the sulfur hot springs at Fuentes Georginas, and another hiking up the sacred volcano Chicabal.

The tutoring, accommodation and food came at a bargain price, 125 US dollars per week! My only complaint was that with all the activity there never seemed to be enough time to study. And I would not choose to return to Xela in November; at 8000 feet above sea level – it was freezing. Mornings and evenings the mode of attire was fleece, jackets, scarves and toques. During the day the temperature reached more manageable highs in the 60's with sun every day.

Of course I was not ready to come home. I had become very close to many of my fellow students and my home stay family. I knew I would miss our cheery cook, the crowded markets and the local Mayans dressed in traditional costumes. Now two weeks later, I can still hear the Latin music that poured from the cantinas and shops all across the city and remember the heartwarming kindness of the locals and their infectious laughter.

Back in Vancouver some decisions had to be made. My time in Xela made it clear that I wanted to pursue language study in Vancouver. I have decided to return to SFU and begin the Spanish proficiency program focusing on fluency, composition and literature. And another visit to Guatemala is definitely in order. I will return for five weeks in April, this time to study for two weeks at Juan Sisay and then to explore the country. The Mayan city of Tikal, the splendor of lake Atitlan and the Caribbean area of the country are all waiting to be discovered. And with luck, I may even be able to communicate in some of the fourteen tenses in the Spanish language!

by Jayne Metcalf [JMetcalf@cnv.org].

OK, that's it for the moment. If you have any comments do not hesitate to write me an eMail.

Hasta pronto,  
Andreas