

Mayatan School News



September 2005

Farewell and Thanks to 2004/05



Fourth Graders doing traditional dancing.

Last school year finished with graduations, farewell parties and several formal and informal end-of year class trips to Omoa on the Caribbean coast, San Pedro Sula, local coffee fincas, Macaw Mountain Bird Park, Hacienda San Lucas and El Jaral Water Park.

Both the kindergarten and sixth grade classes had formal graduation ceremonies in the Copán Municipality followed by formal dinners. The ninth graders held an intimate ceremony with family and friends on the evening of Friday the 10th of June at the school. Each member of the class gave a heartfelt speech in either English or Spanish and science teacher David Meshoulam presented the class with a slideshow of photos from their first days through to their last weeks at Mayatan.

Special assemblies were also held with plaques presented by the Foundation to outgoing Directors Lindsay Hill and Josh Forehand, who over the past two years helped make Mayatan a model for non-profit bilingual education in Honduras.

The teachers celebrated the last day of classes with a happy hour and dinner at a local restaurant and also used the opportunity to get to know the new Academic Director Jenny James and her husband Antonio, who were visiting from Massachusetts for the weekend in preparation for next year.

Congratulations to all the new graduates and to our former and current teachers and staff ... A very sincere thank you!

Keeping Up With Mayatan

We'd like to start sending this newsletter every month or so to friends, family, alumni, parents, former teachers and sponsors to keep everyone informed about all the interesting and exciting things that are going on here at Mayatan.

If you'd like to comment on the new format or submit something to be included, we'd love to hear from you: director@mayatan.org. And if you'd rather not receive these updates please let us know. Also, please feel free to forward this on to your own family, friends and colleagues.

We're hoping to include student contributions soon and possibly even make this an extra-curricular activity.

Welcome to 2005/06

This year Mayatan has a record 18 non-Honduran teachers and directors along with 18 Honduran teachers, assistant directors and staff to support the 280 students!

As usual the first two weeks have been very hectic. On Sept. 1st, an Open House was held where officials for the Parents' Association were elected. We also celebrated Dia Del Niño and the Independence Day Parade and Festivities in the Parque Central before having a long 4-day weekend.

There are now two sessions of pre-kinder as it has become so popular and of the 74 children in these classes and kindergarten, 43 or 58% are on full or partial scholarships or *becas*.

With an excellent teaching staff, several dynamic school activities and after school clubs getting underway and some very exciting staff professional development planned everyone is enthusiastic about this being one of the best years ever at Mayatan.

Shakespeare in the Park



*Baseball Anyone?
Kinder student José Lopez*

This spring, the secondary school, along with the sixth grade and a group of faculty, presented a Shakespeare Festival in the Central Park. Two evenings in a row, students performed various productions in honor of the bard. Thursday evening, the sixth graders performed short scenes from “Julius Caesar” followed by the seventh graders’ version of the comedy, “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” and the eighth graders’ production of “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. On Friday evening, the ninth graders presented “Romeo and Juliet”, followed by a faculty performance of “Twelfth Night”.

Leading up to the performances, the students read the original plays and studied the life of Shakespeare in their English Literature classes with Becca Lowenhaupt. They memorized and rehearsed abridged versions in Shakespearean English.

As most of the audience could not understand the English, students wrote Spanish summaries that were read between scenes. They also worked on exaggerating the physical action to make the story easier to understand. Despite the language barrier, the evenings were a great success. The audience laughed at the jokes, and tears were shed at the end of the tragedies. The students got to experience Shakespeare at its best, in the open air on a beautiful night with the whole town there to watch.

Mayatan Secondary School Science Fair

Initiated and lead by science teacher David Meshoulam, the first, of what will hopefully be an annual, Mayatan School Secondary Science Fair took place on Thursday, April 21st 2005. All secondary students presented projects.

Three judges came from the United States and the six winning projects, which were taken to nearby Santa Rosa’s bilingual school’s science fair, were:

- How does blood circulate in the body? (Juan and Carlos Rene)
- What parts of the brain are used for each of the senses? (Maria Jose and Maria Fernanda)
- How to purify water (Gaby)
- How does changing the contents of a rocket affect its height? (Daysi Ramirez)
- How does the type of liquid affect yeast growth? (Manuel and Eduardo Gamez)
- How do coral reefs protect our beaches? (Lisandro Arias)

The Magic Treehouse

With a lot of imagination, a little help from nature and some improvised subtle lighting discovered in Copan’s one and only ‘thrift store’, our new librarian Emily Nyre has transformed the library into a cozy ‘treehouse’ where students get to listen to stories, choose books to check out and get extra help with their reading skills.

We returned from the summer holiday in August to an amazing 18 boxes of donated books! A very ecstatic *thank you* to everyone who sent these for their generosity and thoughtfulness.

We are now particularly in need of-

- Books for all ages in Spanish
- Class sets for all ages
- ‘Big Books’ for Kinder and First Grade

Boxes usually take up to 3 months and can be sent to: **Mayatan School, Copan Ruinas, Honduras**

Open Air Natural History Museum

Sixth Grade teacher Emory Blackwell has recently been working closely with a local architect in designing an open air natural history museum here at Mayatan School.

The displays will feature Mayan artifacts found around the local area along with an impression of butterflies and bugs which have been collected over the years by Mayatan students.

While planning is still in the early stages, it is envisioned that the upper students will do much of the work in crating and labeling the displays, landscaping the area and maintaining the pathways between exhibits.

We are hoping visitors to Copan will be able to stop by in between touring the ruins and spending time at the nearby bird park.



Community Building

Over the past few years, several Mayatan teachers developed a strong friendship with the Perez family. In addition to helping to secure sponsorships so Erlin, Beto, Memo and Marlon can all attend Mayatan, two-year kindergarten teacher Megan Collins-Richards and others also helped in improving the living conditions for the family. Up until August, they were living in a shack across from the world-famous ruins, which without exaggeration, was quite indescribable. At least two of the walls had crumbled leaving over half the house exposed and since moving, the roof has completely collapsed. The group organized the purchase of the land, raised funds, organized contractors and sourced materials, along with overseeing all the legalities in order to build the family a new home.

Working in conjunction with her university Spanish professor Viki Defferding, Megan also organized members of Viki's church youth mission group to come to Copán to for two weeks to help with the construction. Despite the sweltering summer Central American heat, the 16-member group very enthusiastically hauled cement bricks uphill for hours on end along while 11 year old Erlin acted as official translator.

Well done to *everyone* who helped with this amazing project!

Translations for Medical Brigade By Gabriella Maria Regalado 9th Grade

One of the good community works that Mayatan School does is that the secondary students go and translate for medical brigades. Going on medical brigades helps their community and at the same time it helps the students practice their English.

Helping on brigades is a very important act. The students translate the community people's symptoms into English so the doctors, who come from North America, can determine their sicknesses. The students or translators are like the embrace between the patient and the doctor.

Going on brigades also helps the students develop some skills. Helping on brigades lets them practice their English, and their skills of translating one language to another. They might even learn some new words during the day. The students get very involved in each of the patient's turn so they could even like to be doctors when they grow up. So after a hard day of translating and working, they get the satisfaction of having helped their community and even helped themselves!

Computers for Maya Chorti Communities

Over the years Mayatan has received many donations of computers. Unfortunately most of these can now only be used for typing skills and word processing as they are too outdated to install any new software onto or to connect to the internet.

Through a generous campaign started by Herb Zeimer, who also raised money for a soccer field and program, the school is now planning to buy several second hand IMacs.

We then plan to donate our older computers to a neighboring indigenous Maya Chorti village where our secondary school students will run Saturday workshops in basic computer literacy along with typing and word processing skills for other children who have never used computers.

If you would like to make a contribution to this campaign please contact us at director@mayatan.org

Mayatan School is fortunate to have so many wonderful sponsors and supporters who give so many children the unique opportunity of receiving an excellent quality bilingual education and make all we do here in Honduras possible. Over the summer we've been pleased to welcome some new very special people.

In between traveling around the U.S. to celebrate his retirement and 70th birthday, and their 25th wedding anniversary, Beverly and Charles Schnetzler contacted us about sponsoring a little girl from an indigenous Maya Chorti community. Along with several friends and spouses from Beverly's Book Club in Maryland, they are now sponsoring Osiris Marlen (although due to a bit of initial overexcitement, we thought her name was Aracelly!) Osiris started Kindergarten in August and comes from the nearby *aldea* of Carrizalito. Along with Jose Adeldo (below), she walks the two kilometers to and from school every day with her father or Jose's elderly grandmother.



After coming across Mayatan's website, John Weber contacted us about sponsoring a child with serious economic need who otherwise would not be able to attend the school. He began sponsoring Jose Adeldo Martinez, who also comes from Carrizalito, this summer. Soon afterward he offered to sponsor two more boys. This allowed us to enroll Arnol Hernandez and Daniel Gonzales. The families of all three boys are incredibly grateful for this opportunity for their children and, although their economic means are severely limited, are very serious about their children's education.

Although the families often have no electricity in the houses, the children always come to school fresh and neatly dressed in their uniforms. John's sponsorship pays for registration, books and tuition for the boys along with school and P.E. uniforms, shoes, daily breakfast and lunch, school supplies, a backpack and any minor medical expenses that may arise.

While studying Spanish in Copan with her daughter, Jane Blumberg met one of our students at a local orphanage where they were helping out. Soon after returning home she got in touch about sponsoring a girl. Now, between her daughter Gwen, sister-in-law Lisa and herself, the Blumberg women are now supporting three other little women here at Mayatan. Carmen Espinoza (at right) has just entered pre-kinder, Stephanie Maroquin is in kindergarten and Mavis Espinoza is one of our most bubbly and hard working ninth graders!



Many of our current sponsors originally came to Copan, and to know Mayatan through Elderhostel and Lindblad Tours. Many others visit us from Guacamaya and Ixbalanque Spanish Language Schools here in town. We'd like to extend a sincere thank you to these organizations for their support.



We are still looking for a sponsor for pre/kinder student Francis Martinez, here on the left, and about 40 other students. If you know anyone interested in finding out more detailed information about sponsorship and in receiving a full list of the children, please e mail- director@mayatan.org

Thank you!