

## Eyeglasses, dental exams, construction, women's workshops keep IE group busy



Working with their Mam Presbyterian partner, 31 people from the Albany Presbyterian participated in an IE trip that included free fluoride treatments for 600 children in the Quetzaltenango (Xela) region of Guatemala. The group also gave away glasses after eye exams, assisted dentists and a visiting medical student.

*By the Rev. Kathy Gorman-Coombs, CEDEPCA USA board*

"Is that better or is that better?" Guatemalan villagers were asked as they tried on pair after pair of eyeglasses. The Albany (NY) Presbyterian Intercultural Encounter team had brought 300 pair of prescription eyeglasses of varying strengths, and after a basic eye test, they depended on trial and error to find a pair that worked for individual patients.

It was easy to tell when they hit the right eyeglasses, said the Rev. Bonnie Orth, pastor of Mayfield NY Presbyterian Church. When the person found the right pair, after possibly years of blurry vision, their faces would light up with joy. One hundred and fifty villagers who'd come for the free

glasses clinic left able to see again.

Orth said that was one of the highlights of the CEDEPCA trip that she led to Guatemala this spring. The trip also provided medical and dental examinations and equipment, retreats for women and relationship-building with Maya Quiche and Mam presbyteries. Participants included doctors, dentists, nurses, and members of Mayfield, Cambridge and Shusan NY churches. The youngest member was 14; the oldest was 77. Some had been to Guatemala many times; for others this was their first trip. Since 2007 Orth has been organizing and leading trips that focus on empowerment of women and provision of life necessities for Guatemalans.

Trip co-leader the Rev. Kate Kotfila, of Cambridge Presbyterian Church in Albany, first came to Guatemala on an Albany/Mam Presbytery partnership where 10 women from Albany joined women from the Mam Presbytery for

a weekend retreat. That retreat focused on domestic violence while worshipping and doing Bible study together and building relationships.

This trip, Orth and Kotfila joined Betty Carrera from CEDEPCA Women's Ministry for two different women's retreats during the week, with 100 women attending. In Guatemala, relationships between Protestants and Roman Catholics are still very tense, so when Juana Herlinda, the leader from the Mam Presbyterial, reached out to Roman Catholic women in the Quetzaltenango area, it was a brave and boundary-breaking action on her part. It worked well, as women from different communities found their commonality as daughters of God.

The Albany area group stayed busy, also building a second floor classroom at a Presbyterian church, assisting dentists and helping give 600 fluoride treatments, assisting a visiting medical student with patients, and creating a covered school patio for kids.

Orth, who just finished her term on the CEDEPCA USA board, leads an Albany trip every two years, supported by Albany's Guatemala Partnership, which began with the Mam Presbytery over 30 years ago.

### Four ways to get involved with CEDEPCA:

1. **Support us financially.** You can donate online at [www.cedepca.us](http://www.cedepca.us) or send a check to CEDEPCA USA, PO Box 920243, Norcross, GA, 30010
2. **Support us on social media.** "Like" and follow us on Facebook: CEDEPCA USA (English), and CEDEPCA (Spanish). Get resources and program information on our website, [www.cedepca.us](http://www.cedepca.us)
3. **Share your stories.** Write to us at [info@cedepca.us](mailto:info@cedepca.us)
4. **Share with others.** Share articles from this newsletter and our e-newsletter. You can sign up for the e-newsletter on our website.

## Casa Materna important Women's Ministry partner

By Gwen Wagner  
CEDEPCA USA Board

*Her delivery date is close. Complications arise, and she can barely stand with the pain. To get help, she has a long, dirt path to walk for miles. She may lose her baby on the road; she may lose her life.*

She walks to Cahabón, a village in the most impoverished state in Guatemala. Its population is 95% indigenous Maya Q'eqchi, and most of the women speak only this language. The community is 90% rural, which means they live in the mountains and lack easy access to medical help during pregnancy.

These women travel over dirt roads and treacherous terrain to reach the Medical Center in the town. The center does not have the facilities to house expectant mothers and turns away those not in labor. These women had nowhere to go but back to their homes. Many would start labor on the return trip. Many would not survive to return to the Medical Center.

Casa Materna Ana Sayre was built in Cahabón with the help of the Rev. Anne Sayre, who identified maternal mortality as one of the gravest issues of the district. In Guatemala,

24 babies die out of every 1,000 born, a maternal death rate that is second highest in the Western Hemisphere.

Sayre, a Presbyterian minister who served as a mission co-worker with CEDEPCA, worked to establish a partnership between the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, CEDEPCA and the Northern District of the Nazarene Church in Guatemala.

This birthing center in the village of Cahabón was established through CEDEPCA's Women's Ministry to help pregnant women in remote areas have a free and safe place to finish their labor close to a health center. Because of Sayre's leadership in building the Casa, the district named it after her.

Today the Casa Materna Ana Sayre is a functioning women's house where pregnant women can stay while awaiting labor.

All of the women who have used the Casa since it opened its doors in 2014 have given birth to healthy babies and survived. Several of the women experienced potentially dangerous complications but were able to be diagnosed by the resident nurse early enough to travel to a hospital to receive appropriate life-saving care.

Sayre and CEDEPCA Women's Ministry coordinator Betty Carrera bring visiting medical groups and volunteer construction crews yearly,



At Casa Materna earlier this year, families attended health workshops facilitated by Betty Carrera of CEDEPCA and Anne Sayre, past president of CEDEPCA USA, who led the Dr. Liz Knepp Medical Group IE trip.

facilitated by the Intercultural Encounters program. The clinic offers workshops on pre and post-natal care, family planning and related women's ministry issues.

As word spreads to the surrounding small communities, more and more young women are utilizing the Casa. With only six beds, the Casa is often full to overflowing. Casa Materna would like to have North American midwives come to the work, teach and learn with Guatemalan midwives.

## Couple plans unique honeymoon: IE service project trip Guatemala

By Sunny Stautz  
CEDEPCA USA Board

When most couples plan their honeymoon, they don't talk about a day long-bus trip on muddy mountain roads to spend a week in a rural area of the Guatemalan highlands. They don't plan on doing co-mission work through an Intercultural Encounter with CEDEPCA. And they don't usually have a "honeymoon" that includes family members and people they might not even know. But Andrew Wise and Damaris Santos of Dallas, Texas, aren't most couples.

Wise, who grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, went on his first Intercultural Encounter trip 12 years ago with a group led by Erik Mjorud, who just finished his term on the CEDEPCA USA board. "It was an awesome conglomerate of people from

different churches," said Wise. He joined their annual trips for the next seven years. Many of the group trips organized by Mjorud and the Greater Atlanta Presbytery were to Cahabón, where former CEDEPCA USA president Anne Sayre worked with the local Nazarene church and Casa Materna to build a birthing clinic. (See related story.)

It was Santos who came up with the idea of having their honeymoon be this year's trip, scheduled for August. Once she realized the trip date matched the time they'd planned for a honeymoon, "it felt like a natural thing," she said.

"She's been so fascinated about the trips I've gone on," said Wise. "I've always wanted to go back and she's always wanted to see it. I think it's amazing she was so willing and excited to go." — Continued Page 4





Pastor Osmundo Ponce of the Suchitepequez Presbytery participated in the "Men in the Mirror" program and continues leading a men's group study.

## Will you share your stories with us?

*By the Rev. Elizabeth Milford  
President, CEDEPCA USA Board*

After my first CEDEPCA trip to Guatemala and Costa Rica for a seminary class, I knew my life was changed forever. I was captivated by the culture and awed by the beauty of the horizons. But most of all, I was inspired. A Bible study with the CEDEPCA staff had opened my eyes to a new way of reading Scripture, one I still hear echoing in the background every time I read the text from Luke. I climbed a hillside, hand in hand with a toddler as we saw how a small community was coming together through sustainable farming techniques. I felt the mist off Lake Atitlan, and bought my first stole. I experienced the creative force of the Spirit through observing and discussing Mayan spirituality.

More than 10 years later, I have been able to add many more stories, from a summer spent as a volunteer to a week of vacation catching up with old friends to a visit with the CEDEPCA USA board last year. Yes, I can say without a doubt, I have been transformed by CEDEPCA.

As a pastor and Christian educator, I have learned so much about what it means to experience God's presence and embody the gospel because of my time in Guatemala. I have been stretched and challenged in ways that have deepened my own well. No matter where my life or call has taken me, I always find a part of my heart at home with CEDEPCA. It has been an honor for me to serve on the board of CEDEPCA USA for the past two years, and I am humbled by the opportunity to now serve as its president.

My hope for this time of leadership is to continue to encourage us to share the story of CEDEPCA with as many people as will listen. Soon, you will see posts on Facebook and the website from other Board members about "why CEDEPCA matters."—*Continued Page 4*

## "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." —I Corinthians 3: 6

*By the Rev. Kevin Frederick*

A 2019 follow-up teaching tour is being scheduled for the violence-prevention program "Men in the Mirror" that I taught in Guatemala through CEDEPCA and the Presbyterian Church USA. The workshop's concepts are such a radical cultural change that I have been asked to return and do a more intensive workshop where male pastors and church leaders can ask questions and gain confidence in leading others in this program.

Challenging men to look at how they treat wives and children is difficult because in much of rural Guatemala husbands and wives are not encouraged to date or even show affection in public. The perception is that such behavior is demonstrated only to a second girlfriend and wives don't want to be perceived as prostitutes.

These perceptions are just some of the cultural issues addressed in the "Men in the Mirror" classes. The curriculum recognizes that males grow up learning their own masculine identity from all aspects of society, from one's mother to peers and male role models.

Working with CEDEPCA, with Emerson Morales and Betty Carrera (and PCUSA Mission Workers Brian and Sandi Thompson-Royer) opened doors to provide the greatest impact involving church congregations of many denominations, government agencies and nine presbyteries.

The curriculum invites men to reflect on their own masculinity by examining the humanity of Jesus in his interpersonal relationships with a wide range of people from the Samaritan woman at the well to the scribes and Pharisees. Participants are encouraged to examine their own interpersonal dynamics and pattern their responses on Christ.

CEDEPCA staff report numerous hopeful signs of the impact of this curriculum one year later. Many Protestants in Guatemala have been taught to focus on the divine nature of Jesus, thereby discounting his humanness. The opportunity to explore his life and learn from him in his role as great teacher was a new perspective for many, one they were intrigued by and have begun to embrace.

## IE facilitator accepts new job as PC (USA) world mission liaison for Guatemala, Mexico

By Sunny Stautz  
CEDEPCA USA board member

"I've learned a lot from working in Guatemala with CEDEPCA," said the Rev. Leslie Vogel, a co-mission worker for the Presbyterian Church (USA) at CEDEPCA since 2013. "I know what some of the joys and tribulations are...what it means to be a partner, walking alongside Guatemalans." She added, "We're in this together, trying to find ways to mutually support one another in pursuing God's mission."

Vogel will be taking those lessons learned with her as she becomes the new Regional Liaison for Presbyterian World Mission in Guatemala and Mexico, starting June 1. The PC (USA) has been a mission partner with CEDEPCA for over 30 years and Vogel said the church will continue to have a mission co-worker there, filling the position she currently holds. The IE facilitator job opening has been posted on Facebook's CEDEPCA USA page and on the PC (USA) World Mission website.

A familiar face to many who have participated in Intercultural Encounters, Vogel has worked with IE coordinator Emerson Morales, interpreting for and facilitating US



*The Rev. Leslie Vogel translates for a group visiting CEDEPCA headquarters in Guatemala City.*

and Canadian groups who visit. That background will also help with her new job. The PC (USA) does frequent travel-study seminars along specific themes, and Vogel has been involved with several of those trips, as CEDEPCA worked as the in-country organizers for Guatemala.

While Vogel will continue to live in Guatemala, she will make frequent trips to Mexico, as part of her role will be to

### 2018 Summer IE trips:

*Thirteen CEDEPCA IE groups have already visited Guatemala in 2018, including churches, seminaries, presbyteries, colleges, and medical and humanitarian service non-profits. Up next are:*

#### June:

6-7 Williamsburg (VA) Presbyterian Church  
11-20 Nacoochee Presbyterian Church (GA)  
17-24 Emory University (Atlanta, GA)  
20-27 Kingwood Christian Church (Houston, TX)  
25 PEG Partners (US non-profit focusing on school partnerships in Guatemala)

#### July

2-9 Second Presbyterian Church (Richmond, VA)

5-14 North Decatur Presbyterian Church (GA)

#### August

1-11 Shandon Presbyterian Church (Columbia, SC)  
10-19 Greater Atlanta Presbytery (GA)

participate in cultivating new global partnerships there. Additionally, "CEDEPCA has a program of women's ministry based in Mexico City and I hope to provide encouragement for that program," she said.

## Share stories

—Continued from Page 3

There is power in these stories. They connect us to each other, whether we have traveled on a bumpy windy road together in Guatemala, or simply are crossing paths with others whose lives have been touched by CEDEPCA.

I invite you to share, in writing or video, your own stories. The ways in which CEDEPCA has transformed our lives may just be the beginnings of the transformation for someone else.

## Honeymoon plan *Continued from Page 2*

In lieu of the traditional wedding gifts, the couple plans to ask for gifts for CEDEPCA, similar to the giving ideas listed on CEDEPCA USA's website. Santos explained she's working on a website for wedding invitees to get the details.

Wise said, "I've amassed most of the things we need for a household...it's not like we need a registry." Having a non-traditional "registry" of gifts for CEDEPCA's work in Guatemala "seems like the right thing to do for us," said Wise. Santos said as the couple planned the wedding, "we were struggling with spending so much money for one day." The couple felt the answer was to have a low-key wedding and raise money for Guatemala instead.

While Wise and Santos hope their Intercultural Encounter with Greater Atlanta Presbytery will be at Casa Materna in Cahabón, they know weather can be a factor in getting there. August is during the rainy season and one year the roads were impassible. The group went to Quetzaltenango instead, restoring an area after a mudslide. "CEDEPCA is totally awesome because they are very adaptable," said Wise. "There's always more than one thing we can be tasked with."