

Right: In Cahabón, Atlanta trip members help distribute water filters to those who completed the training class. Erik Mjorud, who was very involved in raising money for the filters, holds one for a woman from the village. Photo by Andrew Wise

Far right: After the Tamar Project graduation ceremonies, Andrew Wise and Damaris Santos stand with class facilitators (left) and Betty Carrera, coordinator for Women's Ministry, who offers the course. Photo by Erik Mjorud

Photos by



Wedding donations, creative fundraising help Atlanta IE group raise funds for multiple CEDEPCA projects

By Sunny Stautz
CEDEPCA USA Board

It began with a “what if” idea as Andrew Wise and Damaris Santos planned their wedding. The date of an Intercultural Encounter trip was the week after the ceremony. What if that trip were their honeymoon? They really didn’t need a lot of household gifts. What if they were to ask wedding guests to donate to CEDEPCA instead of having a traditional wedding registry?

That “what if” snowballed into a trip where members of an Atlanta-area Intercultural Encounters group pursued fundraising through a variety of activities. The 10-member group raised money for projects with CEDEPCA, including over \$5,000 for water filters and \$1,000 for educational workshops.

Andrew’s mother Beth Ann Wise and the children in Vacation Bible School at her small Methodist church found a way to be involved. The IE trip was going to be her first, so she

invited another member of the group, Erik Mjorud, to talk to the Vacation Bible School kids about children in Guatemala. Erik, who has been involved with CEDEPCA USA almost since its beginning, was happy to do so. He explained that many children in Guatemala don’t have clean water to drink and that CEDEPCA provides water filters and training in how to use the filters correctly.

The children raised money for water filters over the week, starting with a donation of pennies the first day. The second day, it was nickels; the third day, dimes; the fourth day, quarters. Day five was any coin—or paper bill. They contributed an amazing \$700 in donations.

Via Facebook, Erik asked for water filter donations instead of presents for his 63rd birthday. His church, Pleasant Hill Presbyterian, had a Mother’s Day donation fundraiser. Through American Eagle Relocation Services, he offered to move things for people

who donated the cost of water filters. The total for these donations raised almost \$3,000 more to add to Andrew and Damaris’s gift.

A third of the \$3,000 Andrew and Damaris raised in lieu of wedding gifts also went toward water filters and a third went to Casa Materna Ana Sayre projects.

Profits from an estate sale also went to CEDEPCA to help finance projects.

On their IE trip, the group helped Disaster Ministry staff assemble and distribute 80 of those water filters to people in Cahabón, where CEDEPCA works with Casa Materna Ana Sayre. Cahabón is a small town in the remote edge of Alta Verapaz province, and the group spent most of the week there and in even smaller rural villages in outlying areas.

The last \$1,000 of the money Andrew and Damaris raised funded The Tamar Project, a Women’s Ministry workshop for girls aimed at stopping sexual violence.

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Creative fundraising...

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Andrew and Damaris saw their gift in action in Cahabón, as their IE group participated in the graduation ceremony for 20 girls who completed the classes. Erik explained the focus is to “help young girls protect their bodies” and “how to say ‘no’ in a culture where that’s difficult to do.”

Andrew, Damaris and the rest of the 10 members of the IE group participated by handing out diplomas and congratulating the girls, who ranged in age from 12 to 16. Participating helped show the girls that “what they were doing is important and they have our support,” explained Erik.

He added working with CEDEPCA staff, seeing how their contributions made a difference, “really highlighted the incredible work that CEDEPCA continues to do in the world.”

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(in Spanish)



US-Guatemala partners meet, share in Kentucky

*By Kathy Gorman-Coombs
CEDEPCA USA Board*

Former and future staff members of CEDEPCA Guatemala and a board member from CEDEPCA USA (me), attended the PCUSA Guatemala Partnership Network conference held recently in Louisville, KY. The network is made up of PCUSA groups who are in partnership with groups who are part of the Guatemalan Presbyterian Church (IENPG) The gathering for those involved in Guatemalan co-mission work focused on networking, sharing of information, and learning together.

The Guatemala Network gathering was the first chance for many of us to meet the Rev. Eliane Menezes, the new Mission Co-worker who will be replacing the Rev. Leslie Vogel at CEDEPCA. Leslie is now PCUSA Coordinator for Mission Co-workers in Mexico and Guatemala. Eliane will soon become a familiar face for Intercultural Encounter groups, after she makes the move to Guatemala this month. She will

serve as a facilitator, interpreter and translator. Eliane grew up in Brazil and speaks Portuguese, Spanish and English. She has been involved in promoting multi-language ministries in the PCUSA.

For more information on Eliane, go to <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/new-mission-co-workers-called-to-service-in-central-america>

Fifteen partnerships of various types were represented at the Guatemala Network gathering, along with the Presbyterian Mission Agency, CEDEPCA, Living Waters for the World, Grannies on the Bus, and the PCUSA Office of Immigration issues.

Immigration issues were highlighted at the conference, including an in-depth update on immigration-related events and policies from Amanda Craft of the Office of Immigration issues. Leslie spoke about some of the “root causes” of migration from the Guatemalan perspective. “Grannies

on the Bus,” a grassroots group of mostly retired folks who travelled by bus to the border after hearing about children separated from their parents, have created a network of folks throughout the country who are providing support to migrants of various statuses

In addition to Eliane, PCUSA Guatemalan Mission Co-workers Richard and Debbie Welch and Sandi and Brian Thompson-Royer spoke to the group, Richard and Debbie in person, Sandi and Brian by Skype.

Participants shared information on projects their partnerships are working on together, and talked with each other about some of the challenges and joys of this work. Many of the groups work with CEDEPCA when traveling in Guatemala.

The PCUSA Guatemala Network meets about every two years, generally alternating locations between the US and Guatemala. When meeting in Guatemala, members of the Guatemalan groups join us.

Fourth in a series:

CEDEPCA, partner ACT Alliance help after volcanic eruption

CEDEPCA has been working for several years as a member of the Guatemala chapter of an international organization called “ACT Alliance.” The alliance is a coalition of more than 140 churches and church-related organizations, working together in over 100 countries. Member organizations support the alliance by sharing the resources of 25,000 staff, and distributing about \$1.5 billion each year in three targeted areas: humanitarian aid, development, and advocacy for poor and marginalized people. This story and the related one on page 4 show readers different ways CEDEPCA works as an ACT Alliance partner in Guatemala.

By Gwendolyn Wagner
CEDEPCA USA board

Ecological disaster hit Guatemala last June, in the form of a volcano named Fuego, which means “fire.” Fuego has had more than 60 eruptions since 1524, but last summer’s was one of the country’s most deadly. And afterwards, CEDEPCA and ACT Alliance were there to help.

When Fuego erupted, it generated columns of ash as high as 6.2 miles above sea level. This volcano, located 27 miles southeast of Guatemala City, dominates the horizon with its cloud of ash and smoke. The June eruption created pyroclastic flows of lava and mud that enveloped homes, highways, and bridges, and destroyed corn, coffee, and beans harvests. Relief organizations estimate the number of dead and missing to be at least 2,900. In total, 1,700,000 people were affected. Ash buried villages. Entire families were wiped out.

CEDEPCA and other members of “ACT Guatemala Forum,” the local ACT Alliance, went out as soon as they could safely enter the area. This forum consists of CEDEPCA, Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala (CECG), Christian Aid, and The Lutheran World Federation. These groups pooled resources and expertise to work through the Fuego emergency.

They started working with people relocated to shelters. A team of three psychologists headed for Alotenango, at the foot of Fuego, to offer counsel to these affected people. The team was warned of more eruptions, dangerous gas and steam, water and rock with mud.

A first response to the volcanic eruptions severely depleted CEDEPCA’s general fund. The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance provided a \$10,000 grant to CEDEPCA for the immediate emergency needs such as personal hygiene kits and psychological and trauma support for impacted residents. But the crisis conditions are anticipated to last until July, 2019.

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Top: CEDEPCA staff members Jorge Ramírez and Fredy Mejía help unload the food at a distribution center. Center: Ana Paxtor of Disaster Ministry helps with food distribution. Bottom: Several groups were involved in funding the food distribution to an affected community. Photos by Priscila Barrientos, CEDEPCA.

CEDEPCA's Ana Paxtor represents Guatemala ACT Alliance in Cuba

By Sunny Stautz
CEDEPCA USA Board

Ana Paxtor, from CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry, traveled to Havana, Cuba, this fall, participating in a workshop on climate change and reducing the effect of natural disasters. Ana said participating "was very enriching. I met people committed to caring for the environment."

The workshop in Havana, entitled "Reducing Risks in the Face of Climate Change," was organized by ACT Alliance, and co-sponsored by the Cuban Churches Council, the Cuban Association of United Nations, and other groups. Delegates attending the workshop came from more than 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries and Spain.

In Spanish, the title of CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry's is actually "Prevention and Attention to Disasters," focusing both on community preparedness and post-disaster response.



Ana's presentation covered both community-based psychosocial help after a disaster strikes, and CEDEPCA's work on climate change and mitigating the risk of natural disasters. She said, "The most important thing is to have an early alert system to evacuate at-risk areas and save the largest number of lives." She said planning also involves "historical memory about disasters that have happened in an area, to be prepared before, during and after a disaster."

Planning, she said, should include "plans to adapt to climate change and to be aware of the psychological harm that disasters can provoke. Include plans for psychosocial accompaniment to reestablish mental health."

She wants to continue the work of training leaders so that "our Guatemalan population will be more resilient and can adapt to climate change."

Volcano help a combined effort

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Because CEDEPCA is a partner in ACT Guatemala Forum, all the member groups are working to provide funding and staff that will last until next summer. Their efforts include psychosocial care for those still in shelters, personal hygiene kits, seeds, portable water heaters, and cash transfers so people can buy supplies at local stores.

The volcanic eruption destroyed vital infrastructures such as water supply and schools. Longer-term impacts of acid rain and ash are likely to affect food security and livelihoods for years to come. Now the rainy season raises concern that ash and debris will clog sewers, causing flooding problems and further health risks.

Since both CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry and ACT Guatemala Forum also work to prevent disasters and reduce the effects of disasters, they will offer courses in hygiene and solid waste disposal, and empowerment and resiliency classes for women affected by the disaster.

Please continue to pray for all affected and consider a donation to support their efforts. You can make these donations at www.cedepca.us/donate.



#GIVINGTUESDAY™

November 27, 2018

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- Like and share our posts about CEDEPCA's transformation
- Comment with your own experiences and pictures of CEDEPCA
- Make a donation to support CEDEPCA's ministries at: <https://www.cedepca.us/donate> and help us reach our goal of \$5,000!

Special gifts awarded to our first \$100 donation and a to a new donor that is randomly selected.