

roots  
and  
wings

international

2011

# Change Lives Through Education



Annual Report 2011

Roots and Wings International

6/5/2012

# Welcome

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Dear Friends,

2011 brought enormous growth and change to Roots and Wings International (RWI) in the form of new programs, even more generous donations, and new volunteers. We are extremely grateful to TECO for donating nine additional computers to the RWI Learning Center. Microsoft continues to show its support for RWI's educational programs by donating software to the Learning Center. These generous donations benefit the 118 students enrolled in our tutoring and computer literacy classes. We have raised tens of thousands of dollars this year thanks to our individual donors and partners at Foundation Beyond Belief, See Your Impact, and local community and civic groups. Ninety-four percent of all funding goes directly to program expenses and this additional funding allowed us to award university scholarships to four new students for a total of 23 university scholarship recipients currently enrolled in university.

This year we launched our own micro-lending program, Credit with Wings, which provides loans of up to \$200 to community members for any income generating activity. Not only do the loans help local villagers launch their own businesses, but all interest paid is funneled back into RWI's micro-lending and educational programs to benefit all members of the community.

In addition to the new micro-lending program, RWI also expanded its online presence with a new mobile site to allow our followers to keep up with us on the go, and a new travel section on our website to promote tourism in and around rural Guatemala where we work. We humbly invite all of our supporters and followers to visit our travel section and plan a visit to Pasac to see first-hand the accomplishments our local staff and scholars have achieved with your help and support. Our partnership with Carpe Diem, also allows us to host groups of up to twelve high school and college students each semester to share our work and give them the opportunity to live and volunteer in rural Guatemala.

2011 was a landmark year for Roots and Wings and we are confident that our staff will carry this momentum into 2012. Our work and accomplishments would not be possible without our donors

and partners and we are constantly amazed by their generosity. Jolkona is a great source to read about our scholars and the students who visit our Learning Center. Our supporters can also follow us on our social media platforms, on Facebook, Twitter, and our blog to keep up to date on our progress over the coming year. We truly appreciate your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "ERIK Swanson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name in all caps and the last name in title case.

Erik Swanson

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to encourage social and economic development in rural Guatemala by promoting education at all levels - from elementary school to university. We believe that development must be based in the local culture and responsive to locally identified needs.

The population we currently serve is made up of indigenous youth who come from families earning \$2 per day growing coffee. We work with these youth to develop the critical thinking skills necessary for putting their own communities on a path to sustainable development. To that end, the goal of all our programs is to give these students the tools they need to obtain higher education.

## **Program Highlights**

## Core Programs

### University Scholarship Program

As RWI grows, the University Scholarship Program remains at the core of our mission to empower youth to receive a college education. In 2011, RWI had 23 scholarship students enrolled in university. These scholarships allow young people to pursue their dreams of becoming teachers, lawyers, and doctors.



### After-School Elementary Tutoring Program

The Roots and Wings tutors, Cecelia and Diego, teach over 130 children enrolled in the After-School Elementary Tutoring Program the joy and importance of reading. Children come to the tutoring center twice weekly and Cecelia and Diego help them with their homework, read books with them, and tutor them in a variety of subjects including math and art, in both K'iche' and Spanish.



### Computer Literacy Program



RWI's computer lab was the first of its kind in the region and RWI's computer literacy classes help students fully utilize these resources. An added component of the computer literacy program is the Skype cultural exchange program between the RWI students and children from North Wall School in Spokane, Washington. The Computer Literacy Program has been certified by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education. The computer literacy classes now take place in the Roots and Wings Learning Center which is the first computer laboratory in the area. TECO generously donated nine additional computers in 2011, for a total of 34 computers available to students.

### **University Preparatory School**

Public schools in rural Guatemala are often out of reach for many children and private school is costly. The RWI University Preparatory School will make primary education accessible to all children in Nahuala, Sololá highlands. The school is currently in the planning stages and we need your help to make this dream a reality. This \$1.5 million project is the next

extension of our educational efforts and will educate the next generation of Roots and Wings Scholars

## **Community Programs**

### **Community Development Meetings**

In addition to the scholarships received, RWI scholars also receive support in the form of counseling and community discussions. The scholars choose the topics of these community development meetings where they can voice their concerns and ideas for community programs. The RWI counselors are also available to help students address any difficulties in school and encourage family support throughout the academic process.





Learning Center. High school and college students also have the opportunity experience Guatemalan life and volunteer with Roots and Wings with the Carpe Diem International Education program each semester.

### **Credit with Wings**

The Credit with Wings program granted its first three loans to community members in the fall of 2011. This program lays a strong foundation for families to increase their incomes to free up more time and resources to send their children to school. These \$200 loans can make a huge difference for families that live on less than \$2 a day and all interest from the loans is funneled back into our educational programs.



### **Travel Program**

The new Roots and Wings Travel Experience gives travelers a unique view of Guatemalan life while also increasing income in the local community. Visitors have the option of staying in the private RWI living facilities, or in a local home stay, and participating in customizable tours or volunteering in the



## **Accomplishments: Year in Review**

In 2011, we awarded university scholarships to four new students, for a total of 23 university scholarship recipients enrolled in university. Currently, 118 students from different villages around Pasac are enrolled in our tutoring program and computer literacy classes. Software donations from Microsoft are an important addition to the computer literacy program along with nine additional computers donated by TECO to expand the computer laboratory and provide computer literacy classes to local students.

In 2011, Roots and Wings expanded its community development programs to provide small loans to community members for entrepreneurial activities through Credit with Wings. The program has been functioning very well, providing much needed credit to members of the communities that we serve while also raising funds for our education programs.

RWI also provides support to our communities with the RWI travel program that gives tourists a unique travel experience off the beaten track and a rare view into indigenous life in Guatemala. The cost of the tours and accommodations go straight back to the community benefiting the local community members incomes through sustainable tourism. Groups of college and high school students also have the opportunity to live and work in Pasac, Sololá and volunteer as tutors in our Learning Center through the Carpe Diem exchange program. These students have consistently praised their experiences and report feeling moved and humbled by their time volunteering in with RWI.

## **Scholar Profiles**

### **Catarina Mercedes Guarchaj**

In 2010, Catarina completed her third year of studies as an RWI Scholar and earned her associates degree in social work. She is now working towards her bachelor's degree in Social work at Rafael

Landivar University and was recently recognized as the top student in her class. She completed the 2011 academic year with a grade-point average of 91.5%.

Catarina is eager and excited to finish her university degree so that she can begin her career as a social worker. She says that the additional workshops and group meetings held by RWI provided a strong network for all RWI Scholars to remain successful university students. She is passionate about working with local community organizations, and helping all members of her community realize their potential to improve their society. Catarina specifically hopes to help the youth of her community get involved with local projects to improve their own lives, as well as the community as a whole.

Above all, Mercedes plans to work with the Defensoría de la Mujer Indígena (DEMI) – a human rights group that promotes the rights of women in Guatemala. Through a career in promoting indigenous women’s rights, Catarina hopes to fulfill many of the promises written in the Guatemalan Constitution and the Declaration of Human Rights for her own people in Guatemala.



### **Lorenzo Gurchaj Tum**

Lorenzo has been a RWI Scholar since 2010. He is in his fifth semester at Mariano Gálvez University



of Guatemala working towards his degree in Public Accounting and Auditing.

“My principal objective is to contribute to society in the sense that accounting is managed according to tributary laws so that taxes are paid as they should be. I would like to be a leader in my community for its development, in the sense of lending my knowledge and applying for projects from institutions, as well as improvements to the roads, the schools, and other necessities of my community.”

“Thanks to Roots and Wings that pays my tuition, with this help I can cover the basic expenses that I have. It is one more opportunity for growth in my personal and family life. Otherwise I would not be able to provide for myself, and my siblings who are studying in elementary and secondary school with what I earn in my job.”

“The Roots and Wings Community Development Meetings have also had a strong influence because of the small projects that we can accomplish in the community. The meetings have been a good experience, since all of the scholarship recipients share our ideas and the experiences we’ve had throughout our studies. They help us resolve certain problems that our country of Guatemala faces, such as environmental pollution.”



### **Manuela Tzep Lopez**

Last year, Manuela was completing her eighth semester at Universidad Panamericana for her degree in Social Work with a concentration in Development Management.

“I chose this career because I enjoy working with people and also the job field is wide. I have also enjoyed working with and training young people and women at La Asuncion where I manage projects. My goal is to work in the defense of indigenous women to help those in my community.”

“Roots and Wings pays for my tuition and I work to pay for books and living expenses. I work at the Private Scholarship Institute program at La Asuncion. My responsibilities are to assist the people in the office and do home visits in the community with the families seeking scholarships for the new school year. I also work with the nuns to coordinate job training activities for 75 girls enrolled in the program and work a little with 35 inmates on professional training. My work with La Asuncion gives me good experience in the field of social work and will help me get a better job in the future.”

“My goal is to help youth become leaders in their communities and to become professionals who will serve our society and improve Guatemala at the national level. I thank god for the support RWI has given me during my studies and for the improvement RWI is achieving in rural communities”.

## **Testimonials of RWI Young Students**

### **Rosa Manuela Guarchaj López**

Rosa Manuela Guarchaj López attends the Official Co-Ed Rural School Caserío Pasac. Her father, Diego, works as an agricultural day laborer and her mother, Micaela, works in housekeeping to provide their family of 8 an income of about \$2 per day. Despite their limited economic means, Rosa Manuela's parents are committed to sending their children to school. Currently Rosa Manuela is enrolled in the computer literacy training program, which will help her to graduate elementary school and move one step closer to realizing her dream of becoming a teacher.



### **José Manuel Marroquín Ajtzalam**

José Manuel Marroquín Ajtzalam has been participating in the computer literacy program since 2009. His father, Juan, works as a farmer, and his mother, Mara, is employed as a housekeeper. Their combined income allows the family to subsist on an average of \$3/day. Though José is only in his second year of elementary school, he has big goals. Like many children in Guatemala, José loves soccer and one day hopes to become a professional soccer player.



### **Cristobal Mauricio Rajpop Marroquín**

Cristobal is one of two children in his family. His father is deceased, and his mother works in housekeeping to provide for her children, earning an average income of less than \$2USD per day. At the tutoring center, Cristobal Mauricio receives help in his coursework, in both Spanish and his native K'iche. He hopes to be able to remain in school and one day realize his dream of becoming a police officer.



## **Financial Report**

We raised \$37,900.42 in 2011 as well as received \$41,071.00 in software from Microsoft and \$26,334.03 in Adwords grant from Google. We spent \$34,870.96 on our programs in Guatemala and \$37,273.43 in total spending. That means we were able to spend 94% of our cash donations directly on the programs we promote in rural Guatemala.

## Initiatives

### AdWords Campaign

The Google Adwords Grant, helped expand RWI's online visibility, bringing over 40,000 more visitors to the site. The Online Positioning Senior Manager, with the help of several new volunteers, created stronger landing pages and improved search engine optimization to increase traffic quality and page views. These efforts laid the groundwork to attract even more website traffic in 2012, with a strong emphasis on increased donations.

### Media Outreach

An integral part of raising awareness about our mission is ensuring that our accomplishments are shared with major media outlets. RWI's media outreach volunteer continually publishes press releases and many of RWI's programs and accomplishments have received coverage from local and international media sources. In the last year, stories about a Spokane native raising \$4,000 for RWI, Foundation Beyond Belief, and the Learning Center grand opening were publicized widely in several local and national media sources.

### Social Media



Over the last year, RWI has greatly expanded its social media efforts over the last year with increased activity on Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr to provide our supporters with daily updates on our work. Our social media volunteers are continually sharing news and information to keep our followers updated on RWI's programs and accomplishments. RWI's Facebook followers more than doubled



from 112 followers in 2010 to 279 followers by the end of 2011 and our social media followers continue to grow in the New Year.

### **English and Spanish Mobile Sites**

RWI is continually adopting new strategies to reach as many followers as possible and our new mobile websites allow smart phone users to follow us where ever they go. The mobile sites provide a new way to engage with RWI as mobile phones play an increasing role in development and fundraising. This is an important stride in improving website access for mobile users in Latin America who are more likely to have internet access through mobile phones than computers.

### **RWI Blog**

In early 2011, the senior blog manager sought out new volunteers to provide a more in-depth perspective of RWI's efforts and raise greater awareness about our programs and Guatemalan issues. In 2011, the blog received over 125,000 page views and is constantly providing an in-depth look at our scholars, volunteer efforts, and fundraising opportunities.

### **Newsletter**

The newsletter continues to keep over 10,000 subscribers informed of upcoming campaigns and newsworthy events within the organization. An ongoing goal of the newsletter is to bring our supporters and our beneficiaries together with stories that are ever more local and personal, as well as offering a glimpse into the culture of the indigenous communities where RWI operates. 2011 has brought growth and change to our newsletter team with several new writers coming on board to volunteer their talents.

### **Partner Relations**

As our financial and organizational needs grow, RWI has continued to expand its donor base by partnering with two online fundraising platforms where donors can make a large impact on someone's life with a small donation. In 2011, our partnership with Jolkona saw a 48% increase in donations to

RWI over the last year, to support over 80 students with tutoring, computer classes and university scholarship support. Donations from our new partnership with See Your Impact provided support to 38 elementary school students, and several months of scholarship support to 6 university students.

### Cultural Exchanges

In addition, we have also expanded partnerships to facilitate cultural exchanges between the local Guatemalan children and children and youth in the United States. Each semester, Carpe Diem International Education sends RWI groups of high school or college students to live and volunteer in Pasac, Guatemala. In addition, we have also expanded our partnership with North Wall Schools in Spokane, Washington to conduct Skype exchange between children in our computer literacy programs and the kindergarten students at North Wall Schools.

## Partners

Our continued growth was made possible by the many generous donations made through our fundraising partners and many small local organizations that chose to support Roots and Wings International with their fundraising efforts. The University of Lethbridge Rotaract Club was named a GoldPlus level partner and named the Jill M. Pekala Memorial Scholarship in honor of their contributions to RWI. Lift'n'Glow Skincare and Buy Well Coffee continue to be valued partners and supporters of RWI's programs through their charitable efforts. Jolkona, See Your Impact, and Foundation Beyond Belief also contributed thousands of dollars in 2011 and offer our individual supporters more ways to connect and learn more about the students that they have helped.



### TECO

TECO Energy, an S&P 500 energy company, is a major sponsor of the first International Learning Center built in the village of Pasac in Nahualá, Sololá, Guatemala. The center, operational since November 2010, hosts RWI's computer literacy program certified by the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and houses an after-school tutoring program.

### **Microsoft Corporation**

The Microsoft Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills program, as part of its mission to bring technology to underserved communities, has donated software to our learning center in the village of Pasac. The software will be put to use in our computer literacy classes, which will give students the skills they need to find jobs beyond subsistence farming.

### **Morrison & Foerster**

Morrison & Foerster, a leading technology and finance law firm, shares RWI's belief that access to technology and education is a priceless commodity in the increasingly globalized world. That is why Morrison & Foerster is a Platinum Level Partner in support of the Roots and Wings mission.

### **Google**

Roots and Wings International is a recipient of a Google Grants award. The Google Grants program supports organizations sharing Google's philosophy of community service to help the world in areas such as science and technology, education, global public health, the environment, youth advocacy, and the arts.

## **Our Volunteers**

Our fundraising efforts and new partnerships were the result of the hard work of our volunteers who spread RWI's mission far and wide. Several new volunteers joined us this year to help us build partnerships, improve our online positioning, and keep our followers updated on our scholar's and staff member's accomplishments.

### **RWI Volunteers**

Erik Swanson	President and Founder
Tammy Chiang	Director of Marketing

Agus Dillon	Spanish Project Senior manager
Vanina Sloan	Public Relations Senior Manager
Adriana Baranek	Online Positioning Senior Manager
Jeanne Santos	Partner Relations Senior Manager
Jazmine Rodriguez	Blog Operations Senior Manager
Lindsey Dixon	Senior Writer/Editor
Chaitanya K. Thatipamula	Web Designer/Team Lead
Shadi Mirza	Senior Writer/Twitter Lead
Anabel Merchan	Translator
Steve Long	IT Volunteer
Edwin Lunandy	Design Consultant
Sandeepa M. Datta	Marketing Project Manager
Teri Miller	Communications Lead
Jacquelin Botello	Flickr Lead
Kristen Keller	Blogger
Patrick McGrady	Blogger
Marie Le Blanc	Blogger
Danica Buckland	Blogger
Hariette Newcombe	Blogger

### **Volunteer Honor Roll**

Volunteer of the Year: Jeanne Santos

Writer of the Year: Shadi Mirza

Blogger of the Year: Jazmine Rodriguez

Scholar of the Year: Catarina Guarchaj Mercedes

Student of the Year: Cristobal Mauricio Rajpop Marroquín



# Organization Information

## Board of Directors and Leadership

Erik Swanson, President	Attorney, Immix Law Group
Cristobal Guarchaj, Vice President	Executive Director, Raices y Alas, Guatemala
Kevin Espirito, Secretary	Senior Manager, ECE, Microsoft
Tammy Chiang, Director	Director of Marketing, Roots & Wings International
Angela Brown, Director	Hiring Manager, Spokane Public Schools
Rod Achtmann-Mendoza, Director	Senior Manager, Microsoft
Jess Arnsteen, Director	Manager

## Advisory Board

Giancarlo Ibarguen, President	Universidad Francisco Marroquín
Robert Goldman, Professor of Law	American University, Washington College of Law, Louis C. James Scholar
Anders Kompass, Representative	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Guatemala
Juan Luis Aguilar, Founding Partner	Aguilar & Aguilar

# Challenges

As RWI continues to grow and meet the needs of its beneficiary community, we are always seeking more funding and corporate partnerships to continue to expand our programs and serve our target community in better ways.

Our staff and volunteers are seeing an increased need to streamline operations between the program office in Guatemala and the communications and development teams in the United States. Moving forward, we are working to improve communications and getting more timely information from our ground staff. In the coming year, RWI will be seeking long-term volunteers to work out of our Guatemala office and serve as the communications liaison between the Guatemala and US offices.

As the RWI scholars complete their college education, RWI would like to help them transition from their academic studies to professional positions with businesses, non-profits, and government organizations. In pursuit of this goal, we plan to hire a local career counselor, however, we need additional funding to be able to make this hire.

## **A Look toward the Future**

RWI has evolved from a small organization providing scholarships to youth in Guatemala. Over the years, the local staff in Guatemala has developed several new community programs that they feel best meet the needs of their community. The local staff continues to direct the organization activities while the U.S based volunteers raise awareness and funding for scholarships and the educational programs.

In the coming year we hope to offer more opportunities to the growing number of deserving students who attend our tutoring and computer literacy classes. With these programs and scholarships it is possible to support students from the age of five until they graduate college. The University Preparatory School is part of this effort and in the next two years we hope to finalize the plans and reach our goals of \$1.5 million to begin construction. The school will provide a high quality education to students in rural Guatemala and fill the gap in educational accessibility that exists today.

## **Thank You!**

Roots and Wings International is exceptionally grateful for its loyal supporters, partners, and the record number of new donors we have seen in 2011. We thank you on behalf of our university scholars and the students enrolled in our tutoring and computer literacy classes. These opportunities would not be possible without your generous support.

