

## **2009 was a great year for Jóvenes Adelante!**

### **Our Mission...**

Jóvenes Adelante, A.C. is a student focused organization that supports talented but economically disadvantaged Mexican youth from the cities of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato, and surrounding communities in the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, through scholarships and other means of support to enable their success at university and in their professional careers.

Please note the underlined addition to our mission. Adding a branch in Guanajuato is one of several big steps this year!

### **Our students...**

We met our goal of adding 25 students again this year. We now have 75 students in 23 universities throughout Mexico, studying everything from architecture to law to medicine, dentistry, geologic engineering, chemical engineering, computer engineering.... and more! Our 17 graduates are working in their chosen fields as accountants, teachers, chemical and computer engineers, and even a nutritionist. A few of our students have been able to take advantage of study abroad programs, some to study English in the US and Canada and one student was selected by the French Tourism Board to serve an internship in France. Another student formed an NGO (non-governmental organization) of students and professors to provide free legal services for poor people in the San Miguel area. In other words, they are all thriving... and inspiring!

We select the top students from local preparatorias (high schools) based on academic achievement and financial need to receive a scholarship. We currently give approximately \$1,200 US each year for the duration of each student's academic program. In Mexico, the normal university degree

program requires five years of study, so we commit up to \$6,000 US for each student, either through existing funds or pledges by individual sponsors, prior to the student's acceptance into our program. If you know anyone interested in sponsoring a student or sharing a sponsorship, please encourage them to join us. Pledge forms are available on the Yahoo Group site at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/JAmembers-mentors/files/Forms/Donation%20Forms/>

### **Our members...**

Our membership has grown to more than 200, buoyed by the addition of 40 or so new members from Guanajuato. This has allowed us to provide more and better services to ensure our students' achievements. The programs created from your ideas provide the support that is critical to helping our students succeed-- both while in university and as they enter the work force in Mexico. The financial support we give is of course critical by itself, but it is all the extra services and encouragement we give our students that makes Jóvenes Adelante unique.

### **Our Office...**

This year we opened, staffed, and equipped an office at the Biblioteca Publica, shared with the Biblioteca scholarship program. A student Anahi Sardaneta, a communications major with graphic design skills, was hired part-time and has provided invaluable assistance to the Scholarship Committee, the Publicity Team and to me as President.

### **Mentor Program...**

The volunteer mentor program has been a great success. Judy Boston, Vice President of the Mentor Program, has done an amazing job of recruiting new volunteers and working with them to ensure that we continue to provide individual as well as financial support to our students. We were again able to recruit enough volunteers so that each student has his or her own mentor and in some cases doubling up to cover for folks in

Mexico only part of the year and to help communications when a mentor needs Spanish skills. Mexican volunteers now represent 20% of our mentors. Students and mentors are matched, as much as possible, based on common career paths and interests, as well as language skills. Mentors meet monthly with their students, and many meet more often as they develop warm friendships. Mentors are a crucial part of the support system that JA offers to students and, while mentors first sign up as a way to give to the students, as time passes they realize they are getting much in return.

It is a joy to watch these friendships as they develop! Based on the monthly mentor reports, requests have gone out to our membership for help obtaining dental equipment, computers, psychological counseling, math tutoring and more. Your responses have been phenomenal! The students are amazed at the generosity and care you all provide. The mentor/student /parent party in September is a wonderful way for us to honor our students' achievements and a good opportunity for mentors to meet their students' families... and great fun thanks to the hard work and party preparations by many of you! Special thanks to new member, Yoli Del Rio, for organizing the fiesta this year.

### **Tutoring...**

Under the leadership of Nancy Soles, our volunteer English language tutoring program has continued to grow to meet the demands of more students. Our hearty thanks to Nancy and to Ann Bontatibus who is now leading our Tutor Program. This is another very important way we help our students excel... and what better way for an expat community to get involved! Mexican university students are required to pass an English proficiency exam before graduating, and most major employers also require applicants to pass an English proficiency exam before they will even be considered for employment. We have

also formed an alliance with the Warren Hardy Spanish School. Warren adapted his highly acclaimed method for teaching Spanish as a foreign language to teaching English. So far, we have offered three classes in English to more than 40 students with the help of the Warren Hardy School and a number of our devoted volunteers.

### **Computers for our Students...**

Computers are essential to help level the playing field as students compete for grades and advancement in their chosen fields. Computadoras Pro Jóvenes, a treasured local group which brings refurbished laptops and desktops to Mexico for educational purposes, have provided 48 computers to our grateful students to date. Randy Broman & his wife, Ann Bontatibus are also helping us acquire more modern laptops, both through some direct contributions & by working with Kimberly Kinser to identify promising sources & submit requests for donations of used equipment. As a result we have recently been approved by the National Cristina Foundation to participate in their program which matches donated equipment with users around the world.

Bill Harding continues as our liaison with CPJ and has worked with many of the mentors to deliver computers to very grateful students. We always try to get pictures to share with CPJ & to help us publicize the ongoing need for more & better machines. Thanks to CPJ, Randy, Ann and to our many members who have contributed systems for our students.

### **Other Partnerships...**

We continue to work with other local non-profit organizations to further assist our students and expand our ability to work within the community.

Mujeres en Cambio, which provides financial help to girls from rural areas, refers their most academically talented high school graduates to us for consideration for

scholarships. We also work with the Biblioteca Publica scholarship program and refer promising applicants to each other. Our three organizations have joined together to work even more closely to ensure that as many students as possible are able to attend university and that those in school have the financial resources necessary to see them through, which is especially important in these tough economic times. This year we jointly sponsored a Career Fair at the CBTis Preparatoria in April. The program included speakers from schools & professions in Agronomy, Bio-Technology, Computer Science, Engineering, International Relations, Medicine, Political Science, Veterinary and Science. We had good attendance despite overlapping with the H1N1 Flu scare!

We also partnered with the Arthur Murray School of Dance, as well as with Casa & Juntos, on two fundraising events this year.

#### **Fundraising and Publicity...**

This year approximately 76% of our income came from donations, 10% from fundraisers, and 11% from foundations. This is a 27% increase in donations! The increase reflects donations from the Guanajuato group and one extremely large donation this year. It also reflects our first two full student sponsorships by Mexican donors. We are truly becoming an established and recognized community resource!

Recognizing the importance of donations, Amanda Ruiz took on responsibility to formalize our donor relations efforts this year. Donors are now receiving combined thank-you letter / tax receipts in a much more timely fashion. Mike Schiavo & Linn Murphy are now managing donations and continue to improve our processes. In the coming year we hope to leverage this work into a formal Planned Giving program. We are also launching a program that enables smaller donations to accumulate into student sponsorships, the Friends of Jóvenes

Campaign. Details will be announced at our Volunteer Appreciation luncheon in February.

We continue to expand our efforts to raise funds, and this year, thanks to the efforts of our Vice President of Fundraising and Publicity Keith Wall and his team of volunteers, we had a four great fundraisers and wonderful publicity to match!

We put on four fundraisers, starting with the Jueves for Jóvenes concert & Raffle in March. The concert featured Mayahuel, Doug Robinson and Ken Bichel, and the Vishnu Wood Quartet. Vishnu is the husband of mentor Peggy Cole.

In July we had the acclaimed Black & White Party in partnership with the new Arthur Murray Studio to celebrate the opening of the new studio. Christie Olvera & her team added elegant touches including dance performances by Christie & Adrian Olvera, and dance instructors Ivan, Anita & Fernanda. This was one of the most enjoyable and successful fund-raisers we've had-and our first co-venture. Muchísimas Gracias to Christie for her support!

In late fall, two more unexpected opportunities appeared. The first was an invitation to participate in a Thanksgiving dinner-fundraiser at CASA, co-sponsored by CASA and Juntos as part of Imagina 2009. CASA and JA were co-beneficiaries of this tasty event. The other opportunity was the unanticipated (but very welcome) formation of the JA branch in Guanajuato, and their first fund-raiser, a wine and cheese introduction, Qué Cera Será (a play on the Spanish word for wax, cera). Raymundo Hernandez and Ana Rosa Manrique donated the use of their Wax museum. Our thanks to them and to Grupo Cenzontles from Veracruz who donated their talents to provide entertainment. Kudos to the GTO group - they

put on a spectacular event with minimal help from our SMA-based committee.

For a variety of reasons, we have had to rethink our auction plans. We've already received some great contributions. (Our hearty thanks to the donors.) The team is now thoroughly engaged in planning the auction for late March or early April. Details to follow. More volunteers & donations are very welcome.

With all of these activities, Jon Sievert, Keith, Anahi and other members of the team did a phenomenal job creating posters, tickets, flyers, as well as writing numerous articles for the Atención. With Jon's help, we launched our own website! We've received lots of comments about how great it is. Check it out.... [www.jovenesadelante.org](http://www.jovenesadelante.org). It includes copies of past articles in the Atención, information about our students, a recently added PayPal button for making donations.... and much more!

This month the 2010 staff of CIEE Study Center in Guanajuato team posted an inspirational message about Jóvenes Adelante to <http://cieeguanajuato.wordpress.com/2010/01/25/jovenes-adelante> Watch the video. I think you will enjoy it. Many thanks to the CIEE Study Center team!

### **Finances & Legal Status...**

Treasurer Sue Beere and the new Finance Committee (Mike Schiavo, Paul Germaini, and Linn Murphy, assisted by Phyllis Culp and Barbara Hardin) have worked tirelessly to make sure our financial records meet or exceed all standards, that they are transparent, and that we ensure continuity in our organization.

In addition to making sure we maintain our status in Mexico as a registered asociación civil, this year, we achieved our independent non-profit status in the US as an approved

501(c)(3) organization, thanks to the persistence of Amanda Ruiz, assisted by Phyllis Culp. This will allow us to seek more grants, which is something we plan to focus on the coming year. Stay tuned!

### **Student selection...**

Another amazing team of volunteers participated in our extensive student selection and interview process this year, headed by Scholarship Chair Fran Mahoney. For academic year 2008-09, we received 69 applications, interviewed 55 students who met JA requirements and offered 25 new scholarships.

In preparation, the team devised new application materials to better assist the interviewers and assess the applicant's situation and probability of success. With a lot of help from Anahi, they developed a "Guide for Students", providing helpful information about the beca process and linking to websites that help with university and career selections.

For 2010, the beca application has been further expanded to include much more financial information, so that the students, and we can obtain a more realistic idea of the true costs and challenges of their university program.

Recently the team of Anahi, Gloria Chiunti, Jock Whitehouse & Fran Mahoney have created and are now offering a workshop in which they counsel students regarding their educational choices and coach them in budgeting and writing an better scholarship application.

As we become better known within the Mexican community, we are receiving more and more applications from qualified candidates. Starting in the spring, students begin submitting written applications that include a written essay. The applications and essays are all translated and reviewed by the

Scholarship Committee, which this year included Fran Mahoney, Kathie Drouin, Jock Whitehouse, Bill Harding, Sheila Byrns, and Gloria Chiunti. Approximately 25 additional volunteers helped in 2009 with the most critical part of the interview process. Students are selected for individual interviews by teams of two volunteers. Based on those interviews, finalists are selected for home visits by additional teams of volunteers, and their families go through a separate interview to verify both the financial need of the student and also the moral and emotional support by the family for the student's desire to attend university.

Out of this four or five-month-long process, we were able to select an outstanding entering class for 2009/2010. It will be a wonderful experience for us all as we watch them grow and develop, and ultimately move into their chosen professions. We wish them all great success ...and will continue to do all that we can to help them along that path.

### **Extraordinary Situations...**

It should not be surprising that despite all the help we provide our students, life can become overwhelming. Sometimes counseling helps. Or tutoring. Sometimes a student cannot complete their program in the expected amount of time. Sometimes they need more funding to cover unusual expenses (dental equipment, testing materials, etc.) or cover for severe changes in their family's finances. Recognizing this, in 2009 we established a petition process for students who need situational financial assistance or to be exempted from a standard JA policy. We also established a process whereby funds can be donated and directed to a specific student with extraordinary financial need. We have received several petitions this year. As President I have been very impressed with and grateful for the solutions the team of Fran Mahoney, Judy Boston & Susi Beere have conceived!

### **Our volunteers...**

All the above reflects the great work of our valued team of volunteers who have made Herculean efforts on behalf of our students. To facilitate their efforts we have grown and better defined our organizational chart and developed job descriptions that facilitate recognizing appealing opportunities for new volunteers. See: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/JAmembers-mentors/files/Org%20Chart%20%26%20Job%20Descriptions/> In addition we have created the new position on the Executive Committee, Vice President of Volunteers, to assure re recognize & appreciate the efforts, talents and potential of our volunteers. Another step in this direction is holding our first Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in conjunction with our 2010 Annual Meeting.

### **And the work continues...**

In the wake of our successes, we face a difficult year ahead. We are all feeling the impact of the downturn in the U.S. economy. In the midst of this, I hope we can all keep in mind how important these young people are to our future and the future of Mexico. I hope we will continue to be inspired by all that these marvelous Jóvenes manage to achieve... with just a little help and encouragement from you. We have more work ahead of us, but with so many hands it is indeed light work.

I found the year both challenging and satisfying. It is exciting to work with such a great group of people on a great cause and gratifying to see these very deserving students grow and develop, and ultimately enter their chosen professions. I wish them all great success.... and know that you will all continue to help them along that path.

Pat