FOUNDERS AWARD 2016

Honouring Unsung Heroes



Betty Plewes (centre) receives her Founders' Award from Dr. Paul Caldwell, President of Horizons' Board, and Beverley Burke, Board member.

Although they come from very different parts of the world, the 2016 recipients of the Horizons' Founders Award have this in common: "They have spent years volunteering in a quiet, humble way to improve the lives of others without a need for recognition, yet with the assertiveness required to get the job done," says Patricia Rebolledo, Horizons' Executive Director.

Each year, the award celebrates the volunteer commitment and leadership of an individual in Canada, and an organization that works with Horizons in the South. This year's award goes to Betty Plewes of Carp, Ontario and the Midwives of Quetzaltenango in Guatemala.

Betty Plewes

Horizons' board member Beverley Burke presented Betty with her Founder's Award on June 13 in Cobourg. "Betty's leadership and contributions to social justice work are evident from her work experience," said Burke. Among other things, Betty was Director of Overseas Programs for CUSO and President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation.

"But her substantial volunteer contributions have never been recognized," continued Burke. Highlights include: participating in international delegations to the United Nations and Africa; mentoring at the Coady International Institute, acting as a Board member for Partnership Africa Canada and the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security; and assisting in the development of gender training programs for NGO staff.

In 1995 she founded the Voluntary Sector Roundtable to strengthen the voice of Canada's voluntary sector with the federal government. Upon retirement, Betty became a founding member of the McLeod Group, which works to advance Canadian policy and action in international cooperation and foreign affairs.

Betty's long list of accomplishments has inspired those around her. As one nominator put it: "I have been fortunate to learn many lessons from her [including] how to remember that 'development' is not just about concepts and theories but about real people."

Midwives of Quetzaltenango

Selflessness, generosity, and fortitude characterize another group of unsung heroes, the Midwives of Guatemala, this year's southern recipient of the Founders Award.

The Midwives of Ouetzaltenango "deserve this award because they dedicate their lives to serving others, often putting aside their own needs to ensure women and newborns are cared for," says Patricia

The midwives often get up at dawn, taking

buses and walking for hours to serve women in isolated rural communities. They treat women in a holistic way, making many visits and intervening in a gentle way when there is domestic violence.

With this award, Horizons shows how much "we value the traditional knowledge of the midwives, who are providing life-saving, and community-centered care to women and children," says Rebolledo.

The Midwives of Quetzaltenango have partnered with PIES de Occidente for many years. They will be the lead trainers in the recently approved project, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: Transforming Indigenous Lives in Guatemala. The midwives will receive their Founders Award at the launch of the project this fall.



Canada

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The Government of Canada generously provides funding for this Project.



Patricia Rebolledo, Executive Director, with the midwives of Quetzaltenango, the recipients of Horizons' 2016 Founders Award.

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BOTIZOIS

FALL 2016

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO END POVERTY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

Women Weavers: property. As a result, it is not uncommon for for-**Becoming Visible**



Florentina Con, an 80-year old weaver, holds aloft documents urging the protection of Indigenous textiles and designs.

"Our traditional clothing is a symbol of our history... it is also our struggle and our resistance," declared Sandra Xinico, a young Kaqchikel indigenous weaver outside the Constitutional Court in Guatemala City. On June 28, 2016, with the support of Horizons' partner, the Women's Association for the Development of Sacatepéquez (AFEDES), Kaqchikel women gathered for a public audience with the Court. Their purpose: to push for a law to protect their ancestral designs and weavings.

The Kaqchikel are one of the indigenous Maya peoples in Guatemala, and for centuries, they have encoded their knowledge and cosmovision of their world in the colourful designs of their weavings. The women understand that the weavings express their own identity as indigenous women as well as their commitment to preserving the ancestral knowledge of their community.

But current laws fail to recognize their ancestral designs as individual intellectual property. As a result, it is eign companies to steal traditional designs, patent them, and sell them at

high profits, without the

permission of the communities. Because of the gap in the law, women weavers are powerless to do anything about it.

Intellectual property rights would give the women greater ability to protect the designs from theft, preserve ancestral knowledge, and keep the profits in their communities. But "indigenous women are invisible to their governments," say the Kaqchikel women.

The irony is that, "When tourists come to Guatemala, the attraction is the Mayans, yet here we are looked down upon for being Mayan," said Doña Marta Puac outside the courthouse.

Angelina Aspuac of AFEDES continued that theme inside the court. "In Guatemala, there is much talk about the Mayan culture. But who sustains this culture in Guatemala? It is indigenous women. We are the ones who create the textiles and wear them every day."

The Kagchikel women recognize that it's time to step out from the shadows. This requires more collaboration among indigenous peoples in order to articulate the women's strengths, and support proposals that defend their rights. In pursuing a new law, the women have presented their ideas to different villages, and asked authorities and local civil society organizations to assist in the protection of the Kagchikel drawings and textiles. The result has been growing support from indigenous leaders.

Requesting a change in the constitution is the first important step in protecting their ancestral designs, textiles and knowledge. "We resist through the art in our hands,"

say the women.

"At Horizons we admire the strength, resilience and creativity of women as they bring a spirit of possibility to their communities," says Patricia Rebolledo, Horizons' Executive Director. "As they move forward in their efforts to protect the intellectual property rights of their weavings, Kaqchikel women occupy a more public presence and cease to be invisible in Guatemalan society."



Weaving Skills Make a Comeback

Traditional weaving skills were almost lost as a result of a decades-long civil war in Guatemala that targeted the Maya — over 200,000 indigenous people were killed or missing. This brutal past, combined with ongoing discrimination, caused many Mayan people to renounce traditional knowledge and practices, such as the creation and wearing of traditional clothing.

But with your support, AFEDES has provided 70 workshops on textile production and weaving techniques to more than 130 Kaqchikel women in eight rural communities. The women are delighted to be able to once again produce their ancestral designs to incorporate in their traditional blouses (huipiles) and belts (cinturones).

In the process of learning weaving skills, indigenous women are strengthening their own sense of value, self-esteem and pride in their heritage.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE 🕒 🔰

PLUS! 2015 ANNUAL REPORT





NICARAGUAN YOUTH

Kids' Radio: All About Food



Recycled pop bottles are repurposed for urban hanging gardens.

In Nandaime, Nicaragua, 30 'Custodians of the Earth' take to the airwaves each week to teach their neighbours about food sustainability. These custodians are kids, ages 6-12, who have learned all about food, nutrition, composting, and the environment from the Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre (CCOAR), Horizon's Nicaraguan partner. The centre promotes youth citizenship around these issues, and also engages kids in the arts (*see sidebar below*).

The kids share their knowledge with their families, helping to increase sustainable local food production. They use their weekly show at the radio station, "La Nandaimeña", to teach their communities how to care for the environment, create

urban gardens and make healthy food choices. Fruits and vegetables come to life as the youth vocally animate these characters in lively exchanges on the nutritional components of food.

During Horizons' recent Educational Tour to Nicaragua, the custodians proudly presented their environmental projects to delegates. These included a kitchen compost project

and an innovative urban garden project using hanging plastic pop bottles to grow vegetables. Using this method, "we have grown tomatoes, cilantro, oregano, beets and chilis," they proclaimed.

Poverty, food insecurity, and environmental degradation are persistent challenges in Nicaragua. In the municipality of Nandaime, 30% of the population lives on less than \$1.25 a day, struggling to earn a decent living and put food on their tables. Nandaime, like most of Nicaragua, has a very young population – 46 percent are below the age of 15, making children and youth vitally important to the process of development.

We asked the children to tell us what they like about the radio program. "I like

giving advice to people to eat healthy," says Grethel, 8. Alexander, 11, is a bit more reflective. "I like inviting community members to see how children organize themselves."

Youth are discovering what it means to be part of efforts to solve problems in their families and communities. It's about supporting sustainable local food production in urban areas through community and family gardening. It's about raising broader awareness about environmental issues and the ways they negatively impact community health and development.

Investing in the next generation and creating these kinds of opportunities for youth is essential to ending poverty and other challenges in Nicaragua and Central America.



Arts Program Ignites Youth



Ramón Canales, María Aguirre, José Mercado and José Soza (behind) learn trust and teamwork during circus workshops.

At the Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre (CCOAR), the youth of Nandaime, Nicaragua find something that is sadly lacking in their lives. Hope.

Poverty, lack of employment, and

violence make the future seem bleak for youth. But CCOAR is working to change that by engaging, educating, and empowering young people.

It provides fun and challenging programs in art, music, dance, circus, theatre, radio and sports to 80 children and youth ages 8-20, along with education on self-esteem, culture and history, human rights, and how to contribute as a citizen.

The arts programs give kids a positive social outlet, and help them build the skills, confidence and enthusiasm they need to take control of their lives.

20 year old María Auxiliadora Palacios Aguirre has been coming to the centre for three years to take part in the dance and circus programs. "When I was little I always wanted to be part of a dance group," she says. "Now I have learned how folkloric dances are important elements of a community's culture and they need to be kept alive." In addition, says María, "the stilt-walking and circus techniques have shown us that we are capable of doing new things."

María also loves the social aspects of the programs. "These groups are so important because they help us to relate to one another," she says. Larry Gutiérrez, 17, agrees. "I have learned many dance techniques and values like respect, friendship, teamwork and patience. These kinds of spaces are important because they keep us away from drugs and off the streets. This has been a great experience for me ... a great stage in my life."

Public performances in each of the program areas attract thousands of people, let the kids showcase what they do, and encourage others to participate.

Profile: **Doña Esperanza Ordoñez**

Doña Esperanza adjusts her stethoscope on her eager patient's belly. The baby's heartbeat has been a bit elusive, but the veteran traditional midwife is confident she'll find it soon enough. "She's playing hide-and-seek today," she laughs, as she tries to reassure the mother-to-be. "Don't worry, though. I can feel that your baby girl is going to be a feisty one."

For the last 17 years Doña Esperanza has been honing her skills attending to pregnant women, new mothers and their children in the southwestern Guatemalan highlands. The 59 year-old mother of six is one of two midwife trainers who will play a major role in Horizons' latest project, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health: Transforming Indigenous Lives in Guatemala.

Doña Esperanza and her colleague are in charge of training 40 indigenous traditional midwives in upgraded, culturally relevant maternal, newborn and child health practices. They in turn will train another

25 traditional midwives following the proven train-the-trainer approach. The 1,040 strong cadre of better trained and equipped traditional midwives will fan out across the province of Totonicapán to the benefit of tens of thousands of women, children and their families over the project's four year life span.

Proudly Maya K'iche, Doña Esperanza first began serving the health needs of her communities as a health promoter. She still remembers the first delivery she attended in that role – and how vexing it was to witness the near death of a young mother simply because of a lack of basic health services in her community. She's attended 1,500 births since and is very glad to share her accumulated knowledge with other midwives young and old.

Despite her reserved disposition, Doña Esperanza can't hide her enthusiasm for the project upon which Horizons and our Guatemalan partner, PIES de Occidente



Doña Esperanza Ordoñez

are embarking. "I can't stress enough how much women in Totonicapán need this. I'm honoured to play the role I'm playing as we get the ball rolling."

As if on cue, she finds the baby's heartbeat. "There it is! Healthy and strong, just like her mother," she proclaims in a scene we hope will play out many times over.

MIGRANT WORKERS Organizations Team Up to Tackle Challenges

Thousands of migrant workers from Mexico and the Caribbean come to Canada each year to work in the agricultural sector. In addition to grueling work, these workers face a number of challenges: culture shock, isolation and poor work-life balance, language barriers and a general unawareness of how to access basic resources. But for those who arrive in Northumberland County, help is at hand.

Horizons, in partnership with Northumberland County, collaborates with organizations in the region to offer a wide variety of services to migrant workers to



address the challenges they face. Here are just some of them:

- We offer free and confidential health and legal clinics in collaboration with the Port Hope Community Health Centre and the Northumberland Community Legal Centre. The clinics run for the duration of the migrants' stay, from June to October.
- Translation services are available to Spanish-speaking migrant workers so they can effectively access services such as hospital emergency rooms, dental clinics, and government offices.
- We organize fun events for migrant workers, including a Welcome Dinner, with free food, music, and dancing, game nights, potlucks, and more. This fall, we will also host a Farewell Dinner for the workers.

For many migrant workers, the social events are the highlight of their time here, providing an opportunity to meet and unwind with community members and other migrant workers. Plus, it gives the community at large an opportunity to meet the workers, find out what they do, and show appreciation for their contributions.



Q&A

Ruben has been a seasonal agricultural worker in Canada for 11 years.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Mexico City in a low-income, working class family. In Mexico, I work in hard labour and construction. It doesn't pay well, so I come to Canada every year to work in order to support my family. I have a wife and two sons.

How hard is the transition to Canada? Leaving your family behind is really tough;

Leaving your family behind is really tough; I really miss my wife and children. The language barrier is a difficult adjustment as well, because I don't speak English.* It's difficult to go to the grocery store and communicate with people.

How has our program helped you?

The health clinic was great. The nurses were very good and they helped me with my medical problem. I'm really looking forward to upcoming events and being able to socialize with other migrant workers. This is my first time working in Northumberland County. So far, it's better than all the other places I've worked at in Canada.

* Interview conducted in Spanish and translated into English.

2 fall 2016 **3**