



December 2011 HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Letter from the Executive Director

December draws to a close our 20th year celebration of Fotokids! It's been an exciting time; reaping the rewards of all the effort and support you have given us over the years. There is a lot to be thankful for and we are looking forward to a challenging 2012, (especially since the Mayan calendar ends its 5,000 year cycle right here in Guatemala on December 21, 2012).

This last weekend I attended Deysi Mendoza's graduation from high school. Deysi is a Tzutuhil indigenous young woman from Santiago Atitlán. She has been with Fotokids since she was 11 years old and was a recipient of one of our educational scholarships from the 7th grade on. You might remember Deysi as one of the kids I took with me to Seattle where she presented a beautiful hand-woven white scarf embroidered with Santiago birds to the Dalai Lama.

Anyhow, I sat in the convention center room that Deysi's school had rented in the glitzy Hotel Camino Real and looked at all the parents, many of them indigenous, and most of lower income, and thought about the sacrifices they had to make to give their kids an education.

There were 150 chairs on stage, slip covered in white cotton, awaiting the graduates. I know I've told you before the absolutely horrible education statistics in Guatemala; only 11% finish high school and this is primarily in the city. All these graduates and where is the employment for them that will make their parent's sacrifices worth it all? Youth ages 15-24 accounts for 67% of all unemployment.

Then Deysi came in, leading the Color Guard, the Guatemalan flag held high, her *huipile* and hem of her colorful woven *corte* peeking out from her gown. She is the *valedictorian* for the entire graduating class. Takes my breath away to think about it. This would have never happened if you all hadn't supported her, or kids like her, with educational scholarships. You really have changed lives.



Deysi Valedictorian 2011 photo by nmcgirr

Deysi wants to continue her education and attend the University to study social work. You know what I'm most proud of? It's the fact that the kids all want to help others, to serve. People often ask me what is our rate of success? (Depends on your definition of success I guess). For me, the compassion I see in them and the desire to give back is how I measure success.

We have 5 students that want to continue their higher education this year, but are unable get into the overcrowded public university. The fees for the private universities have gone up to more than \$200 a month! It has never been so expensive. So, we are putting them in vocational courses and hoping that their

photo/design skills will help them have an edge in getting a job. Everyone here so worries about helping out their family financially that it is a lot of additional pressure.

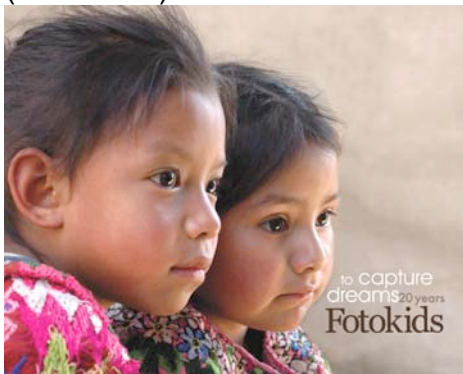
Two of the young women graduates from the *Save Girls* program have taken on teaching a class of fourth graders from a dicey barrio close to the school. Next year they are planning on adding another class from the same poor public school. The third, 18 year old Ana, is a Fotokids' scholarship recipient and is studying architecture and teaching little kids in zone 18, another hell hole.

Jakaramba!- the graduates and interns' design studio- had their best year ever and are actually making money for all involved. Just in this quarter they have designed logos, invitations, posters, and been hired for photography assignments in and out of the capital.

They have worked with a cooperative from the Lake creating a concept and designed 7 logos for members that range from artisans to fisherman.

Jakaramba! is also documenting a non-profit's program that reaches into the far corners of Guatemala and illustrating a book.

And oh, don't forget our book that we published this year, *To Capture Dreams 20 years Fotokids* that makes a lovely holiday gift and can be purchased directly online (see below)



<http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1754196>

I want to just summarize some of the outstanding events and recognition we have received this year. In terms of the media we have appeared in the Manchester Guardian and the New York Times lensblog with a wonderful piece written and edited by David Gonzales: <http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/fotokids/> Numerous articles also appeared in Guatemalan newspapers.

Our 20-year retrospective exhibit in Guatemala City at ArteCentro was attended by hundreds of people as well as the kid's families and has lead to some interesting project proposals for 2012.

I received the Lucie Humanitarian Award for 2011-2012 in a black tie ceremony in New York City. The beautiful video tribute and more on the Lucies is online <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtYbg4DvOh0>

The Lucies are like Oscars for photographers so it is quite an honor though as a friend commented, "that's humanitarian for 2 years! That means you have to be nice to everyone for 2 years...except of course on your days off." Got a feeling I'll be taking quite a few days off.



Lucie and me -photo by Robert Leslie courtesy of Lucie Foundation

Earlier this year adding to Fotokids publicity run, I was invited to speak at a conference in Madrid and did a TEDx talk in the S.F. Bay area in June. Details of these can be found on our blog if you are interested

www.fotokidsinsider.wordpress.com

I was also invited to speak at an Education and Entertainment Conference in India but it was the only one that didn't really cover expenses, so I gave it a pass.

Students have had photos published this year in books by Duke University, the Soros Foundation, and the Paiz Foundation as well as in the New Internationalist and Rara magazines.

The Honduran kids had a major show of their nature work in **Kuopio Natural History Museum** in Finland.

Camilo Lopez was selected to participate in a course for wildlife professionals in Honduras bird identification in Copan Honduras.

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE KIDS

Guatemala elected ex-military General Otto Perez Molina president in November and his party is the mano duro (a clenched fist). He was voted in predominately on a security ticket reflecting the country's concern with violence. Guatemala is number 6 world wide in homicides, with 44 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. There are 17 murders a day with an increase from 4,507 homicides in 2004 to 6,498 in 2009, or by almost 45%.

Daily more people die violent deaths in Guatemala than in Iraq.

The kids have written about what it's like and I share their thoughts with you.

Jorge-17- *I think there is so much violence in my community because of the scarcity of work, the lack of parental love, child*

exploitation and all this adds up to kids 10 years and older being recruited by the gangs, where according to them they receive the love they need. The violence has affected us a lot with the murders in the streets, deserted shops, interfamilial violence, and home robberies. The violence has affected me personally since I was very small; I have been in the middle of gunfights by gang members that lived next door to my house.

Kevin 18 *-In my community the effect of the violence has been the fear of walking in the streets- the fear that something might happen or maybe that the fear itself will bring on the violence. So many houses are now empty, nobody rents them because everyone is afraid of being extorted and they don't have the money to pay the extortion. The barrio is marked by solitude, no children playing in the streets, people that still live there don't go out and shootouts are normal part of life. No one in my family has been killed. My friends though have been killed, Melvin, Jeyson, Josue, Rene, Manuel, and Mynor.*

Alex 17- *What most marks my barrio is that you can't live in peace or take a walk freely in the streets for fear that they will kill you because they have you confused with someone else. This has happened in my community, people are dead because they have been mistaken for someone else.*

Vitalina 17- *For me the violence started the moment they killed my cousin Rafael Antonio who was 17, at the soccer field where he was working as a day laborer. But that day he was there to watch a championship game. All of a sudden some men arrived and starting shooting and they killed my cousin and other people in the community. For me it was very painful to resign myself to losing my cousin because we got along really well and I still remember the times we played together in his house.*

Steven 16 -*I think there is so much violence because there is so much poverty so that the mothers can't deal with their kids anymore and send them into the streets to see if they'll survive. I think the violence springs from childhood abuse. I know this guy Jeremias and his parents were always physically beating him and humiliating him in front of his friends so that one day he just decided to take off because he just couldn't take it anymore . I'm afraid to go out because on the corner where I live the gang members are smoking dope and drinking and drugging themselves up and when they're drunk they shoot their guns off in the air until the cops finally come.*

Brighter News!

The kids in Santiago have been imitating great photographers. This last month it was the famous African portrait photographer Seydou Keita- This was just one of photos I liked, see more at www.fotokidinsider.wordpress.com



Photo by Chonita

Needed: designers, print artists, copywriters, marketing and research people, etc.

If you would like to share your talents with this highly motivated and professional group of young people we could use your

help at the next Design4Kids workshop January 15-21 in Santiago Atitlán. For information see <http://www.design4kids.org> The workshops are all translated so you don't need to be a Spanish speaker.

How you can help

Educational and Photography Scholarships

This year we're looking for 29 scholarships for children, a few primary school kids from extremely poor families and the rest for middle through high school. *There are two kinds of scholarships;*

Educational which pays for a student's traditional education and costs \$300 a year paid in any way you choose, monthly, quarterly, annually, and

Fotokids photography scholarship *Donation of \$150 pays for our teaching and materials. All of our programs are free to the participants.*

HOW TO DONATE IRS Tax deductible

You can use the PayPal button (also they accept credit cards now!) on the opening page of our web site...www.fotokids.org or

Make checks out to: **San Carlos Fdn/Fotokids** and send to: Fotokids. P.O. Box 661447, Miami, FL 33266

Save those Holiday Cards and don't send to the Miami address (we have to pay by weight to get them shipped down) instead send to:

**Fotokids C/O Barb Brown,
140 Pheasant Ridge Road
Monterey, CA 93940**