

Juntos Newsletter – April 2017

Happiness is.



Why are they so happy? Because Rodrigo and Bersahi have just received their own computers! Bersahi is in the center. Her daughter is to her left.

Our teaching assistants are wonderful role models in their communities and are proud to be teaching what they have learned over the years at the JUNTOS learning centers. One drawback to teaching is that the assistants are no longer able to use the computers to research and complete their school projects or, as in one case, earn a little extra money designing and printing party invitations. If they had their own computers, they would be able to go to the community centers at any time during the week in order to use the JUNTOS installed internet. No sooner was the idea of giving out computers raised, that a local friend of JUNTOS in Cuernavaca offered to buy them.

We are most grateful to Lou Monge! He donated four computers in memory of his wife Ermalinda Monge! An activist, she worked tirelessly for many Mexican causes! She raised and distributed funds for many projects: people in need of medical attention, children's education, shelter and food, and organizations providing community services.

Here are short biographies of the first two recipients:

Rodrigo is a thirteen year old boy who is in middle school, called *secundaria* in Mexico. Since his school does not have any computer classes whatsoever, he has been coming to the JUNTOS classes since they began in his area seven years ago. He has been fascinated by computers. Suffice it to say that one of the teachers has begun to teach him programming. Since he did not have a computer at home, his mother, who also attends the classes, sometimes was able to borrow a computer. In addition, his aunt owns a paper goods store that has internet access. He used to go to the store whenever he had a computer and now we are certain he will do so a great deal more.



Rodrigo is hoping to become an engineer. We hope that the computer will take him one more step closer to fulfilling his dream. In the next little while he will certainly have the tools to continue being an excellent student.

Bersahi came to the JUNTOS classes in 2010 because she felt that her daughters had to master this 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. And since she too was invited to sit down and learn, she and her two daughters have benefited greatly.

Bersahi's name is very unusual in Mexico. She explained that although Arabic names are very popular in her family, she did not think she had any Arab ancestors. They just liked the names. Bersahi means "beautiful princess" in Arabic. When her two daughters were born, she gave them names that reflect the same tradition. Her eldest daughter, now nineteen, has two names, Shelxa Guetzaí. Shelxa, comes from the Maya language and means "clear water" and Guerzaí is from the Arabic and means "spring". Her second daughter is called Gabriella Yamilett. Her second name is also from the Arabic. Both girls now come to the

JUNTOS classes to do homework but when the number of attendees is very high, they help instruct.



Bersahi aiding a young student.



Bersahi aiding another student. Note the age difference between the two. All are welcome!



Besahí's daughter, Shelxa Guetzaí, on a busy day when several instructors are needed.

With the skills she has learned at JUNTOS, Bersahi has started a small business. It began quite accidentally when she designed the invitations for her daughter's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday party. The 15<sup>th</sup> birthday of a girl is a very big event in Mexico, usually celebrated with a very large party. When Bersahi handed out the invitations she had designed and printed at the JUNTOS classes, they were much admired. That was the beginning. Neighbors and friends asked her to make invitations for them and she has now been designing invitations and more for three years. She has made invitations for baptisms, weddings and many 15<sup>th</sup> birthdays as well as books where the wedding guests write their comments.

Before becoming as assistant, Bersahi used the hours at JUNTOS to design her invitations but once she became an assistant, she was no longer able to do so. She explained that in the last few weeks, before receiving her new computer, she scrambled. While the others were packing away the computers she was creating invitations.

We hope that having the computer at home will allow her to expand her work and are confident that she will do so. We are now trying to convince her to learn how to design websites so she can expand the services she offers.



Rodrigo and Bersahi, two assistants in the JUNTOS computer classes.

With every computer we hand out, we remember Ermalinda. She was such a generous spirit.