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breaking  
the cycle of poverty  
in Guatemala  
through  
education

Non-Profit Org.  
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Cincinnati, OH  
Permit No. 1061

# cooperative COMMUNICATIONS

Issue 19  
Fall 2006

the quarterly newsletter of the cooperative for education

## THANK YOU

Reflections on our 10th anniversary

by Jeff Berninger

"Where there's a will, there's a way."

This old adage is emblematic of the American spirit. It reflects our cultural belief that we can bootstrap our way to the top, achieve our dreams, be whatever we want to be.

But what if there's the will, but no way? This situation reflects the reality of most of the world's population. It is nearly impossible for those who are born into poverty, ignorance, hunger and disease to fulfill their human potential. They're lucky to have even their most basic needs met.

Victor Ismalej, a senior CoEd Guatemala staff member, also talks a lot about will (*voluntad*). Victor was born into a poor, indigenous family in the rural highlands. He is one of the rare success stories that come out of the Mayan community in Guatemala.

Almost ten years ago, Victor sat listening while Joe and I debated CoEd's criteria for awarding scholarships. How do we decide which kids receive help? Should the assistance go to the smartest? The neediest? The most likely to stay in school?

At a certain point in the discussion, Victor interjected, "You're missing the most important criterion: *voluntad*. Will. Without this, no one can rise above their circumstances. Not here. Not anywhere."

Victor was right. The will to succeed is vital to a person's ultimate success. But what about the means for achieving success? How can there be great musicians without instruments? Great doctors without stethoscopes? How can children be

As we reflect on the our many successes over the last decade, we want to take this opportunity to thank our supporters for your commitment to our mission. It is truly **your** "*voluntad*," or will and determination, to make a difference in Guatemala that has sustained Cooperative for Education—and helped it thrive—these last ten years. Thank you to each and every one of you, from the bottom of our hearts.

-Jeff, Joe & the entire CoEd team

Photo right: Jeff & Joe deliver textbooks to Llano Grande School, 2000.



literate—either in the traditional or technological sense—without books or computers?

As CoEd celebrates ten years of fighting poverty, Joe and I would like to thank each of you—our supporters, volunteers, staff, and family—for giving Guatemalan children the tools to be successful in school—and in life.

They have the will. With your help, we can continue to provide them the way—out of poverty, out of despair, and into a world of new opportunities and new dreams, that are finally within their grasp. ■

**Did you know** that last year CoEd vehicles drove an estimated **49,000 miles** throughout Guatemala? That's enough to **circle the Earth twice** at the equator!

(Turn the page for more CoEd "fun facts"!)

### Fall Fiesta brings in a record-breaking \$58,000!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success by shattering all goals and raising \$19,000 more than last year!

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"By setting up a charitable remainder trust benefiting



CoEd, we found an avenue for giving that will not only support education for generations, but also makes sound financial sense for us personally. It is truly a 'win/win'."

-Ed & Suzanne McCarter,  
Cincinnati, Ohio

For more information about planned giving, please contact Holly End at 513-731-2595, x. 4 or hend@fuse.net.

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Cooperative Communications is produced four times a year by the Cooperative for Education.

Jessica Stieritz, Editor

# then CoEd now



**1996: Crazy idea** After several years attempting to teach students without textbooks, Jeff Berninger launches his "crazy idea," a new book rental project at La Labor School, outside Guatemala City. **The project begins with 215 students and 277 textbooks.** In 10 years, enrollment at La Labor has increased to 396 and they are using 1,436 textbooks, which have been renewed twice.



**1997: The first grant** CoEd receives its first grant, in the amount of **\$20,000**, from the Eiting Family. This allows CoEd to replicate its "crazy idea"—that is actually working—to 4 new schools.



**2001: Bridging the digital divide** CoEd jumps at the opportunity to partner with **Microsoft** in its first lab at Tecpán National School. The humble beginnings of the Computer Program launch a division that in 2006 will provide computer technology to **8,600 students** and employ over 25 people.

**2002: World Bank recognition** CoEd is awarded the World Bank/Soros Foundation **Rural Productivity Prize** for the first of two consecutive years. At the event, the team is congratulated by Nobel Prize winner **Rigoberta Menchú**.



**2005: United Nations** Glenn Chamberlain, Coordinator of the Guatemala Literacy Project, CoEd's partnership with Rotary International, speaks on behalf of CoEd at the **United Nations**.



**2006: U.S. government interest** CoEd receives its first government grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).



**1998: Bringing others along** Delivery tours begin as a way to connect individuals to the project. The **first tour** has just 3 participants.



**1999: The first employee** The first non-Berninger employee, **Horacio Samayoa** (right), is hired in the Guatemala office after Jeff & Joe see him in action with another NGO during Hurricane Mitch. He will eventually manage a staff of 18 upon Jeff's return to the U.S. in 2005.

**2004: Government partnership** CoEd's excellence in technology education catches the attention of the Guatemalan Ministry of Education, which requests a contract with CoEd to administer several formerly government-run school computer labs.



**2005: Record-breaker** An event that began in 2000 as a backyard picnic, the annual **Fall Fiesta** breaks all previous records by raising a whopping \$39,000 for the organization. In 2006, it jumped again to **\$58,000!**

**2006: Planning for the future** The **Literacy & Learning Society**, which gives donors the opportunity to pledge long-term support, is founded as a way to ensure CoEd's projects will be around for many years to come.

**1997: It's official** CoEd is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

1996

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## CoEdFun Facts

- ▶ In **three hours**, the CEO of the Home Shopping Network **makes as much as the annual cost of the entire CoEd payroll** of 25 full-time staff & 21 computer teachers.
- ▶ Of the 105 members of Rotary International who have participated in the Delivery Tours, **30% have returned at least once**; 20% have made the journey 3 or more times. Glenn Chamberlain of Ephrata, WA, holds the record with **11 visits in 6 years**.

- ▶ CoEd has donors in **44 states**, 7 Canadian provinces, the Cayman Islands, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, England and Japan.
- ▶ Of the Guatemala staff—18 full-time employees and 21 computer teachers—only **one** is North American.
- ▶ The Guatemala office created a database to track the **87 different textbooks** and editions currently in circulation at our 135 schools.

## CoEdBy the numbers, 1996-2006

