

A Successful Pilgrimage

The 2011 Pilgrimage is Complete: Hope for the Next Generation!

August 4, 2011



Last month 24 pilgrims from across the country completed the 2011 PAVA Pilgrimage. We helped PAVA work with the people of Aldea Paxixil, a small, agricultural community near Tecpan in the highland Department of Chimaltenango to start construction of a 6-room addition to their school which serves 146 children from 82 families. Men from the village had already started digging the 2-meter-deep trenches for a foundation and, in spite of heavy rains, we were able to reach the point of pouring concrete for the footings – a beehive of activity in

which half the group is bringing sand, gravel and water to the cement mixer and others are carrying mixed cement by the bucket-full across planks and mounded dirt to anchor the upright pillars.



For PAVA, the purpose of a project like this is not only to build a school, but to call forth leadership and cooperation among the villagers, essential community qualities that were lost when a whole generation of leaders was lost during the war in Guatemala. Although the villagers are much more skilled with hand tools than we are, they watch the way we work together, men and women, young and old, and seem to appreciate our presence as much as our help. This year, the younger teens brought embroidery thread and worked with the children to make friendship bracelets – gathering a crowd of eager children during recess. And Peter invited lots of laughter among the hard-working men when he passed out nose-flutes and demonstrated bird sounds and simple songs.





At Lake Atitlan, we visited a new community this year. PAVA had asked us to check out San Juan la Laguna, because it has the only public library on the Lake. We were charmed by its clean streets, public murals and many weaving cooperatives as well as the library where everyone has access to a dozen computers. We learned that the village had been able to avoid involvement in the war because they had “pacifist mayors,” according to our guide. When we were told that a mayor serves a two-year term and cannot succeed himself, we asked where that pool of leadership came from. “Our cooperatives,” he said. “Coffee and weaving cooperatives have been going for 60 years and they encourage the skills we need for leadership.” Using a weaving metaphor, the guide said: “The co-ops are the warp-threads of our community.”



We were surprised that the pilgrimage roster filled so quickly this year! It’s a sign that this ministry is still an important part of the lives of many people. The sponsorship transition from Faith@Work/Lumunos to Seekers Church seems to be working well and with Aeren Martinez (an alumna of Seekers Church and pilgrimage veteran) on the PAVA board, our in-

country coordination went smoothly. We have already made local arrangements for the trip next year, which will be July 14-24, 2012.

You might check out the new [PAVA information blog](#) to see pictures from several villages we've served in past years. You can also [read Aeren's reflections on her pilgrimage experience](#) in a sermon she offered at Seekers Church after the pilgrimage in 2007.

If you feel moved to help, now would be a great time to support this year's project by sending a donation directly to PAVA. [Here's a link to the contribution page of the PAVA Foundation web site.](#)

Watch the Seekers web site for information about registering for next year's pilgrimage. You can let us know that you're interested by e-mailing us (pilgrimage@seekerschurch.org).

Marjory & Peter Bankson