



FARMER TO FARMER NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023
Volume 36, No 1



WELCOME 2023! NEW POSSIBILITIES!

Farmer to Farmer enters the new year full of hope and promise. We are thrilled to have traveled to both Guatemala and Honduras. We finally brought a F2F group to Guatemala (our first since 2020), and we've expanded our scholarship programs to include 36 students, and we have honored several special educational requests.

UPDATE FROM GUATEMALA

The January trip was so important for everyone. There is nothing like sitting down together and having the time to talk to really connect with people. Everyone was grateful to be together. Covid was especially hard on the students and families in Santiago Atitlan. The food support we sent during the first 18 months was critical for their survival. We heard a lot of stories of the struggles during

the past three years. Inflation has hit Guatemala hard, so the increase in scholarship amounts has been a great help.

The coffee farmers fared much better during Covid. Their income from their coffee was steady, and living rurally, they weren't nearly as affected by the virus. We had interesting visits and tours of coffee farms. Traveling in the back of a pickup on the steep mountain roads is thrilling!

We met two new women farmers and their families on this trip.

Learn more on page 3



The travelers at Lake Atitlan



Sharing photos

Friendship and cultural understanding among rural people...



Farmer to Farmer is organized to build mutual friendship and cultural understanding among rural people so that we might better understand and accompany each other in our common struggles. We seek to promote peace within ourselves, within our community, and across international boundaries. We envision agriculture that is sustainable and respectful of the earth, and one that remains in the hands of the people who live on and work the land. We support grassroots agricultural projects that are democratically initiated and managed. Our decisions about a project are guided by the respect that characterizes the relationship between friends. As an organization, we affirm the sacredness of the earth and work for and respect the rights of all people and cultures to self-determination.

Board of Directors

Brenda Betz-Stoltz, President
 Andy Gaertner, Treasurer
 Jody Slocum, Newsletter
 Megan Hoveland, Secretary
 Sarah Broadfoot
 Caleb Langworthy

Coffee Crew

Dana Caron
 Amber Kersting

Contact Information

We're always pleased to hear from you!

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 Glenwood City, WI 54013
info@farmertofarmer.org
www.farmertofarmer.org

SUPER HERO MOVES ON

by Jody Slocum

We are reluctant to let her go! Sue Gerlach has been at the helm of our coffee business for 11 years. She oversaw our growth from a small business in my barn to the professional business we are today.

Sue brought her vast business expertise to Farmer to Farmer and guided us through all our changes and challenges. She has paid close attention to all the coffee details while keeping her vision of the possibilities for F2F's future. Sue has been a blast to travel with in Guatemala and Honduras. We will miss her can-do positive attitude, her smile, and her guidance.

Sue moves on to growing her organic greenhouse business, Good Root Growers, and an AirBnB



Sue selling coffee

business she runs on her farm with her husband Allen, in Prairie Farm, Wisconsin.

We can't thank Sue enough for everything she has done for our organization. We wish her the best in every way!



**ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY, APRIL 29TH**

Please join us for our 34th Annual Meeting!

- 9:00 - 11:00 | Business meeting
- 11:00 - 12:30 | Potluck lunch visiting
- 12:30 - 1:30 | Awesome speaker (TBA)



Family Learning Center | 523 Cedar Ave E, Menomonie, WI 54751
All welcome for all or part of the meeting. Look for updates on FB and our website.
For more info, email info@farmertofarmer.org or call Jody at 541-510-8889.

SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE IN GUATEMALA

by Brenda Betz-Stoltz

When we were in Santiago Atitlan, we celebrated with our students. We loved sharing in their hard work and achievements. We gave out backpacks and school supplies and also a gift for the high school graduate, Cristina. She is the first one in her family to graduate from high school!

We were updated by the students about their studies and were surprised to hear that many of the students were just getting back to in-person learning. We're honoring our commitment to Skarleth for \$500 a month as she enters her fifth year of medical school, and we have two new first graders along with two more new students. All of this has raised our

scholarship yearly needs in Guatemala and Honduras from \$10,000 to nearly \$20,000. We now have 10 university students at \$300 twice a year:

- Skarleth (our medical student) at \$500 a month for two more years, three high school students at \$200 twice a year
- Six basicos (7-9) at \$100 twice a year
- 15 primaria students (gradeschool) at \$60 twice a year.
- We also support three special circumstances students in Honduras that are receiving \$450 twice a year.

We now sponsor 36 scholarship students in Honduras and Guatemala. These students depend on us, and we depend on you. **We are forever grateful for your generous donations and belief in us. We hope you will continue your support and help our students, farmers, and families continue to dream.**

Letter from Skarleth, medical student in Guatemala

I hope you are very well enjoying good health as well as your family. This year, I began the 5th year of my medical degree. In February, I was in the psychiatry area. This month (March), I am in the area of traumatology and orthopedics providing services in emergency hospital care for adults, and children in the General San Juan de Dios Hospital located in zone 1 of the capital city. We work every day from Monday to Sunday and every four days, I do external consultation where post-operative patients are seen. I thank you for the trust you have placed in me. I will always be grateful for the support you give me, because it helps me to continue with the university so that I can fulfill my dreams of being a doctor.



Scholarship students and families, Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala



Skarleth with a patient



WHO GROWS YOUR COFFEE IN HONDURAS

by Andy Gaertner

APOLINARIO GARCIA AND SONIA VASQUEZ ARE MAKING A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR FAMILY

Don Apolinario (Polo) Garcia and Doña Sonia Vasquez of El Horno in Comayagua, Honduras are a quintessential hard-working Honduran family. They want the best for their girls and it shows. Visiting their farm is not easy.

El Horno is an isolated rural mountain community, a three-hour bumpy drive from the nearest city. And their house is on the edge of the community. Don Polo has been a member of the Comayagua Mountain organic growers' coop for many years, but it wasn't until this year that we finally visited the family's house. So far, whenever we have gone to visit the other farms in El Horno and El Sute, we have missed Don Polo and Doña Sonia. Not this year.

Their house is on a ridge with amazing views on either side. Getting there, I wondered more than once if we were still on a road, but our friend Hector's 1980's era Land Cruiser did not fail us. Don Polo's girls were happy and pleased to see us, and Doña Sonia was excited to welcome us and show us around. Don Polo showed us the coffee-drying hoophouse and then showed us where he hopes to expand their house.

Perhaps because they are so isolated, the people in El Horno follow many of the centuries-old traditions of rural Honduras. The story is that when the Spanish occupied the Indigenous lands of Honduras, many of the Lencan people

moved to the mountains and continued to live in resistance. Spain tried to impose itself upon those Indigenous enclaves. El Horno has a church that dates from those Spanish Colonial times, with meter-thick stone and adobe walls.

Traveling to El Horno, one easily understands that despite the loss of their language, this is still an Indigenous community, holding onto traditional agriculture and architecture. In El Horno and neighboring El Sute, coffee farmers also grow their own corn and beans, unlike other places without such deep Indigenous roots. Don Polo and Doña's house is made in the traditional "bahareque" style, which involves making a cage out of wood and filling it with rocks, and then caking mud over the rocks.

Don Polo has ambitions. At his house, he showed us his neighbor's property, which is up for sale. They are thinking about buying it to improve the homestead site. When we hiked up to their coffee plot, we saw young coffee plants growing on the edges of the established plantation, attesting to goals to grow more coffee.

Although at this point, they have only a small area of organic coffee, the good prices they get from Farmer to Farmer allow them to have a little hope for the future.

I was also pleased to deliver backpacks full of school supplies and a small stipend for both Yeisi Carolina and Sonia Yamileth, their daughters, for our recently expanded scholarship program. The continued support of Farmer to Farmer members is greatly appreciated.



Don Polo Garcia and Doña Sonia Vasquez with their daughters of El Horno Comayagua, Honduras



Don Polo in his coffee field



UPDATE FROM HONDURAS

by Andy Gaertner

In January of 2023, I was able to visit all of the coffee-farming families of the co-op during my visit to Comayagua, Honduras.

A few highlights from the trip: (1) Getting there in time for a huge New Year's Eve celebration in Comayagua. (2) Visiting the community of Las Moras, where two hurricanes had recently caused massive landslides, and finding our co-op farmers thriving. (3) Arriving at Don Chico's place and seeing that his grandson had made a number of cardboard signs to welcome Farmer to Farmer to the farm. (4) Going with 22 farmers and friends to the beach for a weekend. (5) So much delicious food, including a party on my last night with homemade tortillas and all the fixings. This year it was just me representing Farmer to Farmer, but I am hoping next year to bring a delegation that might include YOU.

THE HONDURAN SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

What if your chance for an education ended when you finished 6th grade? That is the reality for most kids in Honduran coffee-growing communities.

The small mountain towns usually only have a one or two-room schoolhouse that stops at 6th grade. To continue to middle or high school, families have to find a way for their children to live in a city or send them to a boarding school. For the last several years, with your help, Farmer to Farmer has been supporting three students from the coffee co-op to be able to attend secondary education, and in 2022 we added a small scholarship to support primary school students from

co-op families. In 2023, our three special scholarship students, Sergio, Ada Cristina, and Fatima, are all planning to continue school. We will also have ten primary and three more middle school students from the co-op in school in 2023.

Our long-term plan is to support the construction of a small warehouse/home in the city for the co-op members to share. They have a lot purchased, which we visited while we were there.

We want to thank everyone who donates to the 36 scholarship students in Guatemala and Honduras. The families really appreciate the support.



Jessica, and her parents, Honduras



Andy with the coffee farmer and families after giving out school supplies



WHO GROWS YOUR COFFEE IN GUATEMALA

by Jody Slocum

MEET FLORIDALMA!

On our January trip we had the opportunity to visit Floridalma Estelita Samayoa, one of the women growing coffee for F2F.

Her coffee farm is located high up in the mountains of Huehuetenango, near the Mexican border. At just 25 years old, Floridalma is a very motivated and impressive young woman. She grows about 1500 pounds of coffee each year. Alongside Floridalma's organic coffee field, she also has 15 hives of bees, chickens, ducks, turkeys and a large vegetable garden. She also grows herbs, and

flowers AND makes beautiful baskets. We had a great visit and tour of her one-acre farm and were impressed by the diversity of her crops. She's even growing peanuts and sweet potatoes! Floridalma makes her own organic fertilizer for her gardens and coffee plants. She is also on the Board of Directors of the Women's Coffee Group. It was clear she takes great pride in her work and farm, everything was so clean and well taken care of. Floridalma inspired us all. There aren't a lot of 25 year old women that are so independent and passionate about organic farming. We are honored to sell her coffee!



Floridama, coffee farmer

MENOMONIE COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Mary Lotten

CELEBRATING MUCH MORE THAN SPRING!

At the Community Gardens, we are not only celebrating the arrival of spring but are celebrating being awarded two grants from the Sunrise Rotary of Menomonie and the Community Foundation of Dunn County for new improvements to the gardens.

We have grown slowly over the first several years to now. We have been at capacity for the past four years. Last year the City of Menomonie approved

an additional half acre of land adjacent to the south fence where 20 plus plots are scheduled to be added. The grant covers fencing, gates, and raised beds. Our frontage sign will be undergoing a redesign to include a new logo designed by Trudy Johnson, winner of the logo design contest last summer. The Gardens are a "special place" for about 150 gardeners working 94 plots. It has been our single source of comfort and peace during the past two years of the pandemic. Sharing the harvest, the intent of the founders, continues today benefiting family, friends and the community at large. Visitors are always welcome to tour to see what is happening. We are grateful for the support from our grantors. Check out our website to see the activities we have.



**MENOMONIE
COMMUNITY GARDEN**

To learn more, visit our website: menomoniecommunitygardens.com. Farmer to Farmer, our fiscal sponsor, has been a great support—thank you.



WHAT ARE BOARD MEMBERS DOING ON THEIR FARMS?

by Jody Slocum

Sarah Broadfoot works full time at Marbleseed (formally MOSES—Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service), where they just wrapped up the 34th annual Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

At home, Sarah is an avid gardener and is starting a project of building a deep winter greenhouse for both seed starting and year-round greens production. Sarah and her partner Drew live in Downsville, Wisconsin. They recently welcomed Bertie, a new puppy, to the family.

Andy Gaertner works full-time as a teacher at the Lake Country Land School, a farm in Dunn County, Wisconsin that is part of Lake Country School, a Montessori school in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

As part of his job, Andy manages a three-acre vegetable farm where the students participate in both growing vegetables and marketing them locally. Spring is a busy time with student visits and the garden season kicking off. Right now, they are getting the greenhouse going with seedlings and tapping maple trees for making maple syrup.

Caleb Langworthy works full time for the Land Stewardship Project (LSP), a nonprofit organization working to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland and to promote sustainable agriculture.

Caleb is the Soil Health Organizer with a focus on grazing. On their farm in Wheeler, Wisconsin, Caleb and his wife Lauren have 100 sheep and 12 highland cattle. They are busy getting ready for lambing season and are expecting two calves in the next week!



Learn more about our board members on our website: farmertofarmer.org/board-of-directors.



Sarah in her garden



Andy with Arnulfo Alvarado, Honduras



Caleb in his field

GO TO WWW.FARMERTOFAARMER.ORG FOR MORE PICTURES... IN COLOR!



FARMER TO FARMER
PO Box 303
Glenwood City, WI 54013



NEWSLETTER

SUPPORT FARMER TO FARMER'S WORK



ANNUAL MEETING SATURDAY, APRIL 29TH

9:00 - 11:00 | Business meeting
11:00 - 12:30 | Potluck lunch visiting
12:30 - 1:30 | Speaker (TBA)

*All welcome! Come for all or part of the meeting in Menomonie.
Look for more information on our website or Facebook.*

**Email us at info@farmertofarmer.org
or call Jody at 541-510-8889.**

FARMER TO FARMER'S ONGOING WORK DEPENDS ON YOUR SUPPORT

I'd like to be a member of Farmer to Farmer. Here's my donation:

\$35 \$50 \$100 other

YES! I'd like to make an additional donation for:

\$_____ Scholarships \$_____ other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

DONATE ONLINE AT FARMERTOFAARMER.ORG

or mail donations to: **Farmer to Farmer**

PO Box 303 • Glenwood City, WI 54013

We're a 501(c)3 and donations are tax-deductible.

THANK YOU!