



I wouldn't be here without you!

October/November 2007

A LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER

Dear Netza Project Supporters & Amigos,

First of all, *thank you* and congratulations for the difference you are making with your support of The Netza Project. As a Netza Amigo, you are a welcome and important partner with The Netza Project in our ongoing work. As a result of our growing Amigos program, we were able to help over 380 deserving indigenous and migrant children enter The Netzahualcoyotl Primary School & Kokoyotzin Kindergarten in Zihuatanejo, Mexico this August, continue our new women's literacy and micro finance programs, and keep 33 students in middle and high school – even help 2 stay enrolled in local college and trade school. Your continued partnership in our support of equal-access, multi-lingual education and in our advocacy for every child's 'right to read' and have a poverty-free future is truly priceless.

If you have not heard from us in a while, we apologize (you can always drop into our website or email us for news and events!). But know we have not been silent in our determined international partnership efforts to create brighter futures for Mexico's most underserved and indigenous Aztec children, women and their families.

In 2007, I've crisscrossed the U.S. and Canada sharing our goals, vision, and the story of our work with dozens of communities, schools, clubs and private donors, and made four trips to Mexico, the most recent in September. While we've got plenty of positive news of progress to share (please see page 2), our needs in some areas are more urgent than ever.

- **Migration** out of remote villages and into the city grows, and The Netza School is still the only state-certified school in this region of over 100,000 people that will accept and teach the poorest children, and those who speak four different native languages. We have two student groups meeting in outdoor shack classrooms, a group in the lunchroom, and waiting lists. **Your financial support directly affects the number of children we can serve.**

- The city has concluded its donated labor support at the adjacent **Netza Kokoyotzin preschool & kindergarten site** to help build huge retaining walls needed for erosion safety. The good news is we have funds for materials thanks to a partnership Rotary International Grant, and the site is about 80% complete. **However, we need to raise \$15,000 USD** asap for labor needed to finish preparing the site. Then, working with the state and private donors, we can proceed with plans to erect six much needed pre-school classrooms (at a cost of \$20,000 each) along with bathrooms and a playground. The Rotary Club of St. Helena, CA has pledged major funding toward the first classroom, but we need your help, too.



- Dozens of women stand in line to enroll in our **adult literacy and micro-finance programs**. Your bank "investment" donations help create more loans, which earn 20% flat interest every year, and get recycled again and again to help the next woman, and the next. These mothers commit to keeping their children in school, learn to read and write themselves as well as gain income and financial literacy, and get peer support in their new businesses. By their member votes, a percent of bank profits will also be reinvested into The Netza School! (Juana, left, is a proud women's bank member supporting five children, all in school, and she is learning to read and write for the first time in her life at age 34).

- **There is on-going need for reading books, basic school supplies, and teaching materials and other vital costs.** A donation of just \$25 or \$50 can buy a case of pencils or several dozen books, needed to feed hungry young minds. \$500 fills another empty bed in our dormitory with a waiting child - with meals, clothes and love - for an entire year (that's just \$2 per day). Contributions in any

amount to our **Scholarship Fund** means no deserving student will be denied the chance to further their education. Our **Family Assistance Fund** pays medical bills and provides emergency food and other needs for children and families when they need it most.

There are many ways we can safely & wisely invest your tax-deductible contributions to nurture these women & children, and help them succeed with sustainable schools and economic opportunity programs.

Know that we have invested your donations very wisely. Here are some positive highlights of recent journeys:

- On July 2, 2007 I watched a **record class of 50** proud 6th graders graduate The Netza School, up from 24 in 2006. 47 beaming kindergartners also graduated up into Netza School grade 1, creating our largest entering class.
- We welcomed **11 new students into our Netza Scholarship program**, so now a total of 33 are being supported annually as top achieving young leaders in middle school, high school, and even 2 in local colleges, with scholarships of just \$400 to \$600 per year from U.S. and Canada sponsors. They have begun a Youth Bank to learn fundraising and philanthropy, and have a strong leadership mentoring, culture and homework club we support: Club Tecuani (The Jaguar Club).
- In addition to supporting teacher development in Zihuatanejo, last April we shared the Netza Project partnership model and delivered **progressive teacher training for over 125 educators** in a remote Nahuatl mountain village region, where many of our Zihuatanejo students migrate from. This ultimately impacts the quality of village teaching and education in 17 isolated schools and for over **5,000 children**. The total cost was \$2,500 USD: less than \$20 per teacher, or 50 cents per student, for a 5-day course. Supplies for an orphanage were delivered, as were pen pal letters from Zihuatanejo students.
- With **partnership grants from Rotary International**, major site preparation began for a new 200-child Netza Kokoyotzin preschool and kindergarten (with engineering and labor from the city); we added all new furniture in our present temporary preschool classrooms for 90 children, and combined with a Rotary District 5020 grant, we helped install three new office computers and a new photocopier to modernize teaching administration and lesson plans for a hardworking staff of 18.
- I've met continually with our new **Grameen-model Netza Bank women's micro-finance group**, and I see them proudly progressing in their new businesses, making timely loan payments, and becoming financially literate to lift themselves and their families out of poverty, for good. They are eager for more loans, and to bring more women into the program, as well as to help their children's school.
- In September, we welcomed **volunteer English instructor Christine Berger** who has taken a one year sabbatical from her teaching job in Zurich, Switzerland, to develop and teach a custom English program for Netza students. She's helping meet and greet our many visitors and coordinate volunteers, too. She's center in this photo, with me, left, and Netza Directora Marina and some newly donated supplies purchased in part with \$600 in funds raised by 15 year-old Noemi Sanchez of St. Helena, CA. Christine speaks French & German, & English & Spanish!



LOOKING BACK & MOVING FORWARD: In 2000, the Netzahualcoyotl Primary School was a cluster of seven shacks, 6 teachers, and just 140 children, sporadically attending. Today at The Netza School & Kindergarten - where most of our work is done - there are over 380 students ages 3 to 12 enrolled in a multi-lingual, safe, caring environment where their native languages and (often precarious) family and economic situations - and their dreams - are respected and nurtured. 22 children are sheltered and cared for in the unique 40 bed Netza Dormitory. While these numbers and the expanding permanent cement campus represent impressive progress, there's much, much more left to be done. Directora Marina continues to help a struggling neighboring 'sister' school, bursting at its seams with 200 more kids.

I'm very proud of the work we've accomplished in the last seven years with your help, because **we all know that education will help break the cycle of poverty and discrimination for these families**. Educating mothers and more girls worldwide also creates healthier families, reduces family size, and builds stronger custodianship of local communities. It is no surprise that many of our students aspire to be teachers or human rights lawyers. Mothers who are literate and have jobs are also stronger examples for their children, as well as better providers.

In 2006, 89 cents of every dollar we raised was put to work advancing literacy, improved health, and new vocational options. Just think of what we could do at this efficiency rate - how many more hundreds of children we could help educate - how many future teachers, women and girls we can give hope to - with even more gifts, grants and partnership support from you and people you know. (Return to page 1. Review our list of needs again, please).

We are entering the **Giving Season** where we all feel tremendous gratitude for the richness of friendships, bountiful harvest, ready abundance of books (!), and the many blessings in our lives. Please continue to reach out, across borders and cultural boundaries with us here at The Netza Project, to help **Keep The Promise of Education for All**. Say *"SI! I want to make a difference in the world, NOW."* Reach for your check book or go to PayPal on our website and make a gift TODAY. Call or email me, personally, to discuss other giving options - or your questions and comments - too.

We look forward to hearing from you soon, amigos.

Lisa

Lisa B. Martin, Founder & Executive Director

P.S. Please ask your employer, club, association or family if they will match your gift!

GIFTS MADE DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS CAN, AT YOUR REQUEST, BE ACKNOWLEDGED WITH A GIFT CARD and KEEPSAKE BOOKMARK. This season, 'Give the Gift of Literacy' to end poverty and advance equality, for all.