



From Books to Brilliance

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Our Year in Review

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Finding Futures in Literacy

We welcome Stephanie Lawyer to our Board of Directors.



Stephanie Lawyer grew up in Mexico and has lived in the US, the UK, and Asia. She edited in-house for Secker & Warburg in London and later for Little, Brown in Boston, and worked for more than a decade in Hong Kong as a freelance editor and literary agent. In 1995, she moved to Seattle, WA, where she took a day job in hi-tech, judged fiction for the Kiriya Book Prize, and edited for *The Raven Chronicles*. Now based in Albuquerque, NM, Stephanie edits, translates, and works within the immigrant community.

Entirely unplanned, From Books to Brilliance (FBTB) launched thirteen years ago, sparked by a three-week medical mission in the outlying Nicaraguan town of Mulukukú. Since that time, the trajectory of many lives has forever changed. Now with access to books and educational materials, children and adults in eleven underserved Central American communities gather to prepare for their very own future in their neighborhood libraries and schools. The power of literacy means local readers are steadily becoming tomorrow's leaders. And FBTB continues its work today, both in the USA and abroad. We thank the Dr. Seuss Foundation for getting us started. We thank you and so many organizations for steadfastly supporting this path to literacy along the way.



Jun Toj School, Rabinal, Guatemala

Here at home FBTB has changed dramatically as well. We welcome back Emily Cross, one of our three founders, who left us to get her PhD in education and raise three babies. Stephanie Lawyer, an international editor and fluent Spanish speaker, provides industry advice and polishes our work. Also joining our team is Dr. Rita Wirkala, an award-winning Argentine writer and University of Washington professor. A decade ago, Rita

read an article about our organization in the *Chippewa Herald* and has supported us ever since. Martha Twiggs, my supervisor at Cargill, Inc. in the early 1980s and now FBTB historian, is documenting our past. And, finally, congratulations to board member and founder Maggie Covill, who recently became Maggie Fuchs! As a new bride and entrepreneur, Maggie steps off the board but stays with us as an advisor.

Finding Futures in Literacy

We are thrilled to begin 2019-20 with a much stronger team, one with additional, and needed, capabilities.

Central America, the latest

Unexpected challenges and opportunities continue to present themselves. Political upheaval in Nicaragua compelled us to find another way to grow our existing libraries and generate new ones. Indira Morales, project coordinator for a women's cooperative and long-term FBTB partner, is familiar with every project. She is now our Nicaraguan liaison and visits the projects regularly.



Indira, FBTB liaison



Biblioteca Paz y Vida, Nicaragua

materials to strengthen students' knowledge," says Indira. "It is very important, and above all heartwarming, to see children from our poor barrios of Granada go to the libraries to read a book and do their schoolwork with love and enthusiasm ... Before they had no books—today they benefit from small but very effective libraries."

After FBTB wired funds to our preferred vendors, Indira, along with area leaders,

shopped for all resources for our library projects in La Laguna and in Paz y Vida. Indira then inventoried several hundred books and a mountain of educational materials, and delivered these valuable resources to the villages. "I am so happy that my son has a library so that he can learn more," says Clara Castillo, mother of a student at San Pablo School in La Laguna.



Biblioteca Frankfurt, San Pablo School, La Laguna, Nicaragua

In spite of current challenges, these humble facilities are growing and benefiting their communities. According to Indira, "As of this year, the libraries also serve as community preschools ... the Ministry of Education pays the teachers' salaries. Now the children have a place near their houses where they can receive early education while taking advantage of so many educational resources."

More than two decades ago, the Austrian Guatemalan Institute (IAG) founded schools in a number of outlying Mayan villages, now the locations of FBTB libraries. Last summer IAG's Angelika Maier invited teachers from Jun Toj in Rabinal to the capital city to pick out resources for their new after-school program. In far-away Seattle, a birthday celebration for FBTB supporter Rita Wirkala provided the funds. These donations transformed the K'aak' B'ee (New Beginning) program, attracting a growing number of students with an assortment of materials. Kids do their homework, read, play games, put puzzles together and play Ping-Pong! It is the place to be. We all thank you, Rita.



Angelika with Jun Toj teachers, Guatemala City

Finding Futures in Literacy

When IAG founded Kajib' No'j in Momostenango, Mayan youth studied for only two years. Now the school offers pre-school through ninth grade. The recently founded FBTB library holds a variety of literature, delighting



Kajib' No'j School, Momostenango

middle school students. Younger siblings play games and read charmingly illustrated stories. High-quality Guatemalan textbooks facilitate both teaching and learning. "Writing is improving; imagination is developing; students are motivated to read a variety of books; students' vocabularies are growing; they're becoming more thoughtful," say teachers. These resources are redefining education at Kajib' No'j.



Now a tourist destination, the village of Seacacar just put itself on the map!

We are thrilled to introduce our newest project along with additional partners, the Rios Fund and founder Paul Heesaker. In the impoverished village of Seacacar, seventy Q'eqchi-speaking Mayan families are now hopeful as they witness reforestation and economic development in their watershed home. Residents, young and old, recently planted tens of thousands of tropical saplings, created nature trails, built a lodge, and learned to cook for tourists. Now a declared nature preserve, the area attracts ecotourists and scientists. "The essence of this marvelous project is education," says Educational Director Emanuel Carrera. Young teens at the "intermediate school" have access to high-quality Guatemalan textbooks for the first time. When they graduate, students plan to continue their studies at Ak' Tenamit, specializing in rural sustainable development and ecotourism. The town council is "focused on creating opportunity, not dependency, with gender equality for all people that live on the banks of the Sauce River."



Textbooks for Seacacar, Guatemala

USA news, from Debbie Gonzales

Albuquerque's Sandia Preparatory School is a long-term partner of our organization. Children in Seacacar's two-room elementary school read the books written and illustrated by Sandia Prep's Spanish classes last year. Before the December holidays, our Project Manager, Luke Baca, led a successful book drive at Sandia Prep as well. We also thank the enthusiastic partnership of



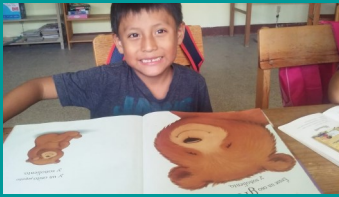
Student-authored books, gifts from Sandia Prep, Seacacar Elementary

Finding Futures in Literacy

Sandia Prep's Melanie Templet, who heads all campus library initiatives due to her zeal for literacy. Our appreciation goes to students, teachers, faculty and parents for donating hundreds of books and educational resources.

Delta Kappa Gamma
Educational Foundation
and
Rotary eClub of the SW USA

iGracias!



We stocked the FBTB library at the Dress for Success Albuquerque office so that clients could enjoy a wide variety of reading materials as they prepare for brighter futures. Dress for Success is an international organization that empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a strong support network. In Albuquerque our partnership with them helps communicate their services and supports their successes. Through our social networks, we share educational and fundraising news. Empowering women through education and economic independence strengthens families, neighborhoods and communities.



Luke's Book Drive, Sandia Prep, Albuquerque, NM

Aware of many community-based book drives, FBTB actively shares information about current initiatives through social media and other communication platforms. We donated dozens of books to the 2019 Read to Me ABQ Network Book Drive, supported across Albuquerque, helping to build a foundation for developing literacy skills. Children from families with limited resources receive books and bookmarks as well as library program information and coupons from local sponsors. Reading is fun!

Thank you, friends! Your expressions of encouragement strengthen our resolve. Your gifts enable us to provide necessary resources to some of the most impoverished communities in the world. We look forward to an even better 2019-20 with added talent from our new team members. It is our privilege to serve. We are forever grateful.



Advisor

Emily Cross, PhD, has a background in higher education, research and leadership

development. Her work spans academic, government and corporate boundaries. Her passion is in education and elevating small businesses and non-profits that feed into community and a local economy while promoting a cleaner, healthier environment for personal well-being and safety. Emily works as a consultant, writer and speaker.



Historian

Martha Twiggs worked with Kim at Cargill in Minneapolis in the early 1980s, then left to start a family. When she was ready to re-enter the work force, the family had a child born with a congenital heart defect. She feels she was blessed to stay home and care for her. During that time, Martha was on the founding board of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Minneapolis chapter. Later she spent many years volunteering for the University of Minnesota Medical School Auxiliary and the University of Miami Medical School Auxiliary.



Advisor

Rita Wirkala is an Argentine writer residing in Seattle, whose work has been published in Spain, Argentina and the United

States. She writes novels, poetry, literary essays and school textbooks. She is also a translator, a Spanish editor and the founder of All Bilingual Press. After 20 years of teaching at the University of Washington, she now directs writing workshops for Seattle Escribe, sponsored by the Seattle Public Library Foundation.