

Note ; photos have been lost in transfer

In This Issue

- President's Message
- Our History
- Apoyo de Emprendedores
- CASA
- Jóvenes Adelante
- La Biblioteca Pública

All articles were written by Amistad Canada volunteers.

The banner photo was taken by local photographer, Gary Reid.

Quick News Bites

Mark Your Calendar

Please mark your calendars for

Greetings from the President

Amistad Canada began its work with NGOs in San Miguel five years ago. We are involved in supporting education classes, midwifery, libraries, scholarships, nutrition and domestic violence projects with donations from Canadians. Amistad has matured as an organization, learning as it moved forward, supporting more and more new projects. It has established its good reputation with donors, members and San Miguel NGOs. The Board works hard developing policies and new projects to strengthen and grow the organization.

This newsletter is a new venture and the next step in our evolution as an organization. It will spread the message about the projects we support and keep members and donors actively involved with Amistad Canada. We look forward to your comments and support for this new initiative which, as always, is being accomplished through the dedication of Amistad volunteers.

Amistad is looking forward to another successful year. We will be taking on new projects and growing our donor bases of those who support the Mexican communities that many Canadians visit and enjoy.

Jaci Winters
President, Amistad Canada

our **Amistad Canada Annual General Meeting** which will be held in Toronto, Tuesday June 16th at 7:00 pm. All members are welcome. Details will be sent out in early June.

Our History

Rotary Citizen of the Year

In February, at an award ceremony in San Miguel, Ezequiel Mojica, Founder and Executive Director of Apoyo a Gente Emprendedora A.C. was honoured as Rotary Citizen of the Year. True to his collaborative approach, he accepted it on behalf of his team.

Amistad Canada has its origins in San Miguel de Allende, a small colonial city in Mexico's Guanajuato state, where a sizeable number of people who come from cold climates spend their winters and, in some cases, their retirement years. Responding to the vitality and warmth of San Miguel's community life and the very evident need of the local population for more social support, many people in the expatriate community become active in supporting social agencies that provide services to those in need. Amistad Canada has been formed to help Canadians participate more effectively in such efforts.

Working with selected non-profit agencies, we support social and educational projects in San Miguel. Canadians who make donations that fund these projects receive a charitable income tax receipt recognized by the Canada Revenue Agency. Amistad Canada also opens the way for additional support beyond the expatriate community in Mexico, appealing to people back home whose work and personal interests relate to our program activities.

Students playing guitar

Biblioteca Pública

The 18 students from the weekly guitar class performed at the **Biblioteca Annual Donor Reception** on February 15, 2015.

The students received enthusiastic applause from the audience for their repertoire of

[more](#)

Spanish music and songs.

Founded in 1954 by Canadian Helen Wale, the Biblioteca celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2014.

Amistad donors are helping to carry on the tradition of support for this very integral institution of the San Miguel community.

Bram Morrison concert C

For the third year, Canadian **Bram Morrison**, icon of the folk generation, performed for adoring fans at the Biblioteca in San Miguel in support of Amistad projects at the Biblioteca and CASA. After sold out SMA concerts in 2013 and 2014, Bram performed twice in 2015, again to full houses.

A lifelong resident of Toronto and a part-time resident of San Miguel, Bram was part of the trio Sharon, Lois and Bram which specialized in children's music.

A member of Amistad Canada, Bram's concerts have become one of the go-to events for Canadians in San Miguel in the winter season. Many thanks to Bram for his continued support and for providing an opportunity to hear old favourites as well as new material in English, French and Spanish.

Ciclo Film Fundraising Event a Huge Success!

What does a film about two young Mexican men cycling

Apoyo a Gente Emprendedora

Education, Training, and Entrepreneurship, the perfect fit in the battle against poverty.

Apoyo is committed to helping Mexicans bootstrap themselves out of poverty, and become financially independent for life. By offering both training and small interest-free loans, Apoyo helps people either start their own businesses, or strengthen existing ones. Apoyo works primarily in low-income neighbourhoods in San Miguel de Allende, and in surrounding rural communities.

The core program of Apoyo seeks to empower aspiring entrepreneurs by providing access to business credit in the form of no-interest loans. Most importantly, Apoyo provides both technical and leadership training to ensure success.

Donations to Apoyo through Amistad Canada specifically support

from Mexico City to Toronto in 1956 have to do with university scholarships for present day youth in San Miguel? If you got to see the film in March in San Miguel, you will know that it's about making dreams come true. And for many young Mexican women and men in San Miguel de Allende, being able to attend university is often nothing but a dream.



Martinez brothers recreating their journey

The sold out event in San Miguel on March 16th proved that people care about making those dreams a reality. This joint effort between Amistad Canada and Jóvenes Adelante raised a net \$75,000 pesos, a sum that is close to a full university scholarship of \$82,000 pesos. If you wish to donate and help to reach this amount it would be so very much appreciated, especially by a deserving student.

Thank you! ¡Gracias!

100 Women Who
Care Honors
Jóvenes Adelante

the business education workshops which are a pre-requisite to receiving a start-up business loan.

Through visits to many rural communities and low-income neighborhoods, Apoyo identifies potential entrepreneurs who express a desire to start their own small family business. The challenge is great since many of these entrepreneurs are not able to read or write due to a lack of formal education. The most highly motivated are offered an opportunity to join the Entrepreneur Training Program.

After 36 hours of workshops in 2014, 98 participants graduated from the program. Those with the most promising business ideas were offered a no-interest micro-loan to be used to start a business or expand an existing one.

In November 2014, Apoyo opened its New Learning Center. They are now able to provide technology-driven training to hopeful entrepreneurs and high school graduates in basic computer skills, English language training, and various on-line and packaged business training programs.

For further information see <http://www.apoyomexico.com/>.

Mel Kliman Visits Mel Kliman Library

Amistad Canada supports a remarkable project of CASA in which the organization has built 16 rural children's libraries in 3 years. CASA's peer health counselors working in the communities in the campo around San Miguel had identified the lack of reading resources for children as a major problem. In response, CASA began to construct small libraries attached to guarderías (day care centres) or primary

The organization awarded this calendar quarter's award - \$69,000 pesos to Jóvenes Adelante. It is a tribute to all who have done (and continue to do) so much to make Jóvenes the stellar organization that it is, and also to the smart, hard working, dedicated scholarship students, who make us proud through the many successes that they achieve.



If you are not currently a member of **Amistad Canada** and would like to be OR, if you are already a member and would like to nominate someone for membership, please contact Joy Levine, Secretary, Amistad Canada at editor@amistadnewsletter.org.

Please forward this newsletter to anyone to whom it may be of interest.

If you note any errors or omissions in this Newsletter and/ or have comments/ suggestions please email editor@amistadnewsletter.org.

If you wish to be on our Amistad Canada Mailing list, please email editor@amistadnewsletter.org

schools. Members of the communities are involved in the physical construction of the libraries and mothers are trained to maintain the libraries with the assistance of CASA's Library Coordinator Gabriela Salazar.

Two of the 16 libraries have been built with Canadian funds, the Amistad Canada Library in La Palma de Rancho Viejo, and the Mel Kliman Library in La Regalada. In addition, Canadian publishers Annick and Greenwood have provided Spanish books at heavily discounted prices for the libraries.

The Mel Kliman Library opened in 2014 and was named in honour of founder and former Amistad President Mel Kliman. In February of 2015, Mel and Eve Kliman visited the library with a group of Amistad supporters and members of the community of La Regalada. It was a memorable day for all including the children who enjoy this library.

In a country where half of all residents have never visited a library or bookstore, this project which encourages a love of books and reading in children and in their parents deserves our continued support.

La Biblioteca Publica is the heart of San Miguel. We meet each other in the courtyard. We read or eat, arrange tours, attend lectures, films, and plays.

But it's more than a centre for expatriates and visitors. It's a place where Mexican children can come to take classes in painting, crafts, theatre, music, computers, and

reading, at no cost.

The Biblioteca provides these services in spite of the fact that it receives no government or public funding. It relies on donations, membership fees, and its own money-making projects to keep afloat. As Canadians, you can help out by supporting Amistad Canada's Education Project.

The Amistad Education Project provides resources to purchase computers and books for the library and scholarships for deserving junior high, high school, and university students. In 2014, Amistad awarded five scholarships, provided funds for textbooks and, in December, funded the purchase of a piano, supporting music lessons and the formation of a choir.

In our own comfortable world, books, music, education, and technology are a part of our daily lives. Not so for many Mexican children. Please continue to donate to the Biblioteca Educational Fund and open the door to a better future for all the children of San Miguel. See the Biblioteca website for more information <http://bibliotecasma.com>.

Since 2001 Jóvenes Adelante has provided university scholarships to the brightest, most promising young Mexicans with financial need. Amistad's support facilitates greater contributions from Canadians, and translates into more scholarships for deserving students. Students like Sandra who is a medical student, and whose family had to sell animals from the family farm to pay for school expenses. Jóvenes Adelante and Amistad Canada, in partnership, found a Canadian donor to sponsor her. Without this support, Sandra would have had to drop out after her 1st year. Now with her Amistad and Jovenes scholarship, she has a university scholarship for the next four years. A Canadian couple are funding Patricia, who is studying Hydrological Engineering. In addition to Sandra and Patricia, eight other students are funded through Amistad and the generous support of Canadians.

Last year 123 applications for scholarships were received. After initial screening, 25 were interviewed, and nine scholarships awarded. Currently, specially trained Jóvenes volunteers are rigorously screening applications for this year's scholarships. At least ten deserving students will receive scholarships, which

Students receiving their laptops. continue until graduation, plus related support designed to ensure success in school and work.

Jóvenes successes to date include 83 students supported in the current school year, 121 graduates to date, and at least 75% of the grads employed.

To quote one student "you are wonderful people without whom the dreams of Jóvenes students like me could not become true".

To learn more about Jóvenes Adelante, and to make a difference in the lives of Mexican youth, go to www.jovenesadelante.org.

Amistad Canada's work is built upon the efforts of Canadians who feel a strong connection with the Mexican town of San Miguel de Allende, as described in Our History.

To make a donation to Amistad Canada

If you wish to make a donation to any or all of our Amistad Projects, please go to our website - www.amistadcanada.org and click on the donate tab. All the required information is there, including a "click here to download a printable donation form."

Please be sure to mark on your cheque the project you are supporting.

Via the Internet

Easy, quick and secure donations can be made through CanadaHelps.org. For detailed information, see our website www.amistadcanada.org.