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Thank you!



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Dear Planting Seeds family,

Thank you for the impact you had on our community in 2023. As we look back on the year and look forward to an already exciting 2024, you are crucial to making this work possible.

In January of last year we started out with ten preschools implementing Planting Seeds' educational methodology, including 25 teachers and over 350 students. In addition to the increased number of students learning under our methodology, we focused on how we coach teachers and support them to positively affect learning outcomes in the classroom.

As the year progressed, we began our inclusive strategic plan process. We held focus groups in each region we work with families of students and graduates to learn more about the direction they see for Planting Seeds moving forward. After multiple focus groups, staff and community workshops, and leadership and board meetings, we launched our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan.

After years of community meetings, fundraising, construction permits and construction, we inaugurated The Planting Seeds Community Center in July! We were able to celebrate with members of the community, supporters from multiple countries, and our staff.

Immediately after the inauguration, there was a huge interest from the community to learn more. We had 806 sign ups for community center programs in the first two weeks. We are still finding our groove with the center and the community, but we are growing, learning and off to an exciting start!

Then in August, Guatemala democratically elected Bernardo Arevalo and Karin Herrera to lead Guatemala over the next four years. The new authorities bring hope to restore democracy, fight against corruption and invest in necessary public services. There has been a huge fight by the elite of the country and the former government to alter election results and prevent a peaceful transition, but as of now, there is new leadership and hope.

2023 was exhilarating and laid the foundation for future growth. In 2024 we look to expand to more classrooms, improve student and teacher learning, enhance community programming, build new partnerships and grow as a team. Thank you for your continued support and for being part of our journey.

*With Peace and Love,
Mac Philips and
PSI Team*



Sacalá: a community with a bright future ahead

In October of 2023, Planting Seeds had to rent a separate building to host the Sacala preschool graduation. It was a celebration with almost 100 people in attendance as students performed plays and songs for their families as well as received their official preschool diploma.

Moving back in time to 2001, we revisit the incredible journey that has led us to this moment and discuss how the community has transformed over the years.

Planting Seeds Methodology was first implemented in Guatemala at an Antigua based non-profit in 2001. While at this non profit, a man approached PS founder Susan Schmaltz about support for his home village of Sacala Las Lomas. The village of Sacala is located in the state of Chimaltenango, specifically in the municipality of San Martin Jilotepeque.



Sacalá graduation ceremony 2023

Sacala is one of over 100 villages in San Martin and is home to a Mayan Kaqchikel population, where the people speak both Kaqchikel and Spanish.

Susan presented him with the opportunity to have a Planting Seeds preschool in his community. The man responded excitedly saying, “The one with all the toys!”

In 2002, Planting Seeds inaugurated the “Garden of Angels” in Sacala as the first Planting Seeds self-operated early stimulation center.

At that time, we hired a local mother, Pascuala, in the community to be trained as an early childhood stimulation teacher and host the students in her home. Susan and Madeli Quiñonez, our current Guatemalan Executive Director, trained the mother and developed this early stimulation program. At this time, although children loved attending the program, there wasn’t a lot of commitment to education and parents lacked the tools to support their children at home.



Mérida Yucuté, current teacher and former PS student

From then until now, we have seen a drastic difference in the Sacala community. Moving forward to 2018, community members found a location and helped build a PS preschool in the community.

In that same year we hired Merida Yucute, a former Planting Seeds graduate who studied with us as a 5 and 6 years old student, to become one of the lead teachers at the preschool. She and Norma Atz have led the preschool to the point where we have over 30 students and over 90% attendance at monthly parent trainings.

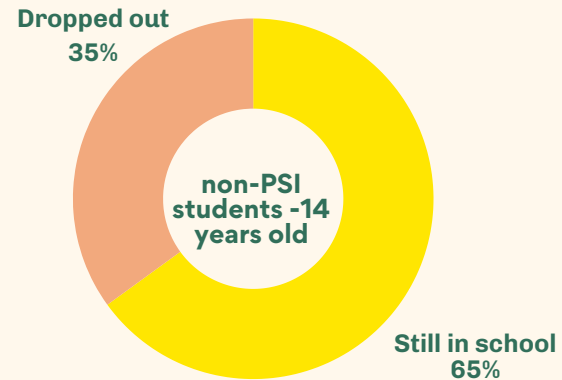
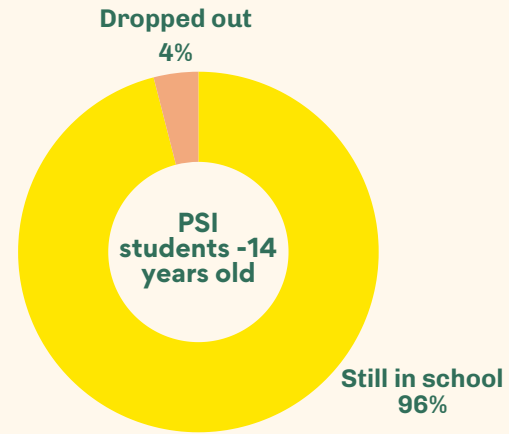
After our preschool program, students transition to the public school. In 2022, we conducted a long term study to evaluate the difference in educational results for 60 former PS students and 60 non PS students ranging from 8-21 years old. The results are astonishing. 96% of PS students under 14 are still studying whereas only 65% of non-PS students under 14 are still studying. Additionally, PS has proven to be a catalyst for academic success, with 44% of its students ranked as top of their class, compared to 26% of those not part of the program. In addition to academic transformation, we have seen the quality of life significantly improve over the past 20 years.

Families are economically more stable than ever before and are able to invest in small businesses like a taxi company to transport people to local markets and open small tiendas and restaurants/businesses in the larger municipality.

Oralia Calan, a mother of three PS graduates in Sacala, cites this success as the combination of two elements:



Oralia Calán and her three children, PS students



High quality education and the amount of money being sent back from families who have successfully immigrated to the US.

Oralia says, "Sacala Las Lomas is a community that has wanted to progress and improve. Many people have emigrated to other countries and in the end that has its consequences as well as benefits because this economic support and education have provided more opportunities for our children."

"Planting Seeds has been a fundamental pillar to the formation of children in the community. The former students are now professionals with a good job or providing a service to the community or other places. My daughters love to write, paint and play. In the future, they want to graduate from highschool and university and help develop their own businesses and help others from their community."

PS also operates a school in a neighboring community of San Antonio Tioxya with 20 students in that program. Over the next 5 years, with your support, we look to open more rural preschools in the surrounding San Martin villages.

Community Center: a place full of life and hope

In the heart of zones 3 and 7 of Guatemala City, there is a building with a brick facade that captures every eye's attention. Fourteen windows overflowing with the laughter of boys and girls, a door that welcomes the community with arms of love, and inside, more than 8 spaces for learning and growth. That is the Community Center of Planting Seeds.

This all began back in November 2016, when the first community meeting took place. While listening to people's needs, the idea of a Community Center started to shine brighter. Through various participatory workshops in 2017 and 2018 people from the community got to co-design, and validate the design. In July of 2022, the construction of the Community Center became real, supported by a community construction team.

After one year, in July 2023, the Community Center was finally inaugurated.

Since week one, we have had over 800 sign ups in our 13 active programs!

First week of sign ups



Community Center facilitators and volunteers

The doors are open

The philosophy of love, nurturing, and care that guides the Center provides a comprehensive approach to community growth through the involvement of the community in its development; it is an open space by and for the community. Given its versatility, community volunteers from different parts of the city have diversified the services that can be offered, leading to the expansion of art, karate, ballet, and boxing classes. The volunteer program started with 27 volunteers in 2023 and ended the year with a total of 33 active and committed people.

In the words of community members, the Center is a symbol of "hope, unity, refuge, and transformation." These meanings resonate also in the 12 facilitators who make up the team responsible for the Planting Seeds Community Center. With a focus on self-sustainability, this group of community leaders was carefully selected to receive constant training and be prepared to take the lead in the Center's operations, proposing, solving, and working together. Therefore, the center promotes economic and professional development for community members.

A regular day at the Center

Zooming into the daily dynamics of the Center, one can find a day filled with fun, knowledge, growth, and support. To start the day, exercise classes in the gym will activate your mind and body. Afterward, a good book in the library is an excellent option to relax and stimulate the imagination. As the beautiful melodies sound upstairs during the youngest community member's early stimulation classes, the school reinforcement space with game-based methodologies offers an opportunity for continuous learning.

At midday, it's lunchtime when everyone goes home to recharge their energy. The afternoon cannot begin without a good board game, a quick ping-pong match, or simply a moment to sit and chat in the recreational area; laughter among friends will never be lacking. English classes are a magnificent addition, demonstrating people's commitment to exploring new horizons. As the afternoon progresses, After-School Programs, Go Boys, Go Girls, Breakdance, and Art always have well-intentioned activities prepared for self-reflection, socializing, and personal growth.

English class



Playroom

The night falls with soccer and basketball games on the court for the older members of the family. The atmosphere of healthy and fun competition is always present. Finally, to close the day, separate spaces for men and women allow adult members of the community to continue building the foundations for assertive nurturing, finding a support network, and sharing their experiences.

Even though every day is different at the Community Center, the sense of belonging is always present. No matter what type of activities, programs, or classes, the Center is home to achieving one's full potential.

Soccer training

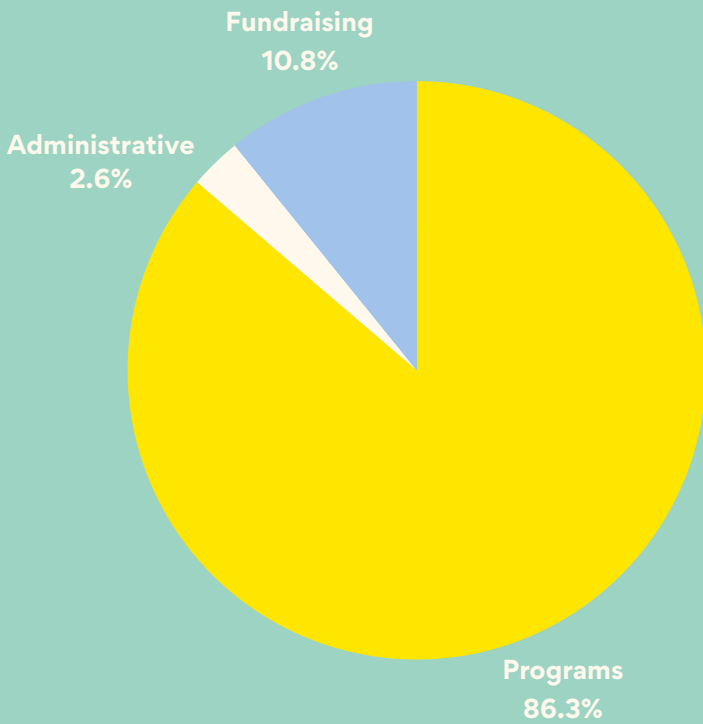




Financial and program numbers

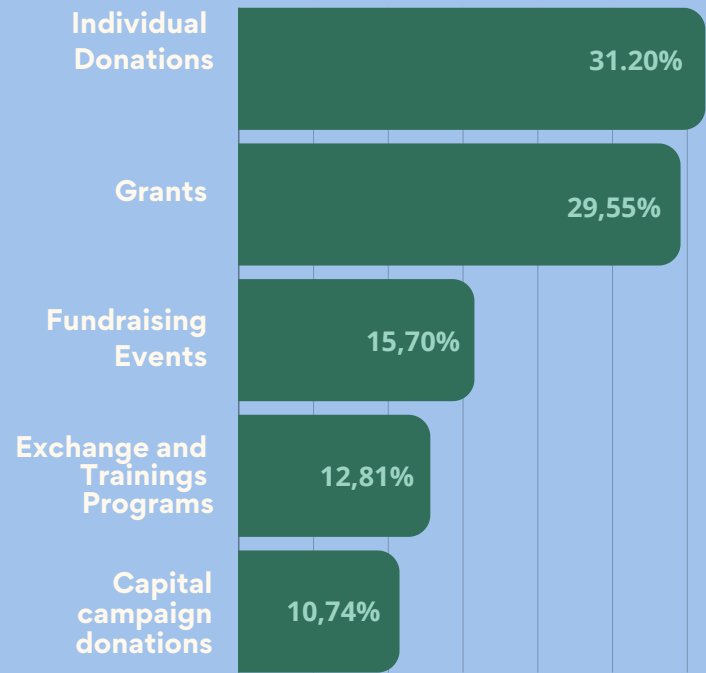
2023 EXPENSES

Total: \$352,491.76



2023 REVENUE

Total: \$380,735



Early childhood education

	STUDENTS
San Lucas	50
Sacalá	33
Tioxya	10
REKKO	46
Berea	42
Estrellita	18
Esperanza Renovada	44
Iniciativa Guatemala	16
Pastores	45
Vida	32
Total:	336

Community programs

	BENEFICIARIES
Fathers Nurturing Group	10
Motivated Women	14
English	90
Go Girls and Youth	32
Go Boys and Youth	25
After School	43
Early Childhood Stimulation	18
Library	60
Exercise	87
Educational Reinforcement	25
Volunteers	28
Total:	432

Accomplishments

Tutoring, Boxing, Exercise Class and more

Through community facilitators and volunteers, we launched new programs: Tutoring, Boxing, Exercise Class, Carpentry, Early Childhood Stimulation and Story time.



10 Schools implementing the methodology

We had over 10 schools implementing our methodology with over 350 students and 23 classrooms.

Strategic Plan

We conducted an inclusive strategy plan process that included families of current and former students, PS graduates, all PSI staff, donors, program partners and our Board of Directors. We are excited to enact this plan in 2024 and the following years.



Working with the Public school in the community la Estrella

We implemented the methodology with the Public School, La Estrella, a village of San Pedro Yepocapa. It is essential to also work within the public system and we hope to expand to more public schools moving forward.



Training for teachers in primary public schools

We began partnerships with the public schools our students attend and have started providing professional development to their primary school teachers.



Plans for the future

Our team is growing

In 2017, we had a staff of 8 people. Now our staff is over 30 people working part and full time. 20 of the employees are from the communities where we work.



REKKO becomes model school

Asociación ReKKO has implemented the PS methodology in San Pedro Yepocapa since 2015. They will be transitioning to a model school and their School Director Leydi will also become a PS coordinator. This will allow us to expand in the region and open more schools throughout Yepocapa.



Community Center Volunteer Program

Led by Diego Trujillo, we have over 28 community and outside volunteers supporting programming in the center. These volunteers provide expertise and also allow us to provide more individualized attention. It also allows community members an opportunity to give back to their own community.



Mental Health Services for our team

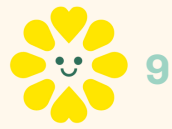
In collaboration with Creamos and Iniciativa Guatemala, we are working with a psychologist to provide mental health support to all Planting Seeds staff. It is essential that we care for our team's mental health, so they can care for others.



Growing School in Tioxya

Because of excellent leadership from Juana Armira, lead teacher in Tioxya, our student population has doubled.





Thank you!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of the donors, friends, community members and staff that worked together to achieve these goals. We are deeply appreciative of your commitment to education and community development and for trusting in our team. Thank you for joining part of our journey and for believing in a bright future for communities in Guatemala!

Board Members

- Gabe Tobias
- Aly Wallis
- Leanne Van Bavel
- Wayne Moyle
- Mary Landi
- Sharon Workman
- Andrea Gomez
- Matthew Linick
- Fredy Oxom
- Kim Mckenney

Graduating Board Members

- Carolyn Collins-Bennett
- Ann Escott
- Onice Arango

Foundations

- Luis Von Ahn Foundation
- Ward Foundation
- One Day's Wages
- Basilian Fathers
- Joann Hartmann Foundation
- Sisters of St Josephs

Friend Circles

- Ottawa
- Pembroke
- Traverse City and Leelanau County
- Chicago
- Northbrook



Change for Change schools participants

- Guardian Angels Catholic School
- Holy Cross Catholic School
- St. Leonard School
- St. James School

Exchange Trips

- Northwest Michigan College
- Educational Tour participants and everyone who attended the Community Center Inauguration

Special thanks

- Leanne and Tim Summers for their Fall Fashion Show and Futbol KY events.
- Suttons Bay Congregational Church and their missions committee.
- Rotary Clubs of Traverse City, MI; Milwaukee, WI; Farmington, Maine; and UWARA Club in Guatemala
- John and Michael Sullivan Maureen Sullivan fund.
- Anonymous Michigan Spring Campaign Matching Donor



Let's continue growing together!

Here are some ideas of how to grow your impact with programs!

1. Donate

- Click [HERE](#) to donate online!

- Mail a check to Planting Seeds International, 2860 Weller Lane, Northbrook, IL USA 60062

2. Become a Champion

Join the Champions Program and help us create a thriving environment for children, youth, and adults alike. Also, you will be part of an exclusive community that receives unique content and updates about our programs. Click [HERE](#) to become a Champion!

3. Join a Friends Circle!

Volunteer from home! You can join our existing circles or start a new one in your own community. The mission is to help us organize fundraisers and awareness events. Get in touch with us to get more details!

4. Connect us to your local schools!

Connect us to your local preschools, elementary schools, high-schools and colleges for our ZoomPal, Change for Change and Dual Exchange Programs!

5. Visit Guatemala!

Join us for a one-week educational tour in Guatemala and get a close look at our programs!

6. Follow us!





Planting Seeds, so that children may grow



to be everything they are meant to be.

