

TOGETHER WE CAN GUATEMALA

ASOCIACIÓN JUNTOS PODEMOS



2023  
ANNUAL  
REPORT



# MISSION

*We are devoted to fostering thriving communities through integrated programs supporting education, environmental stewardship, and food sovereignty.*

## BOARD AND STAFF

### Board of Directors

Sónya Waldthausen	Salina Duncan
Jeniffer Pérez	Peter McManus
Claire Henkel	Nancy Kuster
Alexandra Orozco	

### Staff

David Santa Catalina <i>Executive Director</i>	Donna Trimm <i>Grant Writer</i>
Adriana Chacón <i>El Hato Literacy Center coordinator</i>	Leticia Por <i>Garden assistant</i>
Nicole Shoc <i>Garden Programs Assistant</i>	



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# OUR STORY



Together We Can Guatemala (TWCG) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit registered in Pennsylvania, USA, while Asociación Juntos Podemos (AJP) is a nonprofit association registered in Guatemala. Both organizations were founded in 2018 to provide financial, programmatic, and administrative oversight to two principal projects: **The Garden of Hope** and the **El Hato Literacy Center**.

Operating in El Hato, a small community of around 1,500 people, most of whom are Indigenous and under the age of eighteen, our child and mother resource center in the Central Highlands of Guatemala works to create a more just and healthy world. It achieves this by keeping children in school and teaching families to feed themselves from the earth they inhabit, helping increase food security and access to education.



# 2023 IN IMAGES



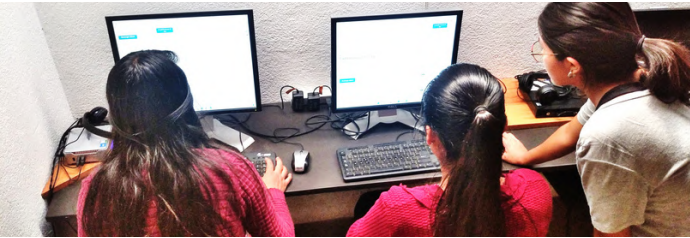
January

New El Hato Literacy Center



May

New computer Lab



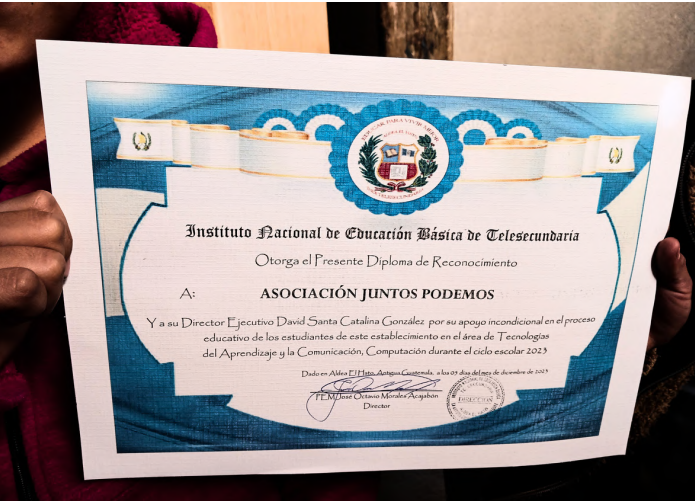
November

Trip to Once:Once



December

Public school recognizes AJP



# PRESIDENT'S LETTER



## TOGETHER WE CAN GUATEMALA

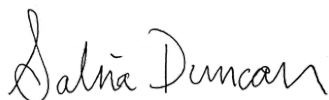
As we reflect on the past year, I am honored to present to you our annual report for 2023. The following report highlights the progress, achievements, and impact we have made together as a community.

Throughout 2023, we have achieved significant milestones, thanks to the collective efforts of our dedicated team, volunteers, and supporters. With funds secured in 2022, we were able to upgrade the location of the El Hato Literacy Center, and add a dedicated computer area to support the learning needs of secondary students (middle and high school students) in El Hato. We would like to recognize Thrive Philanthropy as a major financial supporter, making our community cooking program possible.

After 4 years of dedicated and valuable service on the AJP Board of Directors, Michelle Berkowitz Sultán completed her term, and Alexandra Orozco passionately joined the Board, bringing a plethora of experience.

We have continued to build our institutional stability through stronger operational practices and governance structures. The Board has been working to revise the strategic plan, laying a solid foundation for sustainable growth and impact in the years to come.

Your contributions, whether through financial support, volunteerism, or advocacy, have been instrumental in enabling us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for your continued support, dedication, and belief in our mission.



**Salina Duncan**

**President, Together We Can Guatemala**





*GARDEN OF HOPE*



# GARDEN OF HOPE

## MAIN AIM

The main aim of our Garden of Hope, founded in 2014 by our Board member Claire Henkel, is to improve nutrition, key life skills, and environmental stewardship of the children and families of El Hato through sustainable, closed-circle gardening, plant-based cooking, and nutrition courses utilizing our communal green space.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Increase food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.
2. Provide El Hato children and families with communal green spaces where they can connect with nature, foster joy, and develop life skills.
3. Increase environmental stewardship.
4. Utilize garden produce to provide nutritious snacks to the students enrolled in our El Hato Literacy Center.
5. Identify community members of all ages with a natural interest in nutrition, gardening, and environmental stewardship and invest further in these individuals with specific training to help prepare our students to transfer their skills into jobs in fields such as hospitality, farming, and produce sales.



# PROGRAMS

**Garden to Kitchen:** This project utilizes our garden's vegetables and is equipped with a kitchen, including several mini stoves. Every week, a group of mothers learn a new plant-based recipe and enjoy a meal, learning to easily prepare four family meals by the end of each month. This design reaches a larger audience of beneficiaries and influences the diet of families and the community at large as well as reinforcing the food security of our beneficiaries.

**Vegetable Gardening:** We teach regenerative agriculture practices. Care for soil, cultivate seeds for next season, weed, prune, harvest crops, and fertilize the soil with composted scraps, emphasizing the impact of food production on our environment. The harvested food goes directly into participants' kitchens and diets, and supports our other programs.

**Community Days:** We aim to strengthen our community ties through 12 once-a-month Community Days to play and learn together participating in fun and interactive activities while utilizing a humane education lens to teach about local plants, plant-based diets, nutrition, games and environmental stewardship. Through this program, we present a wide array of plant-based dishes to enjoy together.



# IMPACT OF GOH

## Garden to Kitchen

<i>Participants</i>	<b>18</b>
<i>Hours cooking</i>	<b>97</b>
<i>Meals provided</i>	<b>1116</b>
<i>Learned recipes</i>	<b>27</b>

## Vegetable Gardening

<i>Participants</i>	<b>60</b>
<i>Harvested fruits and plants</i>	<b>499</b>
<i>Harvested herbal bouquets</i>	<b>121</b>

## Community Days

<i>Participants</i>	<b>43</b>
<i>Sessions</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>Meals provided</i>	<b>211</b>

*Program's direct impact* **66**

*Program's total reach* **233**



# IMPACT OF GOH

All of our Garden to Kitchen program participants reported a heightened understanding of nutrition, with **100%** expressing confidence in making informed food choices for themselves and their families. Additionally, **80%** reported an increased consumption of fruits, vegetables, and grains following their participation in the program.

**Ninety percent** of our participants have expressed that they are acquiring valuable knowledge through our programs, highlighting the impactful learning experiences. Furthermore, **100%** of the participants said they would recommend our Garden of Hope programs to others.





# LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

## GARDEN OF HOPE

Our Garden of Hope project holds immense potential, and in 2024, our objective is to enhance its safety, user-friendliness, and capacity. This will enable us to accommodate more participants, thereby expanding the reach of our impactful initiatives. The funds recently raised during our end-of-year fundraiser in 2023 will play a crucial role in implementing the necessary actions.

Throughout 2023, we initiated the establishment of a garden school at El Hato public school. A primary focus for the upcoming year is to complete the implementation, ensuring that the school aligns with the Ministry of Education requirement that schools have a garden. This strategic move will not only meet regulatory standards but will also serve as a valuable resource for enhancing student education across various disciplines. Additionally, the garden will contribute to providing sustenance for the school community. We are excited about the positive transformations ahead and grateful for the support that makes it possible.





*EL HATO LITERACY CENTER*

# EL HATO LITERACY CENTER

## MAIN AIM

The main aim of our El Hato Literacy Center, founded in 2018 by our Board members Peter McManus and Salina Duncan, is to improve literacy and graduation rates through tailored, individual tutoring and literacy services with an additional focus on nutrition and humane education.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Increase the quality of education leading to greater learning, good grades, improved academic performance, and higher graduation rates.
2. Improve literacy, critical thinking, and appreciation for reading.
3. Provide library access for children and adults, equipping them in the areas of technology, reading, writing, and entertainment resources.
4. Improve nutritional intake in support of cognitive development.
5. Equip students with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed and socially responsible choices that resolve real-world problems through improving compassion for people, animals, and the environment.





# PROGRAMS

**Tutoring:** Our staff sit with both primary and middle school children and teach the material in their school lessons, supervise the completion of homework, help them understand concepts, and provide access to technological resources. Our team runs this program in coordination and communication with the primary and middle schools of El Hato.

**Community Library:** We teach the computer science subject for the local public school, provide community-wide access to technology, reading, writing, entertainment resources, playtime, and humane education materials. We actively foster a love of books for all, believing more literate and technologically capable parents will better facilitate those skills in their children.

**Vacation camp:** At the conclusion of the school year, we facilitate our very popular Vacation Camp, running for six weeks from November 1st through December 15th. Our camp provides in-person gardening sessions, cooking classes, art activities, games, and healthy snacks for participants in a safe, fun, and green environment

**Humane Education:** Students learn conflict resolution, peaceful discourse, and respect and love for animals and nature through our structured, weekly, original curriculum.



# IMPACT OF EHLC

## Tutoring

<i>Participants</i>	<b>57</b>
<i>Hours tutoring</i>	<b>685</b>
<i>Pass rate</i>	<b>95.9%</b>

## Community Library

<i>Participants</i>	<b>81</b>
<i>Technology hours</i>	<b>97</b>
<i>Books lent</i>	<b>71</b>

## Vacation Camp

<i>Participants</i>	<b>39</b>
<i>Sessions</i>	<b>13</b>
<i>Meals provided</i>	<b>247</b>

## Humane Education

<i>Participants</i>	<b>51</b>
<i>Sessions</i>	<b>33</b>

*EHLC's direct impact* **102**

*EHLC's total reach* **354**



## IMPACT OF EHLC

Around **87%** of parents from the tutoring program noted a significant enhancement in their children's studies, with **13%** acknowledging some improvement. Additionally, a substantial **83%** mentioned their children are more enthusiastic about attending school now. Moreover, a remarkable **93%** reported a considerable improvement in their overall life thanks to our program, whereas **7%** experienced a modest improvement.

A whopping **90%** of students mentioned that they now have a better understanding of how to tackle their homework since joining our center, and a full **100%** expressed feeling great when coming to our center.





# LOOKING AT THE FUTURE

## EL HATO LITERACY CENTER

The El Hato Literacy Center has recently achieved significant milestones in enhancing its stability, notably through the acquisition of a new location in early 2023 and diligent documentation efforts throughout the year. In 2024, responding to a request from the middle school director, we are poised to welcome all students into our center, offering computer science education given the current absence of computers at the school.

Additionally, our focus for the upcoming year includes broadening the impact of our Community Library. Our goal is to cultivate an environment in which our neighbors feel at home within the library space. While maintaining robust documentation to measure our impact, we acknowledge the importance of continuous improvement. To this end, we aim to revisit and enhance our survey delivery processes, ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness in assessing our programs and initiatives.

In February, 2024, we initiated improvements to our space to ensure the safety and well-being of our participants. These collective efforts underscore our commitment to fostering a secure, enriching environment for all those we serve.



# VOLUNTEERS



Geoffrey Presa  
Belgium

“Being a volunteer allowed me to share many simple and true moments. I loved waking up in El Hato, having breakfast with my host family, and going to help and learn at the Garden of Hope. The families of El Hato like to participate in the activities of the organization, and the organization's team works with passion for the well-being and good development of children.”



Laura García  
Guatemala

“The shared time with the team and the children led to collective learning about the territory of the village El Hato and the people who inhabit it. The work of the Association is very important in El Hato, whose development has been conditioned by the economic interests that exist over it. Recovering the voices of children and their families through education is fundamental for their personal and collective development”



# BENEFICIARIES

## El Hato Literacy Center programs

“Leidy Fabiola was not doing well in her studies. Since she started attending your program she began to improve a lot and ended up being a valedictorian for her grade at the end of the year. Her mom was very affected by the situation so your support was also very good emotionally speaking”



Cristian Moya De León  
Primary School teacher

## Garden of Hope programs

“Here you learn a lot of things, and we share time with friends. If the program is no longer running, we will miss it badly. What we prepared today we had never tried before and I really liked it. I hope to prepare it at home and that my family will like it. One is at home with a lot of work and when you come here you disconnect from stress”



Marina Angélica  
Por Ixcotop

## El Hato Literacy Center programs

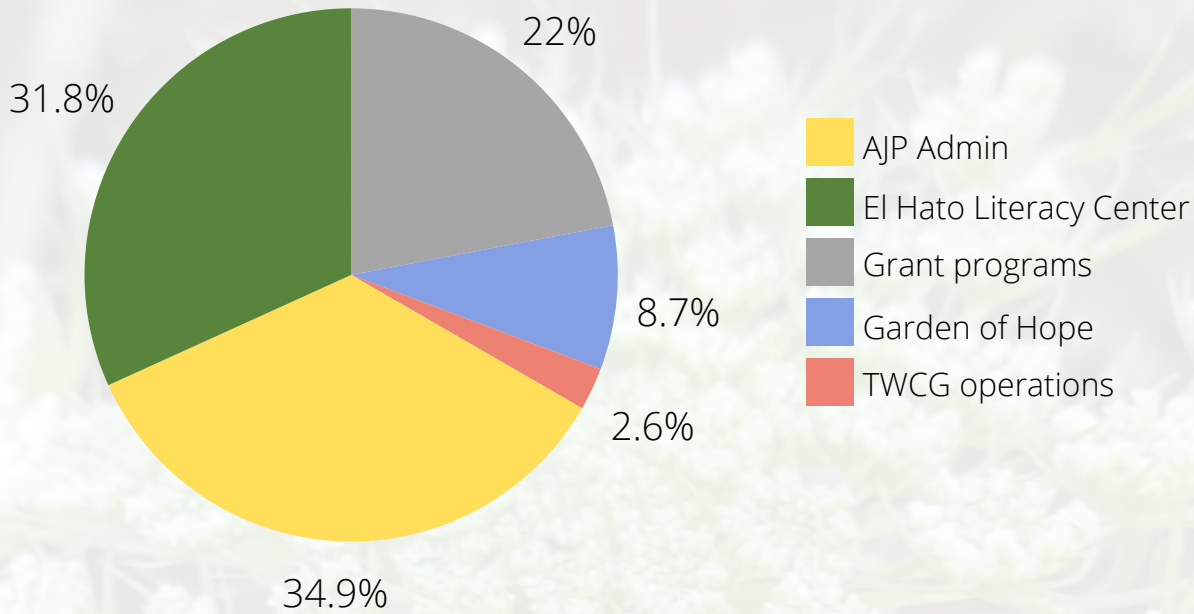
“My life has improved a lot with this program because my children are advancing with their studies and I don't have to be up at night helping them.”



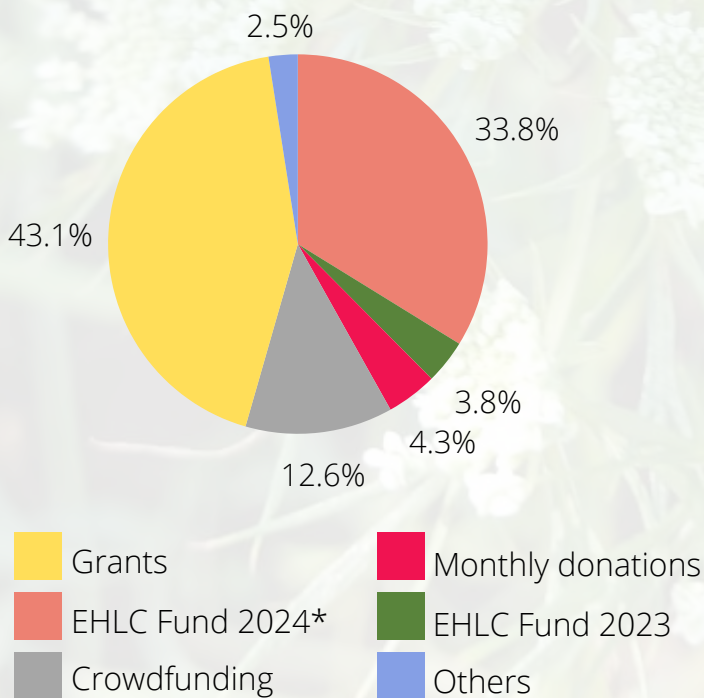
Gloria Angélica  
Aspuac

# FINANCIAL REPORT

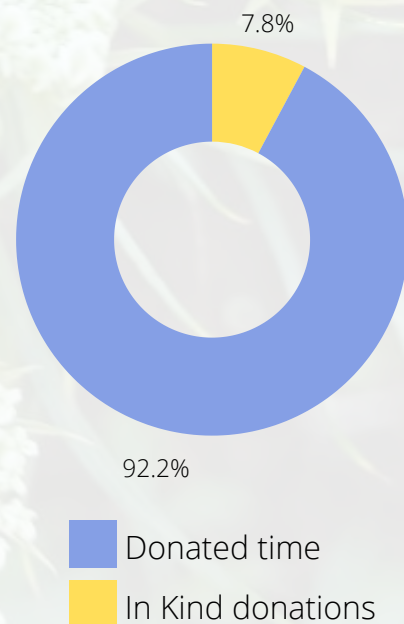
## EXPENSES > \$41,044



## INCOME > \$53,253



## IN-KIND > \$19,689



\*EHLC 2024 funds received in 2023



# A DONOR'S STORY

**Julie** and Van Zimmer first started supporting the children in El Hato more than ten years ago when their son and daughter-in-law worked in Guatemala. On their annual visits from 2012 to 2015, they frequented El Hato, where Julie volunteered with the NGO Las Manos de Christine, helping in the organization's programs in the public school's library and classrooms. When **Together We Can Guatemala** took over some of Las Manos' role in El Hato in 2018, Julie continued her commitment to El Hato's children by becoming a strong supporter of TWCG.

The Zimmers, who moved from the state of Iowa to New Hampshire, continue donating annually. Julie says her favorite contributions grew out of her El Hato visit in 2014 with friend Sue Gnagy.

The pair brought materials for card-making and the simple art project grew under the teachers even after they left. Students of all ages and some families created several hundred Christmas and creative greeting cards which the pair used as donor gifts in fundraising back in their home towns in Iowa.

They shared the story of **Together We Can Guatemala** and the children of El Hato with friends, family, service clubs, and church groups, raising almost \$2,000 for scholarships and educational expenses.

Julie says meeting the children, community and organization staff was a joy.

*"We could see first-hand the needs and the value of contributing. We saw your staff and board multiply the results. We brought back real-life success stories and shared them with our friends who donated."*

*"My family knows our contributions are put to good use, and we hope our annual giving can be a little piece of what keeps Together We Can Guatemala going and growing. In a tumultuous time, we can trust that our efforts and yours help build a stronger future for families to sustain themselves and thrive in the place they love."*



2014 student card project with Julie (at left) and Sue

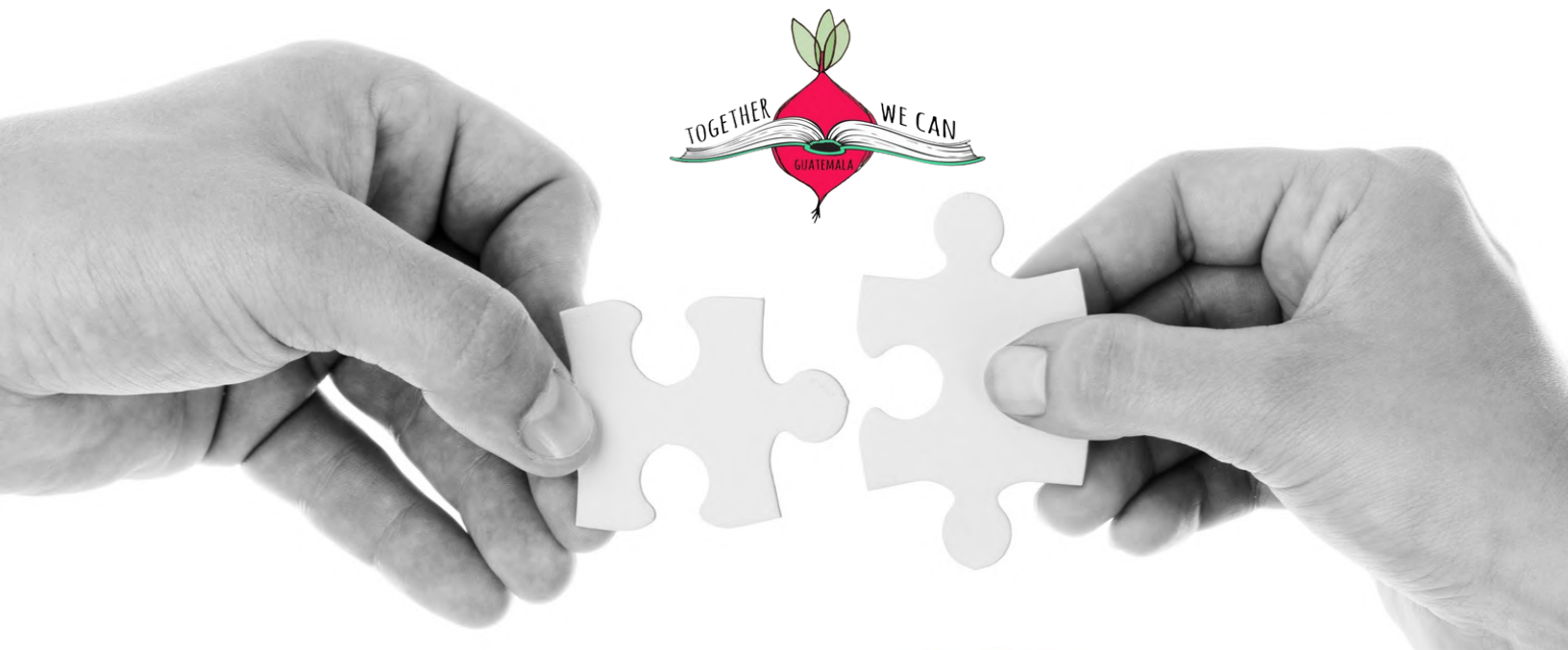


# PARTNERS



TWCG would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed financial supporters, partners, and sponsors. We are genuinely inspired by your unwavering support that plays a pivotal role in helping us achieve our goals

We extend our appreciation with a special mention to each and every individual donor and supporter, both longstanding and newfound, who has been a steadfast pillar for TWCG, the El Hato Literacy Center, and the Garden of Hope. Your dedication is instrumental in making a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve.



Escuela Oficial Rural  
Mixta José Ignacio  
Ortiz Vides





*Thank You*  
**FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

TOGETHER WE CAN  
 GUATEMALA



$$\begin{array}{r} 75 \\ - 55 \\ \hline 20 \end{array}$$



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Aldea El Hato  
La Antigua Guatemala  
Sacatepéquez  
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