

## KOUPAL JOINS EI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cyra Koupal is originally from San Jose, California, and first became passionate about Latin America while living in Uruguay as a high school exchange student nearly 15 years ago. Since, Cyra has lived in Guatemala, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil and holds a Bachelor's degree from Tulane University in Latin American Studies and Brazilian Studies. Cyra served as a human rights companion in one returned refugee community and conducted monthly visits to six communities containing witnesses in a legal case against former military dictator General Romeo Lucas Garcia in the Ixcán region of Guatemala from 2004 to 2005. Since 2007, Cyra has helped monolingual clients access necessary legal and social services by serving as a volunteer interpreter in the areas of family, immigration, bankruptcy and landlord/tenant law. Cyra has also trained new volunteer interpreters thus lending her expertise to ensure the growth of volunteer interpreter projects in San Francisco. Currently, she works as a freelance medical interpreter and is a student in the Spanish/English Legal Interpretation Program at San Francisco State University and in the Healthcare Interpreter Program at City College of San Francisco.



Cyra Koupal

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## THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS BY AMANDA TERHES

I began my involvement with Enfoque Ixcán five years ago after seeing the unwavering dedication and enthusiasm that Scott Pike showed for the people of the Ixcán. His tireless efforts continue but what keeps me involved isn't just Scott, it is the mission of EI to empower the people of the Ixcán and teach them the skills and grant them the tools to help their own communities. Every year I think "I am too busy" but every year I stay involved. It is

the dedication of Scott, the Board, Needham UCC, AMIGOS, volunteer optometrists and opticians and donors that keep me coming back. Enfoque Ixcán would not be the same without each person contributing what they can. I have seen EI grow from a personal mission to a community of supporters working to better the lives of the Ixcán people and I am proud to be a part of that mission.

GIVING BACK FOR MY BLESSINGS BY DR. BRIAN ARVIDSON

When Dr. Scott Pike asked me to contribute to this edition of the Enfoque Ixcán newsletter, I was honored to share a small part of my story, as the annual Guatemala trip has become a big part of my year. In 2003, I was an optometry student looking for all of the experience and practice I could possibly find. My friends, family and classmates all volunteered to let me examine their eyes, but soon the novelty wore off and I began searching again for more people to practice on and more places to learn. Local volunteer agencies like the Lion's Club and Special Olympics are always in need of help and I was happy to do what I could, but it was the Amigos Eyecare trips through Pacific University College of Optometry that caught my attention. Having traveled extensively in South America, a trip to Guatemala seemed like the perfect fit – a chance for me to travel again and a chance for me to learn.

Traveling to Guatemala that first year was exactly what I remembered about South America: long bumpy bus rides through the country, oppressively muggy weather leaving me drenched and the inevitable intestinal

complications that come with traveling abroad. With these challenges came the indescribable beauty of the lush green jungle, nights filled with the sounds of the crickets and early mornings filled with the calls of the Howler monkeys, and most of all the company of the warmest, most generous people imaginable. The people of the Ixcán welcomed us into their homes to share a meal, sometimes sharing the only meat the family would have that week. It was while sitting with these families, at their tables over dirt floors that I knew I would return.

Since that first trip in 2004, I have traveled to Guatemala with Dr. Pike nearly every year. I have witnessed Enfoque Ixcán grow in numbers, people and equipment as it works toward becoming a self sustaining program. Five years ago there was one vision health promoter and now it has expanded to three. As Enfoque Ixcán continues to grow, so does its ability to reach and serve more and more people. Children who had never seen the board at school are given glasses, elderly patients who have gone blind from cataracts were cured and people with eye infections or

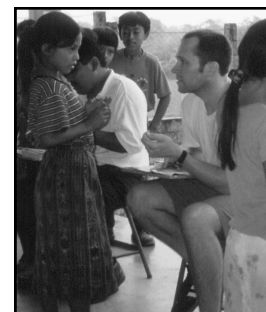
injuries that could have resulted in blindness were given proper treatment.

This work that is being done in the Ixcán is challenging: logistically, physically and monetarily but it is also inspirational and uplifting. Year after year the students and doctors who make the long trip are able to provide care to the hundreds of people who may travel many hours to be seen at the clinic. The presence of Enfoque Ixcán and Amigos in this region has reached remote villages in as far away as southern Mexico, inspiring some patients to hike through the jungles and catch long rides to come for an examination. As Pedro and Felipe continue their hard work, Enfoque Ixcán aims to become a reliable and sustainable resource in the community. It has truly been my pleasure to be a part of this program these last five years as Dr. Pike and his team serve the people of the Ixcán.

As a student I went to the Ixcán to learn. As a doctor, I return to teach. As a man, I go each year to give back (in a small way) for all of the blessings I enjoy. As a father, I hope to travel to Guatemala with my boys one day, to show them how rewarding humanitarian work can be.



Brian doing an eye exam on a baby



Brian as a student on an AMIGOS trip to the Ixcán

“AS A FATHER, I HOPE TO TRAVEL TO GUATEMALA WITH MY BOYS ONE DAY, TO SHOW THEM HOW REWARDING HUMANITARIAN WORK CAN BE.”

2009 ENFOQUE IXCÁN'S EYE HEALTH PROMOTER'S REPORT

The February trip to the Ixcán marks the beginning of a new year for Enfoque Ixcán.

In 2009 Enfoque Ixcán's EHPs did 145 eye exams and dispensed 122 pairs of glasses. For ultra-violet protection

they sold 46 pairs of sunglasses and 35 hats. A total of 9 patients were taken to Guatemala City for eye surgeries, where 12 eye surgeries were performed, including for cataracts, glaucoma and cor-

neal growth (pterygium) removal.

Thanks to your support and donations these totals are going up each year as our program continues its growth.