

In our summer newsletter, we announced the addition of a new member to Yashalum's staff, *Hermenegildo Méndez Gutiérrez*. This month we are pleased to pass along a letter of introduction from *Gildo*.

Dear Friends,

First and foremost I hope that you are all well.

I am the new administrator for the Yashalum Chiapas Education Program, and I would like to thank you for your support and to tell you a little about myself.

My name is Hermenegildo Méndez Gutiérrez and my parents are Manuel Méndez and María Gutiérrez. My father works in the fields cultivating corn, beans and vegetables to feed the family and my mother takes care of our home. I was born in the mountain village of Emiliano Zapata, but a few years ago, my family was able to buy a small plot of land closer to Yajalón in the village of Nuevo Paraíso (New Paradise). I am the second of seven siblings. Our mother tongue is Tzeltal Maya although several of my younger brothers also speak Ch'ol Maya. Because we now live on the border with the Ch'oles, we are privileged to be able to speak two indigenous languages.



I am very proud to be associated with Yashalum because through the scholarship program, together with the sacrifice of my family, I have been able to go to school and graduate from university as an anthropologist.

I studied elementary school in my village of Emiliano Zapata. It is the only school in the village. For junior high and high school, I had to leave home and move to Yajalón where I was able to live and share with other students at the Boys' Ranch of Santiago Apóstol. After high school, I was given a Yashalum scholarship to attend college at the State University in San Cristóbal, Chiapas, where I graduated in social anthropology. I gave my year of service at the Boys' Ranch while writing my thesis on the work of indigenous midwives.

In May of this year, I was invited by the council of elders to work for Yashalum as administrator of the education program. It is a new challenge for me. I accept it as an opportunity to learn new things and a new responsibility to support the program that gave me the chance to get an education.

I do not have sufficient words to thank my sponsors who helped during these past many years. All I can say is "May God Bless You." A thousand thanks.

Your Godson,

Hermenegildo "Gildo" Méndez Gutiérrez